ACADEMIC SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Meeting of March 10, 2021

Virtual Meeting

2:00 - 4:00 pm PST


Absent: T. Wattenbarger


AGENDA

Call to Order

Academic Senate President Adler called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

Approval of Minutes of December Senate Meeting

Academic Senate Secretary General Brooks presented the February 2021 minutes for discussion and approval.

Motion to approve the February minutes. Seconded and passed: 37 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Discourse in Senate Meetings

Adler discussed the importance of maintaining a respectful tone in Senate discourse, both in oral and written communications (particularly in conversations that take place via meeting chats).

Provost Zukoski

President Zukoski greeted Senators and began his update with a reminder of the forthcoming Wellness Day. Wellness Days are designed to provide students and faculty with an opportunity to relax. This semester, there are five Wellness Days scattered throughout the semester. Zukoski then provided a vaccination update. As of March 1, we are in Phase I-B, Tier 1, which allows vaccinations of USC faculty, staff and funded graduate students working in research and instruction. Vaccinations can be gotten at USC or any of the county sites. Those living in California should use the myturn.ca.gov website to schedule appointments. Questions about vaccines and
Zukoski then discussed planning for the fall. We expect student density to be close to normal by the end of August (pre-pandemic levels). Housing will be back at density (double occupancy). A survey will be administered to help us understand and meet the needs of our students. The plan depends on the guidance we receive from Los Angeles County. Student Affairs is preparing two onboarding experiences—one for first year students as usual and the other for 2nd year students in parallel so that we can acculturate both classes on what it means to be at USC. Student Affairs is also planning a robust welcome experience for all students, including those living in university housing.

The Provost thanked faculty for their flexibility, compassion, and hard work this year. He reported that he has received remarkable feedback from students who are pleased with their experience. He noted that faculty have delivered very high-quality courses for three semesters, for which he and students are very appreciative. Zukoski went on to explain that we will be online for the 1st term of the summer, but the 2nd term may be on-campus. With restrictions beginning to lift, there are numerous activities taking place on campus. For example, we currently provide space for studying and dining in canopies for students who live around the campus. Doheny Library is open for research; Levy Library is open for independent study; Thornton is open for instrumental rehearsals; Roski is opening individual art labs and studios; architecture has studios open; athletes can participate in study and social sessions; the bookstore can be visited by appointment; and we have opened tracks, tennis courts, and studios. Pools will open soon, once lifeguards are trained.

Zukoski reminded Senators that the current week was DEI Week, with over a hundred events (e.g., trainings, lectures, and discussions) taking place. Additionally, he noted that actions are being taken to enact the recommendations made by the REDI Task Force and the Community Advisory Board. He closed out his updates by sharing that the new Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, Chris Manning, arrived the week prior and is meeting with various groups across campus. Zukoski then took questions from the floor.

**Senators Pose Questions to Provost Zukoski**

Provost Zukoski then addressed questions posed by the Executive Board and Senators. Adler asked Zukoski about his initial reaction to the WASC Accreditation Visiting Committee Report Out. Zukoski noted that the Report Out was a public, verbal presentation and that we have not yet seen the final, written report. Although the recommendations could change, the Visiting Committee enjoyed conversations, learned a lot, and appreciated the work that went into developing the self-study which addressed three key issues: (1) governance, (2) inclusion, and (3) convergence. The Report Out was positive and upbeat and the Visiting Committee was pleased by the progress we have made. There were numerous recommendations and commendations that presumably will be included in the final report. Regarding reference made by the Visiting Committee to more academic expertise on the Board of Trustees, Zukoski stated that he does not have additional information to share.

Noting that several cohorts of students have never been to campus, a Senator asked if there are any university-wide efforts or expectations for schools to address students’ return and adjustment. Zukoski indicated that Student Affairs is working hard on these issues and that he will pass on to them the need to consider the needs of all students. The Senator also asked if there is a timeline or “drop dead date” that senior administration has set to make decisions and announcements about the fall semester, assuming no other COVID surges or county closures. Zukoski indicated that there will be a drop dead date only in the sense that students will register and be placed in dorms. He went on to explain, however, that we will plan and use parameters to
Another Senator posed several questions related to Ibram X. Kendi. He pointed out that Kendi, in his book ‘How to be an antiracist,’ states, “The only remedy to racist discrimination is antiracist discrimination. The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination.” The Senator also pointed out that race is a protected class and asked the Provost if he was in agreement with this position. Zukoski responded that he was not going to take a stand one way or another on the quote presented by the Senator. The Senator expressed curiosity about Kendi’s payment. Zukoski indicated that he did not know Kendi’s fee, but that he understood the fee to be within the normal ranges of speaking fees.

Adler shared that there were numerous questions about our finances and the budget. Zukoski stated that there have been no changes to what he shared previously with the Senate in past weeks, including the parameters for planning for the next academic year. He intends to provide an update at the April Senate meeting.

In response to a question about whether the University will require students to be vaccinated in the fall in order to visit campus, the Provost indicated that we are not for several reasons, the most common being that all existing vaccines are under an emergency use protocol, that is, they are experimental. We are, however, strongly encouraging everyone to get vaccinated. Those wanting to come to campus will have to get the vaccine or actively decline getting the vaccine.

Regarding the University’s decision to pause unmatched contributions to retirement, a Senator noted that it was not clear if the decision applied to $19,500 matching for faculty making more than $218,000 a year under Section 457B. The Senator also noted that the policy seems quite regressive given that junior faculty are least able to make matching contributions and have the longest time for those investments to compound. Zukoski replied that he did not know the answer to the part of the question related to Section 457B and that he would try to get an answer. While not contesting the statement about the regressive nature of the plan, Zukoski stated that this was the plan that was chosen after being after being heavily debated, but that he could not remember the precise reason for the decision. Adler suggested that the question was a fair one that deserved an answer and proposed working with the Provost to follow up.

A Senator queried the Provost about whether anyone is thinking about lifting travel bans in the near future. After noting the reasons for the travel ban (to save money and to promote safety), Zukoski stated that he expects to see changes in the ban starting in July and that he looks forward to being able to travel again.

Finally, on behalf of her School’s Faculty Council, a Senator asked about the relationship of County and USC going forward, and whether we are going to continue offering experiential learning for students in health professions at County facilities. Zukoski asserted that the relationship with County is not changing and that it is not necessary to find alternative experiential learning. There are contractual issues, however, but those issues do not threaten our long-term commitment to our partnership with the County and LAC. New medicine or psych faculty can still utilize County as their practice site.

Resolution to Change Senate Constitution’s References to Part-time Faculty (2nd Reading)

Adler moved to accept the Resolution to Change Senate Constitutions’ References to Part-time Faculty and provided background about the resolution. The Resolution aims to make that the Senate Constitution consistent with the Faculty Handbook and to ensure that the concerns of part-time faculty (part-time RTPC faculty and Adjuncts) are heard in our governance structures.
The resolution does not aim to impose a one-size-fits all structure on Faculty Councils in the schools. Nor does the resolution aim to constrain how Faculty Councils choose to implement the proposed change.

A Senator recommended that the record acknowledge the enormous variation across schools and offered a friendly amendment to the resolution to emphasize that “each school’s Faculty Council will determine how best to include part-time faculty in the School’s governance mechanisms.”

Other Senators presented concerns and questions; some spoke out against or in favor of the resolution. A motion to table the vote failed.

**Motion to table.** Seconded and failed: 18 in favor, 26 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Without further discussion, the amended resolution was then voted on and passed.

**Motion to approve the resolution with friendly amendment.** Passed: 40 in favor, 5 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

**Presidential Working Group on Sustainability: Progress Report: Dan Mazmanian**

Profess Dan Mazmanian presented an overview of the work of the Presidential Working Group on Sustainability (PWG), which he chairs. Last year Mazmanian presented the PWG’s recommendations. This year, the PWG has focused on implementation of some of the major recommendations and developing a multi-year implementation plan, referred to as the USC Sustainability and Social Impacts – Equity and Justice – Plan 2028. Mazmanian and other PWG colleagues will present a fuller progress report for discussion with Senators and other interested faculty and on Wednesday April 14.

**Announcements and New Business**

Adler encouraged senators to email him with suggestions for new business and he made several quick announcements.

**Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 4:01 pm.


Respectfully submitted,

Devon Brooks

Secretary General of the Academic Senate