ACADEMIC SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Meeting of December 8, 2021
Virtual Meeting
2:00 - 4:00 pm PST


AGENDA

Call to Order
Academic Senate President Tambascia called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

Approval of Minutes
Secretary General Brooks presented the November 17 Academic Senate meeting minutes for approval.

Motion to approve the November 17 minutes. Seconded and passed: 23 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Professor Alan Green, Rossier and Faculty Athletic Representative, Discussing Student Athletes and Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) Policy
The University’s Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), Professor Alan Green from the Rossier School of Education, discussed various topics related to student athletes at USC, including student-athlete rights; Alston Benefits; Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) policy and status; and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) General Council Option. Green pointed out that the NLRB General Council finds the term “student athlete” problematic and therefore will use the term “players,” which is a step towards considering student athletes as employees. However, USC’s General Counsel has advised that we will regard and refer to student athletes as we have done historically and that there are no efforts to treat student athletes as employees. A Senator asked Green about the mechanisms to ensure that student athletes are not exploited. Green expressed his appreciation for the question and indicated that the University is looking at ways to ensure that
our student athletes are protected, guided, and educated on how to engage with deals involving
their name, image, and likeness. Additionally, we are creating opportunities for our students that
we feel are aligned with our values in terms of economic opportunity and professional and
personal development. We are setting parameters and developing guidelines for working with
third parties that have the best interests of our students in mind. Tambascia asked Green if he has
a sense of whether the low level financial transactions for individuals under NIL that are occurring
at USC are typical of universities across the country. Green thinks currently we are on the lower
end and that athletes at other universities have more media exposure and bigger deals than our
athletes, but he expects this to change given the emphasis on our new football coach, rankings,
etc. Tambascia also asked if there are concerns that female athletes may not benefit in the same
ways as male athletes. Green indicated that he wants to ensure that there are opportunities for all
students, including women athletes, entire teams, and students in all sports. In terms of
movement towards professionalization of student athletics, another Senator asked Green about
his perceptions of where USC is headed. Green stated that this is very much on his mind and that
the University is obligated to honor agreements made with students. With respect to striking a
balance between our mission, vision, and values as a university (which include a top athletic
program), Green emphasized the importance of paying attention to relevant issues and asking
hard questions so that we do not lose our values in exchange for “professionalization.”

Updates from President Folt and Provost Zukoski

President Folt thanked Senators before discussing plans for the spring semester. To better
understand the flexible workplace, we will continue assessing what worked, where we need
people, how we work, and how best to do these things fairly. A committee comprised of
administration and faculty has been convened to examine workplace needs and opportunities.
Though not true across the board, compensation has slipped and we are not as competitive as we
were. With respect to staff in the city of Los Angeles, for example, we have fallen below the
median, which is not OK. Administration will continue working on rightsizing compensation for
faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdocs over the next five years so that we are more
competitive. This will be a major thrust of the Provost’s Office and the deans. Currently, about
45% of the budget (approximately $2.6 billion) goes to salaries. Increases in salaries will be
supported through tuition, which will require a long-term plan that considers all aspects of
compensation, such as daycare, tuition benefits (an expense of roughly several hundred million
dollars a year for more than 2000 employees and their children), healthcare, annual retirement
benefits (about $200 million a year), etc.

Folt also discussed the hiring of the new football coach and associated costs. She noted that our
football team has started losing resources and that athletics, particularly football, pays for all the
women’s sports, all the Olympic sports, 250 full scholarships and medical care for students, and
advising programs (which she believes were responsible for increasing the graduation rate to 92%
for our athletes, compared with 91% across the institution). She emphasized the importance of
hiring an athletic director with integrity and who knows how to run athletics in a professional way.
Detailed analyses suggest that within a year, all the costs of hiring the new coach and his
associates will be recouped and that by the end of the third year, all associated debt will have
been paid off.

Folt shared some thoughts about faculty governance and the importance for her of working
closely with faculty, particularly on significant issues that impact academic programs. She stated
that when she first arrived, she pledged that leadership would attend all the Senate meetings, not
just because Senate members want them to but also because leadership believes it is important to
attend. She promised to include faculty, staff, and students on all significant hires, which
happened with the hiring of 29 senior leaders over the past two years (with faculty sometimes chairing the search committees). Other areas and accomplishments where shared governance has been or will continue to be critical include: sexual assault and the Interfraternity Council (IFC); the Community Advisory Board (CAB); implementation of recommendations from the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Task Force; a new committee for investor responsibility; the Faculty History Committee; renaming of the VKC building to the Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow building; a scholarship program for indigenous students; and the Sustainability Working Group. Folt expressed pride and gratitude for working with faculty and the Senate on these important issues and initiatives before opening the floor for questions.

Academic Vice President Pecchenino thanked the President for taking on compensation issues and stressed the importance of working closely with the Senate to establish and publicize goals early on. Folt strongly agreed with the importance of working closely with the Senate, as well as with the deans. A member of the Executive Board thanked the President for the overview she provided and expressed his understanding of the pressures she and the University face. He asked if she sees any role for the Committee on Finances and Enrollment (CoFE), the Oversight Committee for Athletic Academic Affairs (OCAA), or other faculty bodies in helping to hold athletics accountable for achieving specified goals. Folt expressed her hope that there is trust from faculty and suggested the need to determine on which issues faculty input is important. She indicated that she registered the question and will continue thinking about it, and perhaps will work with the Executive Board to follow up on it.

Noting the issue of strict enforcement of return to work policies and the impact on staff morale and retention, a Senator asked if there will be more flexibility in the future. She also raised the issue of the debt to income ratio as an important metric for programs. Regarding the first issue, Folt clarified that one of the goals for the spring is to rightsize workforce presence and need. Regarding the second issue, Folt emphasized that accessibility, affordability, belonging, diversity, and debt are high priorities for her and have been since she arrived at USC. Debt for our undergraduate students has decreased 16% in the last decade, averaging $19,000 at the end of four years, which is considerably lower than the national student debt. We have to turn our attention to graduate programs and find a way to reduce debt.

Another Senator remarked that it appears we are seeing more crime alerts and wondered whether the President could speak to this. Folt speculated that the increased alerts could reflect more reporting of crime than an increase of actual occurrence of crime. She noted that increased reporting is a good thing, but that there is still more for us to learn.

Provost Zukoski took the floor and expressed his pleasure with where we find ourselves at this point in the semester. He offered his thanks and congratulations, and shared some notable achievements of a few faculty and academic units before providing important updates:

- The IFC, Interim VP of Student Affairs Monique Allard and Chris Manning, the Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, are developing short-term recommendations that would allow Greek Row to open for social events at the beginning of the Spring semester and long-term recommendations for dealing with sexual assault in the Greek system and across campus.

- Central leadership will provide written responses addressing their decision not to act on two recent resolutions—one related to faculty contracts (21-22-03) and the other related to merit and retirement (21-22-02). Regarding Resolution 21-22-03, the Provost indicated that the University can amend its retirement plans to address goals of the institution as a whole or in response to changes in applicable law. Such actions have to be consistent with the terms of our retirement program, which is heavily regulated by the state, the federal government, and
the Faculty Handbook. Our retirement plan is also governed by IRS rules which restrict our ability to offer a specified level of retirement benefits to particular constituencies. This has implications on how we can change retirement benefits overall. Regarding Resolution 21-22-02, Zukoski acknowledged the painful long-term impact of last year’s pause in merit pay raises and benefits. He stated that administration is working hard to figure out how to make up for the pause and to have competitive compensation for faculty and staff as we move forward.

A Senator clarified that the “zero percent raise for a year” remarked on by the Provost is actually a zero percent raise for all years moving forward since the pause affected base salaries, to which the provost responded, “absolutely.” Another Senator asked if there was any news about spring teaching masking indoors. Zukoski replied that there has been no indication of change and that we will resume in the spring with the same teaching conditions currently in place (e.g., mandatory testing and indoor masking)

**Ishwar Puri, Vice President of Research**

Vice President of Research Ishwar Puri provided an update on research activities and plans. He noted that there is broad appreciation that USC would benefit from a research strategy and that there are certain issues in research compliance that have become too bureaucratic. He is examining these and other issues. Funding from the Provost will be used to address understaffing in certain areas, such as the IRB, which should improve outcomes. Puri is looking into reported issues with the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and issues with commercialization, which the Research Committee of the Academic Senate is also examining. On the positive side, there have been efforts to increase inclusion of disciplines, and a concierge service has been implemented for investigators competing for very large grants in order to ensure that proposals get submitted on time.

A Senator expressed her gratitude to Puri and the IRB staff for their assistance and quick response to questions and a recent submission. Puri pointed out that the efforts were those of the IRB staff and he promised to convey the praise to them. He went on to say that he expects there to be a culture shift in the office, with movement towards less friction and greater recognition that staff are there to serve and facilitate. On behalf of a Senator, Tambascia asked Puri what the goal is in terms of average wait times for IRB and how soon the goal might be achieved as experiences with quick turnaround do not appear to be universal. Puri agreed and suggested that experiences should improve as a result of new hires and educational efforts. His goal is for wait times to come down to four weeks, which is the national average, and he hopes to achieve this sometime next year.

**Update from Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Co-Chairs, Devon Brooks and Ashley Uyeshiro Simon**

Devon Brooks and Ashley Uyeshiro Simon, co-chairs of the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee (FRR), gave an overview of the committee. Brooks began by thanking former FRR co-chairs Jerry Davison and Steve Bucher. He then explained that FRR is available to faculty experiencing a problem with a Dean, other administrator, or a colleague, or if they are considering filing a grievance under Chapter 7 of the Faculty Handbook. FRR aims to help faculty understand options and resources available to faculty, and the committee’s work with faculty is confidential when possible. Legal advice, however, is not offered by the committee. Brooks encouraged Senators to let colleagues in their academic units know about FRR and to share a 2-slide PowerPoint about the committee with their colleagues. Uyeshiro Simon presented the members of FRR and discussed changes in the size and composition of the committee, which were designed to address workload issues and to enhance diversity in experience of the members.
Pecchenino expressed thanks to Davison and Bucher for their work over the years and to Brooks and Uyeshiro Simon for agreeing to serve as the new co-chairs. He then asked if Brooks and Uyeshiro Simon could distinguish between the work of FRR and that of other offices like the Office of the Ombuds. Brooks explained that there still is confusion around roles and responsibilities of FRR in relation to other offices and that the committee is currently working to define roles and responsibilities. Uyeshiro Simon went on to clarify that there are similarities between FRR and the Office of the Ombuds, but that the primary difference is that the Ombudspersons are formally trained mediators who are entirely neutral, consistent with their professional principles, whereas members of FRR can provide advocacy on behalf of faculty. A Senator asked what rights we have under Chapter 7 of the Faculty Handbook. Jessica Parr, Co-chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee, explained that everything in Chapter 7 stands as written, even if it is not clear (which the Faculty Handbook Committee is working to address). She further explained that the Faculty Handbook Committee is reconciling policies that guide FRR. Tambascia acknowledged the amazing work done by Davison and Bucher and expressed her gratitude to Brooks and Uyeshiro Simon, as well as the other members of FRR, for their efforts.

**Resolution 21-22-04: By-Laws Amendment Regarding FRR Co-Chair Roles, First Reading**

On behalf of the Executive Board, Tambascia presented Resolution 21-2204 for a first read. The resolution proposes to amend the Academic Senate’s Bylaw 18 to reflect the following:

*Composition of the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities. The co-chairs of the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities shall be one tenured professor and one full-time RTPC associate professor or professor (or equivalent ranks). The committee will also have other members.*

Tambascia noted that the resolution is designed to address a disconnect in the language of the bylaws and she opened the floor for questions or discussion. A Senator asked for the rationale for the proposed change. Tambascia explained that existing language specifies that a tenured full professor shall serve as chair and vice chair of the committee, although we have been operating under a co-chair model that distributes the work across the two co-chairs. The proposed changes would reflect past and current practice. Following up, the Senator asked why not rectify the practice instead of changing the bylaws. Tambascia responded by suggesting that the practice has been working for the FRR committee for a number of years. Pecchenino added that the existing structure is at odds with other Senate committees, which have a co-chair structure. The Senator asked if there is an unspoken concern involving parity between tenure track and RTPC lines of faculty. Pecchenino responded that he did not see why there would be vice chairs for FRR and no other committees. A Senator asked for clarification about whether the proposed changes would only allow faculty with a rank of professor to serve as co-chairs. Tambascia explained that tenured professors are either associate or full professors, so it did not seem necessary to specify rank for them. Another Senator suggested that perhaps it would be desirable to require at least one co-chair to have the rank of professor.

**Adjournment**

Tambascia thanked Senators for their service and dedication. She wished everyone happy holidays and adjourned the meeting at 3:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Devon Brooks
Secretary General of the Academic Senate