AGENDA

Call to Order
Academic Senate President Tambascia called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes
Tambascia presented the September 15 minutes for approval.

Motion to approve the September 15 minutes. Seconded and passed: 30 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Announcements
Academic Vice President and President Elect Peccheneno announced that elections for the Nominating Committee will take place during the November 17 Senate meeting. Four members from the Senate will be elected to serve on the committee along with four members from the Executive Board: Peccheneno, Tambascia, Sanchez (Administrative Vice President), and Adler (Immediate Past President). Tambascia discussed the Faculty Lifetime Achievement Award and encouraged Senators to nominate colleagues deserving of the honor.

Update from Provost Zukoski
Provost Zukoski provided detailed updates before answering questions from the floor.
USC is 95% fully vaccinated and the current positivity rate is .01% for students and .03% for employees, which is substantially lower than the overall rating for LA County, which is about .09%. We have had no outbreaks, but we must be vigilant especially with Thanksgiving break coming up.

Regarding student attendance, course modalities, and where we find ourselves with COVID, Zukoski indicated that to his knowledge faculty have been flexible and that there have been few concerns from students, who appear to like hybrid courses. He encouraged faculty to continue being flexible about class attendance since we are still in a pandemic and do not want students coming to class when they feel ill. On the other hand, he noted, we must figure out how to teach going forward given growing expectations from students that they can take courses online. Additionally, Zukoski reported, many faculty feel that teaching online can lead to better pedagogy and outcomes. Although faculty and units determine teaching modalities, some policies can be conceptualized and applied campus-wide.

State and federal authorities are pressing for more vaccinations. President Biden has issued an executive order for vaccine requirements for federal contractors (which we are) to extend vaccine policies to remote employees who work in the United States. The deadline for implementing the executive order is December 8. Additionally, an LA City Council ordinance signed by Mayor Garcetti will require patrons to show proof of vaccination when entering many indoor locations in the city, including restaurants, gyms, and event venues. This ordinance applies to USC and we are working on the best ways to handle vaccination verifications.

The budget process for next year has begun and continues into November. Budgets are approved for units initially in April and then by the Board of Trustees in May or June; they go into effect July 1. In November, the President’s senior leadership team will formulate budget parameters for the following academic year (2023-2024); the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees will review and approve the parameters in December, and the parameters will then be disseminated to units so they can build their budgets in January and February.

The budget situation of the University is improving. Auxiliary services (e.g., residence halls and eating facilities) have resumed, so our revenue situation is strong. Although we ran a substantial operating deficit last year, retirement benefits will be re-established in January. We are, however, facing some pressures on our budget, including pressures related to tuition. The overall cost of operations is increasing, which typically is offset by tuition increases. Revenue to cover growing costs can come from sources other than tuition, including the endowment (which currently pays about 6% of our operating budget and will not increase significantly), auxiliary revenues, and by reducing costs. It will be a challenge for us to continue covering operational costs by raising tuition, especially for some graduate and professional degree programs. Another way to grow tuition revenue is by increasing enrollment—a path that is successful only if the education provided to additional students costs less than the revenue generated by that tuition.

Zukoski pointed out that lack of income last year from athletics (including ticket sales and media rights) had an enormous impact on revenue, which now is being mitigated because we are playing at full season and athletics revenues are returning. However, we continue to face local and national pressures on athletics. Athletics is very important for USC and we are committed to athletics. They are part of our mission and brand, they deepen the Trojan family, and they tighten our community bonds.

The Provost gave a brief update on the PhD Outcomes Assessment Initiative overseen by Andy Stott, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of the Graduate School. The aim of the
initiative is to ensure that the content and structure of our PhD programs are aligned with student educational and career outcomes. Data collection for the initiative is nearly complete with approximately 90% of our 78 PhD programs having submitted data. Stott and his team are organizing the data and will be publishing it through the Graduate School in January. The Graduate School is working with the Senate to form a faculty committee to review the data and make some initial observations. These observations will be used to engage PhD stakeholders across campus in discussions about the future shape, content, and intellectual direction of PhD programs at USC.

Before turning the floor over to Senators for questions for the Provost, Tambascia asked Zukoski how former dean Marilyn Flynn was able to facilitate faculty hiring without a lot of engagement or oversight apparently from faculty in the school. Tambascia also asked if a report of the Tyndall investigation will be shared with the USC community. Regarding Flynn, Zukoski indicated that much of what occurred took place before his arrival at USC and that there is little he can offer by way of a response, noting as well that the situation is still a legal matter. With respect to the Tyndall situation, Zukoski stated that there is no written report, and because there is often confusion on the matter, he clarified that there also is no written report on Puliafito. Marty Levine, Vice Provost and Senior Advisor to the Provost, reminded Senators that the University has made many documents and past reports related to Tyndall available online at https://change.usc.edu/. Tambascia followed up with a request for the Provost to discuss faculty hiring and how to prevent situations like the one involving Flynn. Zukoski explained that each year he receives a hiring plan from the deans, which he then discusses with deans. From there, the standard hiring processes (e.g., advertising, reviewing candidates, approving hires) go into effect. Additionally, some hires are “targets of opportunity,” which involve sudden hires of an individual with unique characteristics. Even those hires are meant to go through the routine faculty review and governance processes within schools.

A member of the Executive Board (EB) had a follow-up question for Zukoski about the role of the Committee on Finances and Enrollment (CoFE) in the budget process. Zukoski explained that CoFE plays an important role and that tuition and enrollment will be discussed at the next CoFE meeting. The EB member then asked if the Provost could speak to how much the University subsidized athletics last year, the kinds of cuts athletics made to get their budget in line, and whether the University plans to subsidize athletics this year. The Provost indicated that losses for athletics were in the 10s of millions of dollars due to lost ticket sales and media rights, and that athletics worked hard on cutting costs last year, but that he did not have additional details at the moment. He went on to state that he has not seen the projections for next year, but losses are not expected to be in the 10s of millions as they were last year.

A senator asked the Provost if he had any sense as to why it has taken USC so long to reinstate retirement benefits, identifying several prominent research universities that had continued these benefits or reinstated them relatively quickly. Zukoski suggested the reasons were twofold: our benefits packages apply to an annual year and our deficit was likely larger than deficits of other universities.

Immediate Past Senate President Adler asked Zukoski if he thought it would be helpful to have a more honest accounting of the administrative and other failures that gave rise to the problems with Tyndall and Puliafito. Zukoski responded by pointing out that a root cause analysis was
carried out and that enormous changes have taken place as a result of the analysis.

Finally, a senator raised the issue of the student loan crisis and asked how the marketability of students’ skills and the salaries graduates can earn play into decisions about which programs to accentuate. Zukoski stated that these factors are vital and that review processes for all new programs consider student demand and outcomes such as whether there are opportunities for students to become gainfully employed once they graduate. He then discussed the debt to income ratio and posed the question, “What is a reasonable debt to take on to get an education?” for Senators to consider.

**Doug Shook, Chief Information Officer – Update on Microsoft Accounts**

Doug Shook, Chief Information Officer (CIO), and Susan Tincher, Associate CIO for Infrastructure Services, discussed the rising costs of maintaining our Microsoft and Google accounts and associated challenges. Both Microsoft and Google are changing how they charge for licenses. Previously they charged based on headcounts and now they will be charging by how much storage is used and how many accounts have been created, for example. Next year, these changes are expected to result in about $3 million more in licensing fees to Microsoft and possibly the same to Google (for as much as about $7 million in total). Additionally, changes in who qualifies for academic pricing will likely triple the price for those not inclusive of academic pricing. Other conditions have prompted rethinking about licensing types, storage consumption, and how long users maintain their licenses. Feedback from listening tours and surveys, as well as other data, will be used to inform decision-making about licensing agreements. Decisions will be made between December and late spring.

**Michele Morgan, Campus Support and Intervention and Lara Hilton, Center for Work and Family Life**

Michelle Morgan, Director of Campus Support & Intervention (CSI), Lara Hilton, Director of the Center for Work & Family Life (CWFL), and Julie Chobdee, CWFL Health and Well-being Program Manager, spoke about support systems and services for faculty, staff, and students. Morgan explained that CSI is housed in the Provost’s Office and provides support, problem-solving, and referrals for complex situations. To contact CSI, email should be sent to uscsupport@usc.edu. Hilton and Chobdee gave an overview of the Center for Work & Family Life and a new initiative called USC Healthy Campus. The CWFL is the University’s employee assistance program and has served the Trojan community for the last 40 years. USC Healthy Campus aims to enhance health and well-being in four key areas: individual/personal well-being; leadership and culture; infrastructure and sustainability; and institutional practices, policies, and systems.

**Mick Dalrymple, Chief Sustainability Officer**

Mick Dalrymple, Chief Sustainability Officer, addressed sustainability at USC, beginning with a discussion of climate change, philosophical approaches to sustainability, and definitions of sustainability. To advance sustainability at USC, Dalrymple suggests that we work from a common vision and definition of sustainability: “the alignment of economic and social systems with nature life support systems, maximizing positive feedback loops and minimizing trade-offs, in order to enable people and other species to thrive now and into the future.” He closed by discussing opportunities for faculty and the Senate, including those related to scholarship and teaching (e.g., courses, certificates, minors, and maybe a major); supporting policies and programs that support solution-based learning around sustainability; encouraging administration to move towards
centralization of non-mission, support functions; and supporting the 2028 Sustainability Plan.

**Senate Resolution 2021/22_02, Merit and Retirement**

Senator James Moore presented Resolution 21-22-02 resolving that the Academic Senate call upon the USC administration to reinstate merit pay increases forgone by faculty members in Fiscal Year 2021 and to pay 401(a) employer non-elective contributions to accounts withheld from faculty members during 2021. Moore suggested that the University has the means and obligation to pay increases and contributions, that faculty relied on promises made when accepting employment, and that faculty performed. Academic Vice President and President Elect Pecchenino proposed an alternative resolution to call upon administration to retain the merit portion and use the retirement portion to address the bottom quartile of the faculty’s salary problem, which has been acknowledged by administrators and faculty, to raise the salary floor and deal with compression issues. Following discussion of the resolution and proposed alternative resolution, Tambascia called for a vote.

*Motion to approve Resolution 21-22-02. Seconded and passed: 25 in favor, 4 opposed, and 7 abstentions.*

**Executive Board Projects and Priorities; Building Capacity**

This item was postponed.

**Adjournment**

Tambascia thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Devon Brooks
Secretary General of the Academic Senate