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2 **ACADEMIC SENATE**

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4 **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**
5 Special Meeting of the Academic Senate
6 December 10, 2018
7 McCarthy Honors College Multipurpose Room
8 4:30 – 6:30p.m.
9

10 **Present:** J. Ailshire, S. Altman, M. Apostolos, J. Armour, S. Asgharzadeh (virtually), F. Bar, Y. Bar-
11 Cohen, B. Belcher, C. Castro, D. Crombecque, R. Davila, E. Fife, S. Gibson (alternate for J. Cantiello),
12 A. Gilbert, D. Griffiths, E. Grossman, A. Imre, A. Justice (virtually), S. Little, R. Lonergan, J.
13 McLaughlin Gray (virtually), P.T. McNiff, M. Mohammadi, J. Parr, D. Pecchenino, M. Polikoff
14 (virtually), P. Rosenbloom, T. Tucker, A. Uyeshiro Simon, A. Wilcox
15 **Absent:** S. Ahmadi, T. Brun, L. Grazette, S. Gruskin, J. Israel, A. Mackay, R. Mackenzie, J. Musso, J.
16 Steele, S. Wickersheimer, E. Wojciak, G. Zada
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18
19 **AGENDA**

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21 Yaniv Bar-Cohen, Academic Senate President, called the meeting to order at 4:40pm.
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23 Bar-Cohen noted the purpose of the special meeting today was to discuss what actions, if any, the
24 Senate should take regarding the recent decision by Interim President Austin to end Dean James
25 Ellis’s (Marshall School of Business) term early. It was stated that we may not be able to discuss
26 whether the decision was right or wrong as we do not know all the facts, but may instead need to
27 focus on this event from a shared governance standpoint.
28

29 The Executive Board met with the Marshall Faculty Council just prior to this Senate meeting, and a
30 draft resolution will be presented to the Senate during this Senate meeting to get input.
31

32 **Discussion regarding the early termination of James Ellis as Dean of Marshall**

33 A timeline of the events was reviewed, and results of a survey conducted by the Marshall Faculty
34 Council since news of Dean Ellis’s early termination was reported (210 faculty members
35 responding in 48 hours). Faculty in Marshall were described as being very upset; Dean Ellis is very
36 well-liked by many faculty members, but Marshall faculty are most upset with the lack of
37 transparency in this process and with the way the decision was handled. It was clarified that
38 Marshall Faculty are in favor of culture change, but they are concerned with the process, fairness,
39 and shared governance. This was stated to have impacted feelings of trust within the Marshall
40 Faculty community.
41

42 It was debated how much involvement faculty should have in leadership changes. Some argued
43 Faculty input in every leadership decision may not be necessary, as some leaders may need to be
44 terminated due to very clear circumstances. However, a statement was also made that decision-
45 makers genuinely need to hear and understand the Faculty point of view in order to have
46 legitimate shared governance.
47

48 The legality of sharing certain types of information and how that can be balanced with
49 transparency was discussed. It was suggested that we can and often do use small groups of faculty

50 representation (committees, Faculty Councils, Senate, sanctioning panels) to promote
51 accountability without complete transparency to the greater community. This type of
52 representation would have been beneficial in the early termination of Dean Ellis.

53
54 The impact of this decision and previous events on the culture and working environment at USC
55 was discussed. It was argued that the stifling of information can have the opposite effect on the
56 culture change that we are trying to enact, as people in other schools are now concerned that
57 leadership in their own schools may change drastically as well.

58
59 The roles of the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) and Human Resources (HR) in these
60 investigations were discussed. Questions about reasonable, process-based, non-arbitrary
61 decisions were raised in regards to how conclusions and sanctions are decided.

62
63 **Discussion regarding possible Senate resolution**

64 A discussion was held to determine if and when a resolution from the Senate would be made, and
65 what the contents of such a resolution would be. There was general consensus that the resolution
66 needed to be voted on at this meeting.

67
68 There was discussion of the wording of the Resolution as well as a synopsis of the messages being
69 conveyed with the resolution.

70
71 First Point: **“We support the University of Southern California in its effort to improve the
72 institutional culture, including in diversity, equity and inclusion.”** It was discussed that the intent
73 of this phrase is to convey our general support for improving our culture in ways that include
74 valuing diversity, equity and inclusion.

75
76 Second Point: **“We recognize that Wanda Austin, as Interim President of the University of
77 Southern California, has the right and responsibility to advance this cause, including by
78 appointing and removing Deans.”** It was discussed that the intent of this phrase is to support
79 Wanda Austin in her right as Interim President to be the primary decision-maker in removing
80 James Ellis as Dean. Specifically, it emphasizes that as Interim President, she has the power and
81 obligation to make decisions regarding appointing and removing Deans. It also emphasizes that
82 neither the Board of Trustees nor outside donors should be making these types of decisions.

83
84 Third Point: **“However, we agree with the Marshall School Faculty that the decision concerning
85 Dean Ellis lacked shared governance and transparency as to the process.”** It was discussed that
86 the intent of this phrase is to support the Marshall Faculty in their concerns regarding the process
87 of Dean Ellis’s termination. The language was chosen to focus on governance and process as areas
88 of concern, as opposed to whether the decision was right or wrong because we did not have
89 sufficient information to assess the merits of the decision. The phrase “as to the process” was
90 added due to concerns that asking for “transparency” implied a wider release of confidential
91 information. There was no consensus that this can be demanded (or whether something effective
92 could be sent out broadly that did not violate confidentiality).

93
94 Original Fourth Point: was amended during the meeting via friendly amendment.
95 “It is critical moving forward that faculty consultation occur in the decision-making process, and
96 this is essential to trust, accountability, and a well-functioning university.” This point focuses on
97 the need for better processes going forward to include faculty in such decision-making that
98 impacts USC (such as a small group of Faculty set up to hear and discuss privileged information

99 about a potential Dean termination).

100

101 **Vote on friendly amendment to Fourth Point**

102 A friendly amendment was proposed to add “now and” to the sentence above. The addition of
103 these words was suggested to emphasize that, despite there not being a process already in place
104 for including the voice of Faculty, the lack of faculty input in the process of terminating Dean Ellis
105 was considered to be inconsistent with the significant conversations and messaging around the
106 importance of shared governance in recent months.

107

108 *Friendly amendment passed with 16 in favor, 12 opposed, and 1 abstention.*

109

110 Final sentence for resolution was therefore as follows:

111 **“It is critical now and moving forward that faculty consultation occur in the decision-making
112 process, and this is essential to trust, accountability, and a well-functioning university.”**

113

114 **Vote on Resolution 18/19-04**

115 *Motion was made by the Executive Board of the Senate; passed unanimously with 29 in favor, 0
116 opposed, and 0 abstentions.*

117

118 **Adjournment**

119 Meeting was adjourned at 6:16pm.

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121

122 Respectfully submitted,

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126

127 Ashley Uyeshiro Simon

128 Secretary General of the Academic Senate

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