

To: USC Academic Senators
USC Academic Unit Faculty Council Chairs

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Subject: Committee on Information Services Annual Report (AY 2021-22)

Committee on Information Services Charge

The Committee on Information Services (CIS) is a standing committee whose members are jointly appointed by the Office of the Provost and the Academic Senate to represent the information technology needs and perspectives of USC's faculty. It is charged with advising the Academic Senate and the Provost on a variety of issues related to the academic technology infrastructure of the university community. The committee is meant to be forward looking by identifying and proposing priorities in the examination and evaluation of IT services in light of changing and emerging needs. The committee advises the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Academic Senate on issues related to the university's enterprise information technology infrastructure, information resources, services, and technologies and technology-related policies with an impact on academic matters, including research and teaching. The CIO apprises the committee of current issues and opportunities associated with these resources and endeavors, and committee members share this information with the university's faculty through the Academic Senate on a regular basis. CIS also coordinates with the USC Libraries on matters of joint concern.

Specific Charge for 2021-2022

The committee's charge is to identify the IT needs of USC faculty and students. Outcomes of the committee's work have included providing feedback on planned upgrades of USC network infrastructure, technology-related policies, and information resources and services, as well as recommending the use of new technology to support teaching and research. The committee advises the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Academic Senate and coordinates with USC Libraries on matters of joint concern. Given the circumstances of the pandemic, USC went from an institution with a small percentage of on ground learning and teaching to 100% online learning and teaching in the span of one week. This committee has explored a year of innovative teaching and learning by faculty and students alike and seeks to understand how we can incorporate the tools we have acquired to deliver the most equitable and inclusive student learning experience possible.

Discussion Topics for 2021-2022

Based on an internal committee survey at the beginning of the 2021-2022 year, three subcommittees were formed. 70% of committee members were interested in topic 1, 88.9% in topic 2, and 62.5% in topic 3.

1. **Technology-enhanced teaching, learning and advising:** *Can we define the characteristics of a superior online student learning experience, identify the resources needed to achieve it, and establish benchmarks to measure our progress to those objectives? What is the role of the on-line modality in the future?*
2. **Classroom and Educational Technology:** *What type of support (equipment, licenses, software, and service) should be provided to provide the optimal technology-enhanced classroom learning experience?*
3. **Academic Integrity:** *What are the appropriate tools/recommendations to achieve this in both the physical, online, and hybrid classroom?*

Subcommittee Efforts

Technology, Enhanced Teaching, Learning and Advising

The topic of Hybrid teaching has been discussed both in our subcommittee, and more broadly in Informal Senator Discussions hosted by the Academic Senate Executive board, particularly on April 26, 2022 where thirty minutes was devoted to this topic. Senators from a dozen schools posed questions and shared comments in that session:

- What are students trying to get out of the college experience now?
- Faculty reported a plummeting experience. Students may like it, but not sure that it's good for them. More students than are covid affected are showing up in the zoom class with screens blackened out. Demoralizing for faculty and brings down the overall engagement of the class.
- Ability to choose hybrid attendance has impacted in person attendance and contributed to a sense of a student's invisibility and impact in the learning space.
- Federated model of classroom management leads to a disparate, inequitable experience across schools.
- Different programs even within academic units may need different solutions
- Faculty feeling they would like a sense of direction from the university. How will these modalities affect the future of enrollments?
- Huge implications for being fully online and fully on campus.

CIS Survey on Hybrid Teaching and Learning

Beginning in March 2022, the CIS surveyed USC's faculty to identify where additional resources should be allocated to support faculty delivering hybrid class sessions. In particular, the CIS wanted to identify where additional resources should be allocated to support faculty delivering hybrid class sessions where some students are in the classroom and others participate remotely.

The survey launch was delayed for over a month – the CIS was not permitted to use the all-faculty listserv and instead had to rely on asking the campus' faculty council chairs to distribute the survey to their respective faculty – so data collection has been hampered. At the time of this report, 254 faculty have completed the survey. CIS continues to work to find alternative avenues to distribute our survey to all remaining faculty.

While the survey is still active and additional data is being collected, **initial results show that faculty support for hybrid teaching is not universal.** When asked “[w]hat recommendations would you like to share with the Provost, Academic Senate, and your school to improve the experience for faculty or students via hybrid teaching in the future,” the most popular response so far was “DON'T!” (n=49) followed by “make it a choice or option but not a requirement” (n=32).

When it comes to hybrid teaching, there is an apparent tension due to lack of “clear expectations for the students from the university of the level of engagement expected in a remote or hybrid model.” According to one faculty member,

We have been told by the Provost that classes are expected to be in-person except for those approved by curriculum committees, and that remote attendance should be reserved for continuity of education. However, this is not the reality on the ground. Students are demanding flexible remote attendance, and unless the Provost disallows hybrid classrooms, they will choose to attend remotely whenever it suits them. I have tried adjusting my policies around remote attendance, but it's a losing battle--the genie is out of the bottle. I think we must accept that hybrid classrooms are here to stay. But to make this work, faculty need better technology that is easier to operate, less glitchy, more robust in terms of number of cameras, with the ability to project the professor, slides, and students; better training, both in terms of technology and hybrid pedagogy; and better staff support--on the level of Viterbi's DEN classrooms. This will be an expensive investment if we are to do it right.

Additional data from the initial survey results are attached as an appendix.

The Provost and the Senate might consider these questions:

- To what extent do we want the Provost or the Senate to set policy on hybrid teaching? What sorts of guidance or policy are we asking for and what are we asking them to stay out of?
- How can CIS play a role in this discussion going forward?

Classroom and Educational Technology

The Classroom and Educational Technology Committee, working in collaboration with the University Technology Council's Classroom Technology Committee and ITS Learning Environments staff, created a recommended list of classroom and auditorium equipment. This list, which includes screens, cameras, microphones, and more, is the *minimum* set of equipment that must be in USC's classrooms and auditoriums to support both in-person and remote instruction.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/17of1ZDo5X8h3ZSEs-pAh0oXtx8SaPNTwfw9GWzJxXw4/edit?usp=sharing>

The Senate might consider these questions:

- Should CIS, the Senate, or the Provost poll the students who registered in one school in the 2022 spring semester but who took classes in other schools to determine if the disparity between their home classrooms and the 'visitors' classrooms was significant, noteworthy, or impeded their learning?
- If schools or academic units do not meet these minimum equipment standards in their classrooms and auditoriums, should there be a penalty (e.g., not allowing students from external schools to enroll in classes taught in those rooms)? Action should be taken with the acknowledgement that timelines will be important to set.

Academic Integrity

CIS will focus on this topic in the next academic year.

Conclusion

We hope these considerations advance IT equipment, support, and service equity across all 22 academic units and wish you a safe and joyful conclusion to the 2021-2022 academic year.

APPENDIX - Initial analysis of CIS Survey on Hybrid Teaching

Initial data from the CIS Survey seems to support the 4/26/22 conversation with Faculty Council Chairs. Here are a few of the questions and the data garnered from the survey:

From January 2020 until now, did you teach any of your classes in the hybrid format?

- 209 yes
- 41 no

Did you have a teaching assistant?

- 37 faculty reported that they always had a teaching assistant.
- 19 had one most of the time
- 27 had one about half the time
- 43 had one sometimes
- 124 never had one

The survey reviewed faculty teaching classes sized under 20, 21-50, 51-100 and over 101 students. Each size of class was responded to by all 254 faculty who took the survey.

Class sizes taught in the hybrid modality were reported:

- Spring 2021 - 171 (under 20), 183 (21-50), 47 (51-100) and 18 (over 101)
- Summer 2021 - 49 (under 20), 30 (21-50), 10 (51-100) and 4 (over 101)
- Fall 2021 - 198 (under 20), 196 (21-50), 158 (51-100) and 201 (over 101)
- Spring 2022 - 195 (under 20), 215 (21-50), 50 (51-100) and 18 (over 101)

Who designed and supported the classrooms? (Q7, Q11, Q15 and Q19)

- USC ITS Learning environments 25 (under 20), 21 (21-50), 12 (51-100), 3 (over 101)
- Local and School ITs 44 (under 20), 47 (21-50), 27 (51-100), 10 (over 101)
- Both 12 (under 20), 9 (21-50), 3 (51-100), 2 (over 101)
- I don't know 36 (under 20), 18 (21-50), 11 (51-100), 8 (over 101)

Routine problems reported (Q9, Q13, Q7, Q21) according to class size were fairly similar across the four sized classrooms. Most notable in these questions were the number of people reporting that they never had problems or only sometimes had problems.

When issues arose how frequently did you contact ITS? (Q10, Q14, Q18, Q22)

- By far the most common response was sometimes or never
- Never - my past support experiences have not been helpful or no support staff assistance was available 6 (under 20), 4 (21-50), 3 (51-100), 3 (over 101)
- Never - I was able to resolve the problem myself - 29 (under 20), 17 (21-50), 10 (51-100), 5 (over 101)

Question: “How did you prepare to teach in a hybrid manner? What resources did you rely on? What training did you receive?”

Many of the responses suggest that the respondent may be responding with respect to online rather than hybrid teaching. This is, possibly, related to the large number of individuals who indicated that they received no training. Many imply considerable resentment of being asked to take on this task without much of a training opportunity.

Most of the responses here are not very specific—often referring generally to training by university wide groups or the respective school. A number report having had previous experience teaching in the hybrid format, although some of these may be confusing the term “hybrid” with online.

Respondents generally do not report a programmatic approach consisting of different phases (e.g., training followed by personal research and planning). In general, responses can be grouped into the following categories.

- Training—USC ITS, CET, or other university wide source or non-specific
- School level training
- IT support
- Support from other faculty or TAs
- Adaptation of online only teaching strategies or relied on previous hybrid teaching experience
- Research, self-training, or innovations
- Specific tools
- Other
- None

Reflecting upon your preparation, pedagogy, teaching, and peer and student evaluations, what were the most positive outcomes from your hybrid class sessions?

- Student Continued Learning n=49/138 (36%) (Choice to attend where/when they could)
- No positive outcomes n=23/138 (17%)
- Faculty Benefit n=16 (12%) (Recorded Lectures, reduced burden for make up, rose to the occasion)

What could have improved your interactions with IT or classroom support?

- Positive Interaction (35%) (IT is great or n/a) n=42/122- Marshall++
- Personnel n=34 (28%) (In need of TA/Tech person, faster response times, show up, answer phone)
- Improved/ Maintained Technology & Classrooms n=24 (20%) room checks, audio updates, functioning technology