

USC Academic Senate

Academic Senate Newsletter

October 2022

Dear Colleagues,

To keep you informed of the work of the Academic Senate, this newsletter from the Executive Board (EB) provides updates on the Senate's activities during the month of October and shares the agenda for the upcoming official Senate meeting.

Announcements

- The next Academic Senate meeting will be held Wednesday, October 19, 2022, 2:00 - 4:00 PST in a hybrid format: in MCB 101 for in-person attendees as well as on Zoom. Find the meeting agenda [here](#); the meeting agenda includes Zoom meeting information (Meeting ID: 932 6631 8155 Passcode: 655628). If attending via Zoom, please use your USC Shibboleth sign-in. All faculty are welcome to attend monthly Senate meetings. If you are planning on attending the October Senate meeting, please review materials beforehand which are available on the [Monthly Meetings page](#) of the Senate website and linked here: [2022 Security and Fire Safety Report](#). We are excited to meet and engage in the work of shared governance.

EB Activity Update

The EB met weekly during October to address a range of issues, including the following: collecting governance resources in a shared drive to support Faculty Councils; offering input on USC's approach to the federal mandate to increase Open Access publishing; organizing next steps for incorporating changes in the Faculty Handbook; addressing changes to the University Student-Athlete Advisory Council (USAAC) (such as expanding membership) as it transitions from a university committee to a Joint Committee of the Academic Senate; strategizing on parking, access to food vending, and other issues at the USC Soto campus; inquiring about the enrollment census and early budget implications; hearing updates on status of Dean searches; reviewing updates on the Health Sciences reorganization; discussing how the Board of Trustees views its role in relation to faculty and the administration with the Board of Trustees Chair, Suzanne Nora Johnson; planning the October Senate meeting; and meeting regularly with the Provost and other senior leadership.

Highlights of Meetings

- The [September Academic Senate meeting](#) was held Wednesday, September 21, 2:00 - 4:00 PM PST. After approval of the [May meeting minutes](#),
 - Academic Senate President Dan Pecchenino offered welcoming [remarks](#) and introduced top Senate priorities for the year: strengthening Faculty Councils; assessing Senate structures; continuing culture change work across the university; and centering faculty in discussions about changes in research, curriculum, pedagogy, clinical care, and administrative structures. He also announced a new Senate Compensation and Benefits Committee, which will bolster faculty councils in their efforts seeking greater transparency about salary distributions, merit increases, and similar matters.

- President Folt offered an overview of positive items, such as strong enrollment, philanthropy, and school rankings. President Folt continued with extended updates on faculty and staff compensation and faculty hiring. On faculty compensation, President Folt reported investing \$110 million last year to improve faculty salaries, including raising the base salary for full time faculty. President Folt emphasized that the university was committed to continuing increasing faculty compensation over the next three to five years. On faculty hiring, President Folt shared the success of the Provost's Diversity Fund, a \$50 million fund instituted by former Provost Michael Quick to increase faculty diversity through supporting faculty hiring and retention. In three years, Provost Zukoski exhausted the fund. President Folt shared some data on the fund's utilization, including that 89% of accepted offers went to racially underrepresented faculty and 60% went to women and gender nonbinary faculty. This fund helped the university achieve one of the goals of the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force (REDI) [report](#), to hire one hundred new faculty of color. President Folt concluded with reporting the success and growth of the undergraduate free tuition accessibility initiative.
- Provost Zukoski provided important updates on athletics and graduate student debt. He shared that USC's move to the Big 10 athletic conference comes with a number of positive changes, such as the launch of the University Student Athlete Advisory Committee (USAAC), which brings faculty governance to how the university works with athletes and their academic programs; and the Big 10 academic alliance, in which the universities confer on shared problems. On graduate debt, Provost Zukoski called on schools to consider the cost of their professional and graduate programs relative to the degree and noted some schools have this work underway. Following Provost Zukoski's remarks, President Folt and Provost Zukoski responded to Senators' questions for an extended period.
- Director of the Office of Academic Integrity, Jacques Zalma, and Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs from the Office of Community Expectations, Daren Mooko, introduced their two offices which have replaced the now-closed office of SJACS (Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards). Director Zalma described the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) as focused on student academic behavior while the [Office of Community Expectations](#) focuses on non-academic conduct. These changes were made with the goal of addressing student conduct more efficiently, effectively, while being less adversarial.
- Representatives from the Employee Benefits Advisory Committee - EBAC chair, Patti Riley; Vice President of Finance, Greg Condell; and Assistant Vice President of USC Health Plans, Alice Chen - reported changes to [USC health benefits](#) in preparation for upcoming open enrollment.

The full schedule of official Senate meetings for the year and meeting details are included on the [Senate website](#). Meetings are from 2:00 to 4:00 PM PST. All faculty are welcome and encouraged to attend.

We welcome feedback on these issues directly (acsenate@usc.edu) and encourage you to reach out to us or your Faculty Council with concerns, questions, or suggestions. Be well and we will see you soon.

Sincerely,

The Academic Senate Executive Board