ACADEMIC SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Meeting of November 16, 2022
Hybrid Meeting
2:00 - 4:00 pm PST


AGENDA

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

Approval of Minutes
President Pecchenino presented the September and October Academic Senate meeting minutes for approval.

Motion to approve September and October minutes. Seconded and passed.

September minutes: 27 in favor, 0 opposed, with 2 abstentions.
October minutes: 34 in favor, 0 opposed, with 2 abstentions.

Announcements
- ITS will be making upgrades to the Faculty Hall including additional microphones and an additional camera to the room.
- President Pecchenino acknowledged Connie Roque on her retirement at the end of the year after 28 years of working for the Senate at USC. Connie will join the Senate in May for the end of the year celebration to properly celebrate her.

Introduction of Nominating Committee ballot and voting procedures: Margo Apostolos, Academic VP
Academic Vice President Apostolos described the purpose and makeup of the Nominating Committee and its importance. She explained the structure of the committee which includes the four nominees that will be elected at this meeting along with four members of the Executive Board: Pecchenino (President, Dornsife), Apostolos (Academic Vice President, Kaufman), Young (Secretary General, Libraries), and Tambascia (Immediate Past President, Rossier). She shared her plan to meet with the members in order to identify qualified candidates from across the campus who will be placed on the ballot to serve on the Executive Board for 2023-2024. Apostolos also explained that anyone, including those not on the Nominating Committee, can recommend themselves or others to a slate. Apostolos presented nominees for the Nominating Committee: Devon Brooks (Social Work), Steve Hsu (Dornsife), Clifford Neuman (Viterbi), and Julie Nyquist (Keck). President Pecchenino explained the in-person ballot voting process and Secretary General Young launched the electronic ballot for Senators online. All four nominees were elected to serve on the Nominating Committee, with each receiving a majority of the vote. Results of the elections were announced at the end of the meeting.

Discussion with Vice President of Research Ishwar Puri and Interim Vice President of Research Strategy and Innovation Steven Moldin about USC Stevens and other research issues

Ishwar Puri, Vice President of Research, discussed USC Stevens and the Research Committee Report issued last year. He explained the Bayh-Dole Act which gives universities that have conducted federally funded research the first right to commercialize intellectual property (IP). If the university does not want to commercialize it, inventors can go back to the federal government and claim the IP. This led to the establishment of university tech transfer offices, of which USC was a pioneer. These university tech transfer offices and legal assess whether or not a creative work falls under the Bayh-Dole Act. If it doesn’t, the intellectual property goes back to the creative artist, who can then use it to present it at galleries, as a work of art, etc. Puri then addressed issues brought up through the Research Committee around tech transfer and about entrepreneurship. There are three main frustrations that have arisen:

- It often takes several years to create a work and the artist/researcher would like to know before they have done the work, rather than after, whether or not the work will come back to them as IP.
- Tech transfer offices often work on determining different positions to value startups. Startups prefer tech transfer offices to take equity positions but these offices are often reluctant to do so.
- Tech transfer offices typically have a limited budget to patent, which can be very costly.

The issue with USC Stevens is that there is an expectation that it should be self-sufficient but USC hasn’t had enough shots on goal for it to be successful. Puri explained that we must have a different way of thinking so that we can balance revenues with expenditures. Another issue is that Stevens has become engaged in more than gaining licenses for tech transfer but also acting as a conduit for entrepreneurship and innovation. Puri explained that when he arrived at USC, he suggested that there should be both research strategy and innovation (incubation of startups and tech transfer) and shared that we are on the cusp of some changes to expand and add these capabilities.

Steven Moldin, Interim Vice President of Research Strategy and Innovation, explained his role and goals for his office, in particular with respect to the committee report as well as transparency.

Pecchenino asked for a timeline for a report on work. Puri asked for time due to the consultation process and budgeting constraints.
A senator asked where the Al Mann (AMI) structure fit in this innovation, infrastructure and generating novel IP? Puri stated that we would know more within a week.

A senator shared that the discussion around innovation was not fully encompassing around the non-STEM fields and suggested this is something worth further expansion. Puri shared that USC is working to develop a mechanism to address issues around creative arts.

Discussion with Chief Information Officer Doug Shook about the work on finding a new LMS and other ITS issues

CIO Shook explained the process for assessing the LMS. His office would like to do an RFP to get bids for a new LMS. His office submitted a proposal for funding for the current FY, but it did not make the financial cut. It will be resubmitted for the next FY. President Pecchenino asked about our obligation for the current LMS contract with Blackboard. Shook explained the LMS would likely go on a year to year contract starting next year. Shook shared that the university should be prepared to spend $25 million, including converting current courses. Student workers may be used to complete manual work and cut down costs.

A senator asked how they are adding faculty voices in which platform to adopt. Shook responded that there was a year-long process to incorporate faculty and student voices including surveys and meetings. A Senator asked about any Blackboard updates coming out. Shook noted that they are rolling out an accessibility module (Blackboard Ally) in order to meet the needs for greater accessibility for people with visual and auditory limitations.

Shook then reported that we are facing $1 million increase yearly of storage fees due to a change in how Google is pricing data storage. In order to avoid the fee, we would need to get our storage down from 7 to 1.5 petabytes. This may be accomplished by removing unused accounts. Shook also addressed issues over work on the use of encryption. A Senator asked about quarantined emails. Shook said they are working with Proofpoint to retune blocks and reroute non-nefarious spam. Shook directed the body to view the LMS Assessment 2022 PowerPoint located on the Senate website.

Discussion with Patricia Hoen and Ben Bell about Conflict of Interest Policies

Hoen and Bell from the Office of Culture, Ethics, and Compliance presented a training on Conflict of Interest including changes to policies. Pecchenino asked to clarify “the gray zone,” in particular around consulting or things that are closer to the line where disclosure might be in question. This is particularly the case with Humanities and multidisciplinary fields rather than STEM fields where there are external reporting mechanisms already in place. Marty Levine recommended that when a faculty is in doubt that they report and get clearance. A Senator asked if there was a streamlined way to contact key officers on the website. Bell agreed to make those changes since their titles do not exactly match up. A Senator asked if there was someone to consult if there are questions about what should be disclosed. Hoen shared that faculty can contact compliance@usc.edu.

Senate conversation about ensuring engagement of Deans with Faculty Councils

President Pecchenino introduced a guided discussion in efforts of normalizing or mandating certain forms of consultation between FCs and Deans. Pecchenino shared that there will be a discussion on Friday with FC chairs specifically on minimum standards within bylaws and what could be in bylaws or other governing documents. He added context around previous work as it related to changes to the Faculty Handbook pertaining to faculty involvement in decision making in consultation with the Deans. The Executive Board’s intention is to restart this work via three possible strategies:
Focus on the Faculty Handbook

The Senate could put forward a resolution calling for certain requirements for FC engagement from the Deans

Working with the Faculty Council chairs group to develop a collective strategy for general engagement with their Deans

A Senator shared that administrative buy-in was necessary for success and a resolution may not yield helpful results. Another senator asked for clarification about parallel groups and asked why the EB felt the need for a separate meeting of FC chairs if the purpose of the Academic Senate was to come together to discuss governance issues. Pecchenino explained that this came from a recommendation from the Taskforce on Faculty Councils. The purpose is a convening of FC chairs, who have very particular roles that are different from other senators, to talk to other chairs and work on strategies where they see similar problems within their school. The expectation is for chairs to bring these discussions back with their councils.

Adjournment

Pecchenino adjourned the meeting at 4:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christal Young
Secretary General of the Academic Senate