Meeting of January 18, 2023
Hybrid Meeting
2:00 - 4:00 pm PST


AGENDA

Call to Order
Academic Senate President Pecchenino called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

Approval of Minutes
Secretary Young presented the December Academic Senate meeting minutes for approval.

Motion to approve December minutes. Seconded and passed. 25 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions.

Faculty Awards Nominations: Julie Nyquist, Chair of the Faculty Awards Committee
Julie Nyquist, Chair of the Senate Awards Committee, announced the Call for Nominations for two awards for this year. Senator Nyquist encouraged councils to nominate colleagues from their schools who may have been previously overlooked but have done great service on behalf of the faculty within their respective schools. The Distinguished Faculty Service Award honors faculty service related to governance through a life-time of service (typically 10 or more years). The Walter Wolf Award is bestowed upon a USC faculty member for defense and advocacy for academic freedom or other manifestations of social conscience. Nominations are due March 3.

Academic Administrative Assistant Position
Initial phone screens have been completed and interviews will begin soon to fill the position of Academic Administrative Assistant. Connie Roque will return temporarily as a resource employee for limited hours per week.
Discussion with Interim Provost Elizabeth Graddy

This semester, the Provost office will continue to focus on supporting the faculty toward advancing academic goals. Provost Graddy is working with her leadership team around the beginnings of a set of projects:

1. Semester at Tech: The Provost’s office is looking to leverage space at the Silicon Beach Campus. They would like to look at developing a program for students focused on technology and innovation. Senior VP for Research and Innovation Ishwar Puri will lead the project.

2. Student Success: This project will answer the questions: “What are we doing and what can we do more to support the success of our students at USC?” This includes academic achievement, career outcomes, retention and graduation rates. VP for Academic Programs Andy Stott will lead this effort and President Pecchenino will also serve on this group.

3. Postdocs: The goal of this project is to improve our support of postdocs including compensation, benefits, career planning, etc. Interim Vice Provost Kelvin Davies will lead this program along with the Postdoctoral affairs office.

4. Data Management and Governance: This team will take a hard look at how we manage data within the Provost’s office and across schools including ways to improve efficiency and operations, and will consider how to develop a robust data governance structure. Mark Todd will lead this effort.

Q&A:

Q1: A senator asked whether the data management project would include more data transparency to the schools. The senator stated that one of the most difficult tasks for many Senate committees is to collect data that the Provost’s office might already have.

A1: Provost Graddy explained that one of the challenges is that, often, no one has the data readily available. Part of the issue is that we don’t have good data systems and another is ensuring that the data they do have is in the format that is needed. Provost Graddy acknowledged that her office should do a better job about communicating what they do have.

Q2: A senator asked for additional details about leveraging our space at the Silicon Beach campus.

A2: There is another building and that we want something of substance there and the “something,” we’re still developing.

Q3: A senator asked about seeing an announcement for a new Vice President for Research and Innovation.

Q3: Provost Graddy did not have any additional information and deferred to Senior VP Of Research and Innovation, Ishwar Puri.

Q4: A senator asked whether the USC Silicon Beach campus was intended to be just an additional site or whether it is an opportunity to network with existing businesses in the Silicon Beach area that will allow students to get engaged in projects where faculty are already networked with some of those companies.

A4: The intent is to take advantage of those organizations. Provost Graddy shared that the idea is a collaborative structure, a place to introduce our students to industry through internships, and other kinds of experiences. The senator added that there are a number of faculty already engaged part time in the community and that it seemed to be a natural fit to pull in those faculty who are already working with the businesses in those areas.

Q5: President Pecchenino asked if we would see a change in the kind of relationship between the Provost office and Research.

A5: Provost Graddy’s office already works closely with the Office of Research around areas where, for example, faculty affairs would overlap with research. Provost Graddy also shared that she,
Senior VP for Health Affairs, Steve Shapiro, and Senior VP Puri will meet regularly around issues that would normally have been solely in the Provost office.

Q6: A senator asked if the low number of postdocs was intentional and whether the project would expand the number of postdocs.
A6: One of the President’s goals is to double research. It would be impossible to double work-funded research without substantially increasing the number of postdocs. It’s time to lift our conversation and elevate our focus and part of that will be that we’d like this to be a good place to be for postdocs to come.

Q7: A senator asked about an update on the GE revamp.
A7: VP of Academic Affairs Andy Stott is working on it. Provost Graddy recommended bringing in VP Stott to provide an update.

Q8: How are we addressing holistic admissions for sustainability? Is this short term or will we be doing it for a while?
A8: There are no plans to change and we are 100% committed to that. The only change is adding early action as an option but nothing else will change. We’ve received for Fall 2023 over 80,000 for undergraduate first year students. Provost Graddy recommended bringing Kedra Ishop to speak about admissions.

Q9: How is our enrollment looking? Are we concerned about enrollments?
A9: Our enrollment continues to be strong within the context. We had two unusually large undergraduate classes that came through during Covid and we are in the process of getting them through the system and leveling back out at approximately 20,000 undergraduates and 28,000 graduate students. We did see some fluctuation in graduate enrollments in some schools during the last 2 years but that has stabilized.

Q10: President Pecchenino asked post-Covid, are we seeing any trends within the health system that we should be talking about?
A10: We have been upgraded from negative to stable in outlook by two bond rating agencies, Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. That’s a strong signal in support of our financial performance. This was based on 1) how we managed Tyndal, 2) how we managed the pandemic, and 3) the re-engineering that we did around institutional governance with relationship to the board. Relative to the industry, we are doing well. The Health Care System is currently underperforming and they’re watching it closely.

Q11: Are there any updates for graduate applicants?
A11: Provost Graddy didn’t have any updates for Fall 2023 but Spring compared to last year, looks good.

Q12: What issues do you need Senate input on?
A12: Provost Graddy expressed that there’s not much she wouldn’t need faculty input but nothing immediately comes to mind.

Q13: Do you feel that the mechanisms that are in place for faculty input are sufficient and appropriate?
A13: We need multiple avenues. The right forums and right avenues depend on the questions that are involved.

Q14: Do you feel there is sufficient input on your leadership team from the Medical School?
A14: There is no direct connection nor does there need to be. Senior VP Shapiro and Provost Graddy are both committed to making sure that nothing falls through the cracks with this new structure. It’s important that we move toward an implementation of this new structure where the health schools are reporting to Senior VP Shapiro.
Updates from Faculty Councils on their Fall activities and discussions

Cinematic Arts: Richard Lemarchand - The duties of the Council is to discuss paid leaves, promotions of RTPC. They are in the process of the internal reviews of their division chairs. They are also forming a committee to review and potentially revise and update their process for reviewing the chairs of the divisions. They have been getting oriented to the work that the Senate is doing in bringing together Faculty Council leadership across the schools. They’ve begun to look back at the bylaws. They recently established a system of co-chairs. These appointments will be staggered. The goal is to increase continuity of knowledge about how the FC works and what it does. They’ve been discussing matters of equity in salaries with the SCA dean’s office. The deans office has been working proactively to address disparities in compensation across faculty at equivalent levels.

Gould: Scott Altman - The council has spent a considerable amount of the year trying to revamp their review process. This has been a tense topic that they’ve been working on for a couple of years. There’s never been any public guidelines and the faculty saw it as unduly discretionary and insufficiently transparent. Faculty are never told their merit scores at the end of the merit review process in the law school and, that too, the faculty found insufficiently transparent. Like many review processes, they don’t go visit people’s classroom and observe their teaching. For that reason, some faculty thought that it was an insufficiently accurate process. At the same time, other faculty believe that raises are often small, differences between raises are often small, and that devoting a huge amount of faculty energy to revamping their process and to conducting merit review was a waste of time that they ought to better spend their time on doing teaching and scholarship and not evaluating it. They have submitted a proposal to make small improvements which they are experimenting with this coming year.

President Pecchenino asked why the merit review had not been shared. Senator Altman stated that the process has been this way since he began 35 years ago. The thought behind it was to think clearly about ideas rather than simply to give faculty a number. It was meant to be a helpful process in which faculty would hear from the Dean constructive suggestions about how to make improvements, based on discussions of the committee. The faculty mostly thinks that sharing scores is a good idea.

Keck: Grace Kung - One challenge is that there are over 2000 faculty and it’s very heterogenous to different departments. ⅔ faculty council is clinical, ⅓ in basic science. They are not involved with merit reviews and are not involved in budgetary decisions. They have a website that is somewhat updated and if someone wants to submit anonymous feedback, there is a section on the website page that is anonymous by default that only the FC sees. This past year, they conducted a faculty survey about teaching responsibilities to their faculty. They are working on coming up with faculty recognition awards to recognize faculty in different areas such as teaching, mentoring, etc.

President Pecchenino suggested that the FC think about what are the questions that are emerging from the faculty administratively around how this is working moving forward.

Thornton: Sean Nye - They are currently awaiting the announcement of their new Dean. They conducted a climate survey in the Fall to identify different aspects to be working on. There is a lot of transition with losing staff and concerns regarding tech support. They have been considering more communication between the staff council and faculty council to make sure that those activities are ongoing.

Dworak-Peck: Tracie Kirkland - The Council has had great support from the interim Dean and the Dean’s office. They have prioritized work on their Faculty guidebook over the past year. The current 2021 guidebook was approved by faculty but not by the Provost office. As such, they are
working to finalize their governance document. The Council is also trying to assimilate as they prepare to transition under the Health Science. There is uncertainty about next steps.

**Sol Price:** Rosalie Pacula - This year, the Council is largely focused on reviewing the government documents and bylaws and updating them to reflect some of the new processes that the Dean would like to implement that they support as well as fix things in light of the new structure within the school. One of the biggest things that they are tackling is more memory within the FC. The term is currently a single year for everyone so there is not a lot of institutional memory from year to year. The FC is seeking to improve transparency on some of the processes related to the Dean's decisions on budgeting, and to some extent his strategic initiatives. The Dean has instituted a faculty newsletter which he seeks feedback from the Council before distribution.

**USC Libraries:** Andy Rutkowski - There are over 60 librarians spread out across the university. The Council’s goal is to bring together these librarians across these various locations. Their number one priority this year is conducting work around the new library leader search. They conducted an activity with their faculty to generate a report to share with the search committee in terms of what they’re looking for in a new leader and ensuring that the process in transition to a new Dean would be smooth. They are also strategizing to work more closely with the Dean’s cabinet in this process. Other goals for this year include improving their faculty mentoring program and general onboarding resources. They’ve centered discussions around equity, diversity, inclusion at their faculty meetings. There is an EDI tracker to encourage faculty and staff to share with others and center that discussion at their meetings. They seek to collaborate, as regularly as possible, with the Libraries Staff Council. Other goals include salary benchmarking, merit review process, and improving how they share information. The Libraries is anticipating work with/in the Big 10 Academic Alliance, as the Libraries already have a big connection.

**Updates on Fall activities of Executive Board**

The Senate’s Compensation and Benefits committee launched and met earlier this month. It is chaired by Paul Adler and TJ McCarthy. They discussed goals and processes and what the committee would do, especially in relation to faculty compensation, and especially now given SB1162.

Jim Clements shared that the Dornsife committee met to discuss goals and their concern is getting this information. He suggested it’s a good time to ask the Administration to make it standard to release this information for all jobs and titles within their department. President Pecchenino stated that the resolution should be clear and have a concrete ask that acknowledges the complexity that exists within any given school.

President Pecchenino began a conversation regarding ChatGPT concerns from faculty across the university. He asked what, if anything, are senators hearing within their schools about concerns about the technology? What do we actually want said or done in relation to this? The CIS Committee has begun to look at ChatGPT and academic integrity. A conversation ensued around events and conversations happening around campus to discuss these ChatGPT and other AI concerns. Another question was posed about what we are using writing to assess. President Pecchenino shared a concept that former Provost, Chip Zukowski talked about in terms of de-stressing education and assessment and what are we actually using different assessment tools for?

**Discussion to generate Senate questions for Provost search**

There are 2 EB members on the Provost search. President Pecchenino will participate later in the process. President Pecchenino started a conversation to gather questions that we’d like the committee to ask potential candidates.
1. Moving into the Big 10, what is the importance of the graduate and postdoc programs. In terms of standins as a research institution, does the provost view it as an important part of their job to consider the standing of doctoral programs not just undergraduate because that’s where we get a lot of our revenue.

2. What do they think the Administration’s role is in handling the decline and interest in humanities and arts and sciences degrees. In particular, humanities.

3. Support for faculty, and training.

4. Intentionality with recruiting and retaining diverse faculty.

5. Addressing the role of nursing in the current climate. Level of commitment to compensation and support for the faculty.

6. CTAL report - perspective on teaching and how to reward it.

7. What disruptive innovations does this future provost have to bring faculty together across schools, ie. translational sciences.

8. Working with faculty and faculty governance. Experience and reflections on previous relationships.

9. Ideas on strengthening faculty councils and faculty governance with novel ideas they bring from their experience elsewhere

10. Reviewing and assessing tenured faculty contracts. Compare to their own contracts.

Closing Remarks
A senator asked about revisions to the Faculty handbook. The committee is working on it and they are thinking about it from a bigger perspective of how to improve the process.

Adjournment
President Pecchenino adjourned the meeting at 4:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Christal Young
Secretary General of the Academic Senate