

ACADEMIC SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

April 17, 2024
UPC/Hybrid Meeting
2:00 - 4:00 pm PST

Present (Senate Members): S. Altman, M. Andersen, M. Apostolos, M. Aranda, M. Bayiz, D. Becker, M. Bodie, G. Prieto Botana, K. Carlson, M. Chatterjee, J. Dinalo, N. Duquette, C. El-Haddad, S. Faris, D. S. Grimes, S. Gruskin, S. Hsu, K. Imagawa, S. Kim, M. Kong, B. Lemgruber, J. Lin, L. Matchison, J. Matsusaka, C. Neuman, S. Schepens Niemiec, S. Nye, L. Olvera, D. Pecchenino, M. Philadelphia, S. Rao, A. Samkian, A. Siegel, L. Turcotte, A. Tzoytzoyrakos, A. Yang, C. Young

Guests (Senate Members alternates & invited guests): A. Cheung (Chief of Staff, Provost Office) D. Armstrong, J. Dopheide, Provost A. Guzman, M. Just, (Dean of USC Libraries), C. Kane, B. Kim (SVP and General Counsel), G. Kung, M. Levine (Vice Provost and Senior Advisor to the Provost), G. Malhotra, M. Mather, R. Newmyer, K. Savla, S. Shroyer, E. Southers (ASVP of Safety and Risk Assurance)

AGENDA

Call to order: Margo K. Apostolos, Senate President

Academic Senate President Apostolos called the meeting to order at 2:05pm.

There were 2 student guest observers in attendance.

Discussion with Provost Andrew T. Guzman

- Addressed issue of decision regarding valedictorian. Provost Guzman explained the process for selecting a valedictorian. When the valedictorian was selected, the University received a number of responses. Convened series of meetings and made the decision that the valedictorian based on 3 factors:
 1. Was the content/tone/volume of the response received which was alarming
 2. Unique challenge of commencement with 65,000 on campus.
 3. Reality of global political status going on around the world.
- Errol Southers - Provided additional context regarding the decision that was made.
- Provost Guzman acknowledged that these are judgements in the light of information. I have a high degree of comfort that we made the right decision. We have a responsibility to the 70,000 people who will be attending commencement. There were 352 events that happened last year that the campus did not hear about.

- They have placed a high value in ensuring that our community has the opportunity to speak. The difference between other instances and the commencement speech was that in other instances, we were confident that we had gotten to a point where we were able to address and handle the situation.
- This person remains the valedictorian, this is not a withdrawal of her title. The only change is the speaking opportunity at commencement. This student remains a USC student until graduation and we will continue to provide her with support. Nothing has changed in that regard.

Q&A

- A faculty guest (John Rowe) asked why faculty had not been consulted. The Provost responded that the decision about keeping the campus safety is not a faculty governance issue. It would not have been appropriate for a broader conversation. They would not typically engage a faculty conversation on issues of safety.
- A senator (Anastassia Tzoytzoyrakos) asked if other options were considered for the valedictorian to deliver a speech in another format or another time. The Provost shared that the concern was that an alternative venue would still have turned the campus into a focal point for the expression of anger about her selection or focal point for other actions. They have not identified an option that would address that concern.
- A senator (Nick Duquette) asked what we are doing to make sure that our threat management processes and response to off-campus threats are revised to make sure that we are protected against threats. Provost Guzman responded that we try to identify sources of threat and try to address it; the challenge in this instance was a concern about danger and risk where we weren't able to address it. SVP Southers added that in previous instances, we were reacting to things that happened. When we have enough information to act preemptively and prevent something from happening, we act.
- A guest faculty (Jonathan Cohen) asked if the university would condemn threats disrupt commencement and reassure everyone that the university is not the type of university that caves to those types of pressure. Also, would the university affirm that their decision has nothing to do with Assna's political views and that nothing she said or done contravenes USC's core values. Provost Guzman reiterated that the students political views were not a factor and that they do not go against USC core values. He also condemned violence and threats to the smooth functioning of the institution, disrupting classes (not to protest) and that they have no place in this academic institution.
- A guest (Paul Adler) asked if the Provost endorsed the decision of the committee to select the valedictorian as there was ambiguity in the Provost's letter. Provost Guzman clarified that he accepted and endorsed the decision of the selection committee to

select the valedictorian and salutatorians. At a later time, there was a separate set of people, including the Provost, that made the decision that the valedictorian would not speak at commencement.

- A senator (Bruno Lembruger) shared in this polarized situation that by taking this decision, we may be facing backlash so what are we facing because of the decision that was made? Provost Guzman shared that there they were aware that it would create a response of its own but he is confident that it was the right decision. General Council Beyond-Soo Kim shared that they couldn't ignore the obligation they felt to do what they needed to do in the interest of campus safety.

Discussion with Melissa Just, Dean of the USC Libraries

- Dean Just provided introductory remarks and shared that she has met with the Joint Provost and Academic Senate Committee on USC Libraries. They are working on library communication and how we are communicating to the faculty and broader community the services, resources, and partnership opportunities that libraries offer as part of the academic mission of USC. There is always room for improvement. We're taking a look at the ways we're communicating, there are differing library messages. It is an environmental scan of the communication to identify what we can do differently.
- The main channel that we have to communicate in a passive way is through the website and we'll be taking a look at the site to see what services are available to support teaching, learning, and research. We plan to do a redesign within the next year or year and a half. Dean Just is open to feedback from faculty about what we can be doing more of, less of, etc.
- Dean Just can be reached at just@usc.edu

Q&A

- A senator (Sean Nye) asked are there updates on Special Collections and Exile Studies on how they might be evolving. Dean Just shared that there is an associate dean for special collections as well as a collections committee that advises the library on unique archival collections that may be of interest to the libraries. One concern is the lack of space. We balance wanting to get collections and the need to preserve them forever and make them available for use.
- Immediate Past President Pecchenino asked what is our area of greatest need, beyond space, for the library to be central to the research and teaching mission of the university. Dean Just shared that libraries are becoming increasingly involved with research at the university, with the preservation and delivery of research outputs. There are more and more mandates coming to faculty to make the products of their research available from the moment they have produced including journal articles and datasets

that help make research reproducible, making sure that we're developing the right relationships around the campus. The things the libraries does gets broader, not different.

Faculty Handbook Discussion

- Co-chairs John Matsusaka and Steve Bradforth presented revisions to the faculty handbook. Cover letter and revisions can be found on the Senate website under the [April 17, 2024 Meeting](#).
- A vote to approve the handbook revisions will be conducted at the May meeting.

Announcements

President Apostolos presented the candidates slate for the 2024-2025 Senate Executive Board She asked faculty to encourage all faculty to vote. All faculty, not just senators, are eligible to vote. Immediate Past President Pecchenino reminded senators that there is a self-nomination form available for interested faculty members. Secretary General Young reminded faculty that all faculty will receive an individualized ballot which should not be shared with anyone else.

Adjournment

President Apostolos adjourned the meeting at 4:03pm. The last Senate meeting will be held May 8th.

Respectfully submitted,



Christal Young

Secretary General of the Academic Senate