

ACADEMIC SENATE

MINUTES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

January 15, 2025

UPC/DML 121

2:00 - 4:00 pm PST

Present and online (Voting Senate Members): Rima Jubran (president), Lorraine Turcotte (academic vice president), Christine El Haddad (administrative vice president), Margo K. Apostolos (immediate past president), Clifford Neuman (secretary general), John Matsusaka (executive board), Grace Kung (executive board), Sofia Gruskin (executive board), Andrea Hollingstead, Mari Kong, Stacey Schepens Niemiec, Steve Hsu, Anastassia Tzoytzoyrakos, Elizabeth Blomstedt, Jennifer Swift, Susan Enguidanos, Jef Pearlman, Yihyun Lim, Hoda Abdel Magid, Karen Kay Imagawa, Kristian Carlson, Susie Kim, Joseph Nunes, Marion Philadelphia, Mike Andersen, Jerome Walker, Bruno Lemgruber, Artineh Samkian, Renee Smith-Maddox, Marlon Boarnet, Christy Kane, Ivan Bermejo-Moreno, Mayank Kejriwal, Kristi Lewton, Bill Leach.

Present and online (Non-voting Alternates, Ex-officio, Speakers, Guests): Provost Guzman, Micheal Bodie, Jason Buhle, Stephanie Shroyer, Ketan Savla, Paul Adler, Naomi Warren, Daniel Pecchinino, Aniko Imre, Jessica Parr, Matt Salomon, Howard Rodman, Chrisandra Kufeldt, Shubha Kumar, Jennifer Unger, Bridgid Fennell, Christina Dunbar-Hester, Harvey Kaslow, Grace Baranek, Paula Cannon, François Bar, Hannah Findling, Larry Gross, Erik Johnson, Rene Pak, Amy Cheung, Sherin Guirguis, Lynda McGinnis, Michael Burroughs, Antonio Idini, Jim Moore, Rebecca Lonergan.

PROCEEDINGS

Call to order: Rima Jubran, Senate President

Academic Senate President Rima Jubran called the meeting to order at 2:00pm.

Discussion with Provost Guzman

Provost Guzman addressed the university's response to the recent wildfires. He acknowledged the significant impact on faculty, staff, and students, noting that approximately 2,100 faculty members and 1,800 students were in the mandatory evacuation zones, with 138 staff members reporting they had lost their homes. The University established a resource page and FAQ related to the wildfires. The Provost also mentioned that classes had commenced smoothly, with most students attending in person, and encouraged everyone to report any impacts they had experienced through an online form.

In addition, the Provost discussed ongoing efforts to support those affected by the wildfires. He highlighted the creation of an emergency fund, which opened for applications the following week, and mentioned the potential for providing relocation specialists to assist with housing needs. There is a need

for improved communication about these efforts and the university's financial support for affected employees.

Updates from Senate President Rima Jubran

The Senate President, Rima Jubran, provided updates on the Senate's efforts to address the challenges posed by the fires, including the establishment of a support group for those affected. Additional updates were provided regarding the President's search committee and faculty organizing efforts.

Discussion of Faculty responses to Culture Survey - Micheal Burroughs, Executive Director, Organization Change, Ethics and Culture

Michael Burroughs presented the purpose and findings of the 2024 USC Culture Survey, which aimed to evaluate how well the university's unifying values are being upheld. The survey reached over 60,000 Trojans, including 8,000 faculty members, and yielded 2,300 usable responses. The results indicated that faculty respondents rated the values of excellence and DEI highest, whereas open communication and accountability received lower ratings. Faculty members also rated their peers highly in terms of embodying these values. Additionally, tenure-track faculty tended to respond less positively compared to RTPC faculty. Paul expressed his eagerness to hear the university leadership's response to the survey results and his hope for actionable plans moving forward.

Proposed Changes to Senate Bylaws - Jessica Parr, Chair of the Senate Bylaws Committee

Jessica Parr, Chair of the Senate Bylaws Committee, presented and discussed proposed changes to the Senate Bylaws. The amendments included the introduction of a Parliamentarian to ensure adherence to Robert's Rules of Order, updates to accommodate the transition to hybrid meetings, and a new timeline for introducing resolutions to allow faculty members to consult with their colleagues. The committee also relocated some standing rules to more appropriate sections. The Senate was encouraged to review the proposed changes and provide feedback before the next meeting, where a vote on the revised bylaws would occur. The committee also mentioned plans to review the Constitution next to ensure consistency with the revised bylaws.

Introduction to Joint Provost/Senate Task Force on Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility - Co-Chairs John G. Matsusaka and Robert K. Rasmussen

The formation and goals of the task force were announced. The discussion emphasized the committee's forward-looking purpose, aiming to establish policies and procedures to promote academic freedom and open discourse. The chairs highlighted the committee's diverse membership and the need for engagement with the broader community, including students and faculty. They acknowledged the challenges of balancing academic freedom with professional responsibility and the need to consider legal constraints. Suggestions for engaging with individual schools and organizing student forums were also discussed.

Discussion and vote on proposed Resolution: In support of proposal to implement undergraduate sustainability graduation requirement

The President's working group submitted a proposal to make it a graduation requirement for undergraduates to take at least one course related to sustainability. This proposal aims to implement a sustainability graduation requirement for all students at the university by requiring students to take at least one course introducing them to the concept of sustainability and its relevance to their respective disciplines. This course could be an existing one that provides students with a broader understanding of sustainability, rather than creating a new general education requirement.

The proposal has already been presented to various stakeholders, including the Council of Academic Advisors, the academic policies committee, and the sustainability leadership team. Many details have yet to be finalized and will be developed by the University Committee on Curriculum. The Academic Senate was asked to express support through a resolution for the general idea of the proposal.

The discussion focused on concerns about the lack of a well-defined concept for sustainability and the potential impact on program accreditation. However, the majority of participants voted in favor of the resolution, with some expressing concerns about the implementation process and the potential for additional requirements in the future. Approval of the resolution was moved by Marlon Boarnet and seconded by Miki Turner. [Resolution 24-25-02](#) passed with 17 in favor, 6 opposed, and 7 abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Clifford Neuman

Secretary General of the Academic Senate

(minutes approved by Academic Senate on 2/19/2025 [23 for, 0 against, 1 abstention])
(portions of these minutes were drafted using Zoom's AI Companion and Microsoft Copilot)