

ACADEMIC SENATE

MINUTES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

December 10, 2025

University Park Campus
DML 121

2:00 - 4:00 pm PST

Present and online (Voting Senate Members): Lorraine Turcotte (president), John Matsusaka (academic vice president), Jessica Parr (administrative vice president), Clifford Neuman (secretary general), Artineh Samkian (executive board), Kristian J. Carlson (executive board), Miki Turner (executive board), Doug Becker, Julie Cederbaum, Briana Marcos, Stephanie Shroyer, Lucio Soibelman, Jennifer Swift, Aninda Das, Susie Kim, Jerome Walker, Stacey Schepens Niemiec, Hoda Abdel Magid, Jason Buhle, Margaret Trost, Kristi Lewton, Steve Hsu, Mike Andersen, Karen Kay Imagawa, Bill Leach, Anastassia Tzoytzoyrakos, Kiki Benzon, Elizabeth Fife, Hicham Jaddoud, Nina Kang,

Present and online (Non-voting Alternates, Ex-officio, Speakers, Guests): Andrew Guzman (provost), Ginger Clark, Patrick Prince, Neeraj Sood, Jim Moore, Jennifer Silverman, Michael Thom, Elinor Accampo, Harvey Kaslow, Melanee Vicedo, Erik Johnson, Paula Cannon, Kate Nelischer, Amber Foster, Robert Labaree, Shubha Kumar, Alicia McDonough, Lorraine Kelley-Quon, Bridgid Fennell, Kelsey Vukic, Shannon Gibson.

Proceedings

Call to order: Lorraine Turcotte Academic Senate President

Academic Senate President Lorraine Turcotte called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Discussion with Provost Andrew Guzman - University Financial Challenges and Solutions

Provost Guzman provided an overview of the university's financial position, explaining that expenses began to outpace revenues around 2015, resulting in a structural deficit by approximately 2019. Key contributors discussed included flat net tuition revenue since 2022 due to affordability initiatives and declining graduate enrollment.

The Provost noted that the university has implemented cost-containment measures over the past year, including reductions in administrative expenses, and anticipates a balanced budget for the current fiscal year. Ongoing challenges include recent federal legislation affecting graduate student loans and a potential federal return-on-investment (ROI) test for graduate

programs beginning in 2027. Strategies under consideration include exploring private-sector options for graduate lending and increased fundraising to offset tuition costs, particularly for professional programs. The discussion also emphasized the importance of expanding philanthropic efforts to support academic priorities.

Provost Guzman addressed questions regarding facilities investments and athletics funding, noting that while some projects are supported by philanthropy, limited general fund resources are also involved. He acknowledged the financial complexities of maintaining elite athletics programs and indicated that a plan is in place to improve financial oversight. Considerable uncertainty remains regarding Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies and other evolving aspects of collegiate athletics.

Senate Updates

Academic Senate President Turcotte provided an update on Executive Board (EB) activities, noting that fewer EB meetings were held between Senate meetings due to the holiday period and the earlier-than-usual December Senate meeting.

Campus Safety and Prevention Strategy

Patrick Prince, Assistant Vice President, Office of Threat Assessment and Management

Patrick Prince, USC's Chief Threat Officer, presented an overview of the Office of Threat Assessment and Management, emphasizing a prevention-focused approach to campus safety. He described how the office collaborates with campus partners to identify and address potential threats early, with an emphasis on intervention and support for individuals in crisis rather than deterrence alone.

Mr. Prince explained that his office evaluates risk but does not investigate allegations of misconduct. He described procedures for receiving and triaging reports—via tools such as the USC Report Portal—and tracking cases involving students, faculty, staff, or external individuals. He emphasized the importance of responding to all concerns, even those ultimately assessed as low risk, and acknowledged that managing perceptions of safety and fear constitutes a significant portion of the office's work.

He also outlined the composition of the threat assessment team, which includes representatives from Counseling and Mental Health Services, Campus Support and Intervention, Residential Education, and other units, and shared relevant contact information.

Approval of the November Senate Meeting Minutes

Lorraine Turcotte moved to approve the minutes of the November 19th Academic Senate meeting and the motion was seconded by Jessica Parr. The minutes were approved by the Senate with 28 votes in favor, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Open Dialogue Project Update - Neeraj Sood, Founding Director, USC Open Dialogue Project, Professor, Sol Price School of Public Policy

Professor Sood provided an update on the USC Open Dialogue Project, which seeks to foster academic freedom, free expression, and constructive discourse across campus. He reported that the project has launched a website, received approximately 20 proposals, and expects to fund about 12 initiatives.

He highlighted recent events addressing controversial topics, including standardized testing, and shared encouraging survey results indicating that participants experienced respectful and productive dialogue.

Discussion focused on strategies for planning and organizing events that promote critical thinking and constructive engagement, particularly among students. Participants discussed ways to increase faculty involvement, vary event times, and engage parents. Additional suggestions included follow-up activities such as residence hall discussions and the possible formation of a faculty committee to support the initiative's long-term sustainability. Professor Sood noted ongoing efforts to secure future funding.

Revisions to the Definition of Excellence in Teaching at USC - Ginger Clark, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs, Professor of Clinical Education

Associate Vice Provost Clark presented proposed revisions to USC's Definition of Excellence in Teaching, originally developed in 2017–2018 as part of a Provost's Office initiative. She explained that the document serves as an aspirational framework for faculty evaluation and the work of the Center for Excellence in Teaching, though implementation varies across schools due to resource differences.

Key revisions include simplified language, reduced educational jargon, and updates addressing federal guidance related to inclusivity. Faculty were invited to provide feedback by early January, with particular attention to the role of AI and educational technology and the balance between aspirational ideals and achievable expectations.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Academic Senate President Lorraine Turcotte at 4:01PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Clifford Neuman

Secretary General of the Academic Senate

(minutes approved by Academic Senate on 21 January 2026)

(portions of these minutes were drafted using Zoom's AI Companion)