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**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA FACULTY SENATE**

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

This session was held at the Booker T. Washington Auditorium

Chair Audrey Korsgaard called the meeting to order at 3:01pm EST.

**Meeting of the Faculty Senate**

Minutes of the April 7, 2023, meeting was approved.

Minutes of the April 19, 2023, meeting was approved.

Provost Arnett is presenting for President Amiridis. President Amiridis is at a meeting of the Board of Trustees. President Amiridis asked Provost Arnett to speak on his behalf.

Five institutes were recently announced. The process for identifying the funded interdisciplinary institutes was very competitive. It was a collaboration between President Amiridis, Vice President Julius Fridriksson’s office, and the Provost’s Office. The institutes include:

* USC Institute for Rural Education and Development,
* USC Institute for Extreme Semi-Conductor Chips,
* USC Institute for Infectious Diseases and Translational Research,
* USC Institute for Clean Water, and
* USC Institute for Cardiovascular Research.

Each institute will be funded for the next few years by the president’s office. The goal is to build their research capacity in an inter-disciplinary approach, making them competitive for large center type grants.

The second point from President Amiridis is the university is anticipating a large freshman class. The university is preparing for this influx of students. Provost Arnett is conducting a classroom analysis based on the spring semester. This was also conducted last fall. The “section filled” rates are being monitored closely. An extra orientation has been added to accommodate an additional 450 students. New housing is coming online. Two new parking garages for students will be available. The administration is confident USC will be able to accommodate the incoming freshman.

Provost Arnett stated that she made it through her first year at USC. At the conclusion of the year, Provost Arnett is working to redesign the Provost’s Office to enable the office to get the right people in place to launch forward the president’s vision, and newly released updated strategic plan. The strategic plan has not changed foundationally but it has been reformatted. It has been reprioritized in three areas. As part of that plan for the provost’s office, new positions are being added to the existing budget. The provost’s office is a support unit. This means the provost’s office budget does not increase; its budget is generated out of the revenue generated by the state or indirect cost recovery or tuition.

Persons added to the provost’s office include:

* Vice Provost for Strategy and Innovation: This is a new role. An external search was conducted. Shannon Means was hired. Shannon comes from the University of Kentucky. This is an interesting position that will interface between the CFO’s office and Deans. The objective is to help Deans formulate new programs that they want to innovate and help them develop the business model for new programs. This will help the university have a more data driven, informed way of thinking through new program development so when you review proposals that come forward you understand the financial implications of new programs being proposed and how long it will take to become financially solvent.
* The second national search is in online education and teaching excellence. Sixty percent of USC undergraduates during spring 2023 took at least one online course. The university knows it needs to do better in terms of overseeing its online offerings. This person will be charged with overseeing online courses on the Columbia campus, working with the Center for Teaching Excellence, Distributed Learning, Continuing Education, as well as teaching innovation. While this is a national search, all faculty at USC are welcome to apply.
* The following position is a co-reporting position between the Provost and the President for Global Carolina. This position will assist in interfacing on the research side as well in the international arena in the research. This person will be working with the President and Provost to create an international strategy in curricular offerings in international studies.

The provost thanked the two Vice Provosts who have served in the roles over the past six years. Dr. Sandra Kelly and Dr. Cheryl Addy are moving back to faculty. The university will be conducting national searches for a) Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and b) Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs positions. This places the provost at six direct reports. This allows the provost’s office to move in areas in growth throughout the university.

**Guest speaker: Jason Caskey, CEO of USC Foundations**

Mr. Caskey thanked Faculty Senate for the opportunity to speak to the group. Mr. Caskey reported on the university’s investment in fossil fuels.

This is an important issue with different viewpoints. The foundation understands the concerns expressed by the Faculty Senate. The Student Senate passed a similar recommendation (i.e., to divest in fossil fuels) in the spring of 2021.

The Board of Trustees (hereafter referred to as The Board) has issued a response. This response details the work that has been conducted by The Board and the ad hoc committee (hereafter referred to as The Group) on this issue. The Group spent approximately 18 months evaluating recommendations, interviewing administrators, faculty representatives, and students’ views on this topic. Faculty representatives included current and past Faculty Senate chairs and Dr. Carolyn Nagel (chair of the sustainability committee) as well as other representatives of that committee.

The Group reviewed the amount of direct and indirect investments in funds related to the fossil fuels industries during the first quarter. This issue was brought to the attention of The Group (i.e., quarter ending June 2021). The Group noted that less than five percent of the investments were in this type of investment. The Group also considered fiduciary responsibility as it relates to the management and investment of donor funds, as well as consideration to their desire for scholarships, fellowships, and other methods of support to the university.

During the 18 months of work, there was an interim president and a permanent president. The Group wanted to provide ample time for the current administration to view the issue. The Board met in May and made the following commitments to the Faculty Senate and the Student Senate:

* Going forward, we will gain a thorough understanding of any new fund that involves extraction of fossil fuels before making any new investment,
* Alternative investments will be considered,
* Additional information will be added to the website that will provide insight into the direct and indirect investments in fossil fuels,
* The investment policy statement will be reviewed, and modifications will be considered because of The Group’s work, and
* The Board will communicate with the fund managers about the importance of environmental sustainability and request updates their actions.

Mr. Caskey reiterated appreciated Faculty Senate’s work on this topic. He hoped Faculty Senate understands that The Board views this as an important issue based on the time and effort that has been involved by the Foundation Management and the Board of Directors.

Senator Mark Minette (English) asked for confirmation of the action items and the timeline. Mr. Caskey stated that the investment policy statement is reviewed and updated every fall. This occurs typically at the November meeting. The policy statement is reviewed at the August meeting. Senate Minette inquired about future investments and the website. Mr. Caskey stated that the website was the USC Educational Foundation website containing the full investment report. Additional information that discloses quarterly direct and indirect investments in fossil fuels will be added to this website. USC has only three funds that are with fossil fuels. The last fund was invested in eight (8) years ago. No new investments have been made since those eight (8) years. The Foundation is focused on endowments.

Senator Minette asked about the process of investing. Mr. Caskey stated that the process of evaluating USC Foundations has been talking with other universities who are committed to divesting from fossil fuels. A lot of time has been spent with Rutgers University. Rutgers made a commitment over 10 years to totally divest. Rutgers has a much larger endowment than USC, and their investment in fossil fuels is much more significant than USC.

USC has not committed to divesting totally from fossil fuels. After interviewing faculty and students The Group learned that the indirect investment (mutual funds, index funds), there was no expectation for the university to unwind all the mutual funds. When we think of the three direct investments, out of $780 million, there are three funds totaling six (6) million. The Foundation will be focused on the three funds as they mature.

Time was spent interviewing other universities. That helped The Group in formulating the response.

Dr. Caroline Nagel (response emailed to Chair Korsgaard) thanked Chair Audrey Korsgaard for the invitation to respond to The Foundation’s report on divestment in fossil fuels recommendation. Dr. Nagel is commenting as a proponent of the original Faculty Senate recommendation for fossil fuel divestment and as the chair of the ad hoc committee on sustainability. The views I (Dr. Caroline Nagel) am expressing are solely my own. I have had multiple conversations with members of the Board of the USC Educational Trust since the passage of the fossil fuel trust investment recommendation. I believe they have given serious thought and consideration to the recommendation. The Board operates under many practical and political constraints, so I appreciate the Board’s commitment to consideration of environmental impact before making future investments. It is important to note that the university’s fossil fuel investments are a very minor component of the overall investments. Given the pace of change in the energy sector, I anticipate that fossil fuels will become even less significant in our investment portfolio over time. I believe the Senate can and should continue to show its support for investment strategies that prioritize renewable energy over fossil fuels.

The fossil fuel divestment recommendation has been a valuable starting conversation around campus and calling attention to the lack of leadership regarding sustainability issues. Making the university a sustainable campus will require much more than fossil fuel divestment. It will require changes to the campus operations, curriculum, and the research culture. The state of South Carolina is poised to become a leader in green technology. USC needs to prepare students and South Carolina citizens for the transformation to a low carbon economy.

Those of us involved in sustainability issues have been heartened by President Amiridis’ expression of support for a compressive and proactive approach to campus sustainability. He has charged the Office of Sustainability with creating a new campus of sustainability plan and he has told the planning group to think big. We appreciate this leadership and commitment.

As we end one academic year and begin another, I would like to remind the Senate that the university has had an official environmental policy statement for 23 years. The policy calls for the incorporation of sustainable issues into the university curriculum, the expansion of student engagement on sustainability issues, and the encouragement of research that aids in the understanding of issues and solutions to sustainable challenges.

I urge faculty senators to read this policy statement and to consider the aims it might articulate. I also urge faculty senators to monitor the progress of the new campus sustainability plan in the coming year and to hold the university leadership accountable for implementing it. Thank you for your time.

**Reports on the Committees**

*Committee on Courses and Curricula*

Chair Bill Hauk (Business) has met multiple times since the past Faculty Senate meeting. The Committee moves to approve 27 course proposals. The proposals include:

* College of Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management N-2
* Darla Moore School of Business, 2
* College of Arts and Sciences, 12
* College of Information and Communications, 5
* College of Education, 2
* School of Music, 3
* College of Engineering and Computing, 1

All proposals were passed and approved.

The School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (until recently named the School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management) has made a request that the four-letter course designator be changed from HRTM to HTMT. This batch change did not go through the CIM system.

* Chair Hauk requested that Faculty Senate be allowed to view this change at this meeting. There were no objections.
* C&C and the Graduate Council have reviewed and approved the change.
* Faculty Senate voted on the course designator change; it was approved.

*Bookstore Committee*

Guests Eve Ross and Russell House Bookstore Manager Sarah Polley presented information regarding textbook adoptions.

USC is home to hundreds of students who receive scholarships funds to pay for textbooks and other course materials. Scholarships are through Vocational Rehab, Veterans Affairs, South Carolina Commission for the Blind, and USC Athletics. These funds may be used only through the official USC Bookstore. When adoptions are placed as “no textbook required” faculty are communicating to the bookstore that they do not intend on using materials for their courses and no further action is needed. However, each semester we (bookstore employees) discover that there are multiple courses requiring course materials despite being marked as “no textbook required”. This information only comes to light as we are helping students in the store to locate their books to discover that one or more of their courses are without a shelf tag even though the syllabus does have materials listed. Students will also call or email after attempting to call or order materials online and find that their course is not listed. Bookstore staff will then conduct a system lookup for the student’s course and discover the adoption was not submitted. Ms. Polley has personally assisted dozens of students with this issue during both spring and fall semesters. Students’ first question is always “what do I do? I must buy my books here and classes are starting”. This is stressing and disheartening for our scholarship students who are then faced with a decision to either a) go without a book until the bookstore can update the adoption and place an order from the publisher, or b) find another source and pay out of pocket.

The fall 2023 adoption rate is currently at 88%. Faculty members who have submitted the adoption have Ms. Polley’s heartfelt appreciation. Fifty-one percent of the 88% adoptions have been submitted as “no textbook required”. This figure equates to almost 3900 courses. The best way to prevent this added stress to our students is for all course materials to be submitted through the Adoption Insight Portal and contact USC Russell House textbook manager Tim Barnett to ensure your textbook has been submitted. Ms. Polley is also available for assistance. The USC Russell House Bookstore staff want this process to be as streamlined as possible with the end goal being students set up for academic success with all materials in hand on the first day of classes.

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Audrey Korsgaard stated that is her last meeting as Faculty Senate Chair. She has two more meetings with the Board of Trustees. When Faculty Senate returns in Fall 2023, the new Chair will be Dr. Wayne Outten.

Chair Korsgaard stated that it will be a “reset” when Faculty Senate resumes in the fall. Faculty Senate will resume discussing professional-track faculty. FAC will be revisiting this issue during the summer. In addition to transitions in Faculty Senate, there are transitions in the Provost’s Office. Chair Korsgaard and Dr. Outten have been meeting with the two interim Provosts (Dr. Mary Anne Fitzpatrick and Dr. Lara Lomicka Anderson) to acquaint them with the committees that they are ex-officio members by virtue of those roles.

Chair Korsgaard and Dr. Outten will meet soon with the Vice Provost for Strategy and Innovation. Chair Korsgaard thanked Provost Arnett for the effort she is spending on creating this role and creating more transparency surrounding the creation of new programs.

It was only two years ago when the university struggled with the creation of online programs. Faculty were operating in the dark and trying to make decisions regarding adopting an online program with virtually no information about the financial feasibility. This is outside the Faculty Senate wheelhouse; we don’t approve of academic programming; however, it is difficult for us to make intelligent decisions about programs if we don’t know where resources are coming from or what new resources are required. These efforts to make programming more transparent and rational are welcome. We now can see pre-authorization letters.

There will be a new Senator Orientation at the beginning of the year. There will be a new Faculty Senate caucus in each school or college. You are encouraged to meet and discuss the concerns of your school or college. We will need a new point of contact (one person) from each school or college. Please send the name and contact information to Dr. Wayne Outten and Sam Clarke.

Chair Korsgaard will be reaching out to standing committee members with an orientation memo. This memo will include information on:

* How to conduct a meeting,
* How to conduct teams’ meetings,
* When it is necessary to meet in person, and
* If a chair and/or co-chair are needed.

Standing committees are reminded to submit annual reports at the end of the year.

Chair Korsgaard expressed her thanks to the President and the Provost. Thank you for being at the university. It is wonderful to have stable leadership. They have demonstrated they are “up for the job and engaged in the job.”

Chair Korsgaard thanked the following:

* Officers and Faculty Senate,
* Marianne Bickle (Faculty Senate Secretary),
* Bill Suddeth (Parliamentarian), who is stepping down and Dan Brackman is stepping up, and thanks to all Chairs of Standing Committees.
* A special shoutout to Senator Bill Hauk, Chair of C&C,
* Thanks to Jean Ellis, Chair of UCTP. Dr. Bob Brookshire, Chair of FAC.
* Thanks to all members of the Faculty Senate.

In recent decades, academic freedom is imperiled. We need to be extremely vigilant both in the classroom and in our research. Faculty Senate is a major body to help sustain and protect academic freedom. As faculty, we are in a unique role. We are both frontline workers and stewards of the institution. We are the ones trying to uphold the standard of academic excellence in the classroom and innovation and discovery in research. A big part of your job is to preserve the institution’s academic excellence and its research excellence. We are making sure the courses are right; we are making sure we are being held accountable.

**Old business**: none

**Good of the order**: none

The meeting adjourned at 3:46pm EST.