

USC Faculty Senate Meeting

Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2025

Russell House Theater

F. Wayne Outten, Chair, presiding

The meeting was called to order at 15:00 EST by Faculty Senate Chair F. Wayne Outten (Chemistry and Biochemistry, MCAS).

Minutes from April 2, 2025, were approved.

President's Report:

President Michael Amiridis was not present due to meeting at another USC campus.

Provost's Report:

8 commencements in the next three days. There are roughly 8,300 graduates in the system. Named three colleges in past 3 years—reason donors give to USC is because of faculty members. Top 10 US News and World Report faculty-led living-learning communities—started 1st gen center. Top rankings in College of Education, International MBA, rising rankings in Engineering, Nursing, Library and Information Science, and Rice School of Law. 60,000 applications this year, 8,300 paid applications, anticipating 7,700 in the fall.

PTF promotion criteria: 18 unit criteria have been submitted, 3 approved and published on Provost website. 12 currently returned to unit for revision, 2 being reviewed by Provost, 1 at office for review. UCPTF committee did large amount of work. Senate extended membership of that committee.

QUESTIONS:

Alex Reynolds, Psychology: When can PTF go up for new ranks?

Mary Anne Fitzpatrick (Vice Provost, Dean of Faculty): As soon as unit guidelines are approved and posted, faculty can write a memo to the chair, Dean, Provost requesting title change. The official re-naming might take a semester. Trying to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Report from Scott Verzyl, VP of Enrollment Management

Test Optional Admission Status

- 1) Currently students can use test scores or not.
 - a. Admissions Index predicts first-year grades. Tweek model every year. Main way to evaluate applicants, not scores. Most SEC remains test optional.
 - b. 4 cohorts of test-optional policy: most recent (2024) 55% did not use test scores
 - c. Retention rates continue to climb (92% current). Students earning more credits each year (31.4 hours current). Number of failed and withdrawn classes going down.

Report from USC Staff Senate, Megan Colascione and Chris Kemp

- Established 2021. 52 elected staff senators. 5,300+ staff Columbia campus, Palmetto College, and School of Medicine (Columbia and Greenville).
- Advisory group to President. Biggest focus is staff retention.
 - 52% staff 5 years or less; 20% 5-10 year range
- 8 working committees
- Accomplishments:
 - Staff ombudsperson, alumni association memberships, staff appreciation day, employee well-being unit, staff excellence awards, classification & compensation study, Imagine Carolina
- Staff Senate meetings on Teams, 2nd Tuesday of every month at 3pm
- Want more collaboration with faculty colleagues

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Marco Valtorta, Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing: Is President faculty or staff member?

Megan Colascione: Several administrators have dual role, such as Dr. Michelle Bryan. Staff Senate support them as well as faculty senate.

Faculty Committee Reports:

Curricula and Courses Committee: Michael Dickson presented the committee report. New online portal for submitting new course proposals, hopefully ready in the fall. He can come to units to show how to use the new system, by request.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Marco Valtorta, Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing: course descriptions remove diversity and inclusion, etc. Michael Dickson: Three proposals edited to reflect these changes and were approved by C&C because not in violation of policy.

Mark Minett, English: who requested the removal of those words/phrases?

Michael Dickson: does not know; assumes internal discussion in unit.

APPROVED REPORT AS SUBMITTED.

Committee on Instructional Development: The InDev Committee co-chairs Kunio Hara (School of Music) and Stephanie Armstrong (College of Nursing). C&C presented University 202 and 303 at the February meeting and April meeting and asked InDev to look at it. InDev proposes to revise ACAF 2.03, creation and revision of academic courses, requiring MOU from academic unit for courses not offered by an academic unit.

- Courses that are not offered under an academic unit (for example, INTL or UNIV courses) must be created including a limited-term Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with an academic college or department that clearly states that a partnering academic unit has an oversight role regarding instructor selection, faculty appointments, and course content. the MOU shall define the roles and responsibilities of both units, establish processes for content development and review which incorporate oversight from the academic unit, and specify both the duration and the renewal procedures for the partnership. If a MOU is not renewed, is cancelled, or otherwise becomes defunct, the associated course can no longer be offered until and unless a new MOU is established. When an MOU is added, revised, renewed, cancelled, or expires, a course change proposal must be submitted at that time. Additionally, any special topics courses offered by a non-academic unit must have individual sections submitted to the Committee on Curricula and Courses of the Faculty Senate for review and approval.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Jean Taylor Allison, Geography: why choose a unit, not a college?

Kunio: 202 and 303 offered by Student Affairs

Wayne Outten to Allison: are you asking about specific language used in the policy?

Allison: we need to think more broadly when making changes to ACAF, because this issue will come up again, for example with GRAD courses, which is also not an academic unit.

Wayne Outten to Allison: that would go to Graduate Council, not C&C

Michael Dickson: policy is all-encompassing. UNIV and INTL are only listed as examples.

Mark Minett: an academic unit is an academic college or department. Ensures policy is faculty-integrated into process.

Dan Friedman, University 101 program: every course is developed by committee of faculty and staff across campus, then goes to Faculty Senate committee. UNIV does not make decisions independently. Must meet SACSCOC standards. Zero issues in 2 accreditation visits. Delaying this vote will negatively impact students.

Wayne Outten: this is not a votable motion, just a report provided for consideration

Marco Valtorta, Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing: case of principle of subsidiarity should hold. Partnership should be smallest unit that is relevant to the case. For example, the Department of Geography, not the College of Arts and Sciences.

Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Vice Provost: consulted with SACS experts, there is no SACS requirement for courses not attached to a degree. The reason this issue is because there are no SACS procedures.

Michael Stoeltzner, Philosophy: the MOU's still go through C&C for approval/faculty oversight.

Kunio: yes, and they are time-limited, so they must go through review process.

Stephanie: C&C was concerned because they did not know the qualifications of the proposed instructors. So, if a proposal comes from an academic unit, then C&C knows the course/instructor has been vetted.

Michael Dickson: all proposals still go through C&C.

InDev co-chairs also discussed Explorance Blue updates. To be fully implemented in Fall 2025. Student Survey Week will give push for students to take survey. Adding unit/department questions (up to 3), individual faculty can add up to 2 questions (selected from question bank. Use of mobile phone to take survey, automated announcements, and take in Blackboard. Explorance Blue subcommittee created to handle additional questions from departments and individual faculty. Recommended revisions to additional questions—grounded in scholarship of teaching and learning. 9 core questions. Qualitative question still on the survey based on feedback from students and instructors. Strongly disagree to strongly agree scale. 1-6 pertain to the course. 7-10 is based on instructor, but all relate to teaching. All questions available on Faculty Senate website. Explorance Blue Governance Committee will provide improvement to core questions, gather feedback, and advocate for needs and concerns of faculty/staff. You can provide feedback on Provost's page and Student Course Experience Survey website (coming soon).

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Liem Heim, Nursing: questions are less standardized now than the original conception. And this was supposed to come out in summer, but has it officially been moved to fall?

Stephanie: department can add 3 questions; up to each unit if they allow faculty to add individual question. But those aren't used for T&P.

Kunio: one week before survey goes live for students, faculty will receive an email with a link for the Explorance Blue page where you can pick your questions.

Laura Smith, Journalism: We were on the pilot on the second round, and seeing response rates in real-time was great. Second core question seems more like an instructor question, not a course question. Question 10 seems double-barreled—can we break that into 2 open-ended questions?

Stephanie: question 2 could vary based on course, etc. but all are grounded in scholarship of teaching. So, really all questions are about teaching. Question 10 feedback was that both positive and negative comments were needed. So, yes, it is double-barreled, but wanted to keep question count low so students don't have survey fatigue and only have one qualitative question.

Kunio: for co-taught classes, the students will only answer 1-6 once but will answer 7-10 for all instructors of the course.

Mark Minett, English: two questions on survey that InDev did not recommend: 1) overall rate my course/overall course was effective—not grounded in teaching scholarship, and 2) overall rate my instructor question—also against teaching scholarship. Research on responses to those 2 questions consistently show that there is no link to teaching effectiveness and are where biases are introduced. Including those questions is playing with fire.

Stephanie: questions 6 and 9—a case is made for those questions to be maintained while USC transitions to Explorance Blue from Course Climate but will be reevaluated going forward (after a year of data).

Wayne: faculty manual does not specify which questions are used as criteria for T&P and teaching evaluation process, but some units do specify that.

Michael Stoeltzner, Philosophy: given the concern about significance of criteria in T&P decisions, one should consider the wording, especially considering the use of “overall” because that draws evaluators to use those problematic questions.

Stephanie: that is why follow-up on those questions after a year of data.

Unfinished Business

Postponed course proposals for UNIV 202 and 303.

Michael Dickson, chair of C&C: If these courses come back to C&C, the committee would like to see a policy they can follow before they know what to say about them.

Dan Friedman, University 101 program: MOU was submitted with course proposals with partnership with Arts & Sciences with Joel Samuels and Christy Friend. Delaying this will deprive students these courses.

Wayne: but only part of the sections of 202 had MOU and none of 303.

Dan Friedman: my understanding is that it was for both courses.

Michael Dickson: we only have proposed policy, not an actual policy. Two outstanding issues: 1) C&C needs to see proposals again with policy in front of us. 2) We don't know the policy yet, so we feel uncomfortable going forward approving these two courses.

Wayne: aye—approve the courses; nay—voting against accepting the motion. **The motion:** to approve UNIV 202 and 303, which came from C&C.

Motion PASSES, both courses are approved.

New Business:

Two committee vacancies have come up, one in athletics and one in UCTP. Both committees put forth nominees. Connor Harrison for Athletics, Sarah Williams for UCTP. Call for other nominations. Seeing none, those candidates are approved to fill those vacancies.

Report of the Chair:

Chair Outten's last meeting, Liam Heim taking over in the fall. Creation of two new standing committees and many works done by standing committees this year. Read annual reports posted by September fall meeting. Strive to be pragmatic and we work in good faith toward betterment of university. We are facing unprecedented pressures in higher education. Academic freedom, faculty control of curriculum is being tested. The institution is biding its time. But attempts to placate hostile forces will not protect our university. USC must actively reflect on our mission and identity: "to educate students through outstanding teaching, providing research, scholarship, and service that drives community and economic impact for the benefit of the state, nation, and world." What can we do to accomplish this mission? We cannot let external actors make those decisions for us. We must be prepared to resist actions that compromise our ability to complete our mission.

Good of the Order:

Next Faculty Senate meeting held on September 10, time TBD. Steering Committee discussed creating an ad hoc committee to look at impact of federal impacts on faculty and come up with recommendations to assist faculty. No specifics yet but Steering Committee is moving forward. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 16:52 EST.

Submitted by:

Sarah A. Rogers, Faculty Senate Secretary

August 22, 2025