

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
University Senates Conference
(Final; Information)

UC.15.01 Report on the August 25, 2014 meeting of the University Senates Conference via Videoconference

The Conference membership list for 2014-15 can be found here:

<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/membership.cfm>

The agenda for this meeting can be found here:

<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/documents>

The Conference was joined by President Robert Easter, Vice-President of Academic Affairs Christophe Pierre, and Associate Chancellor Reginald Alston.

Conference members present: Don Chambers (chair), Shar Fadavi, Danilo Erricolo, Sandra DeGroote, Benet Deberry-Spence, Kouros Mohammadian, Jorge Villegas, Xiaoqing Li, Karl McDermott, William Maher, George Francis, Kim Graber, Nicholas Burbules, Gay Miller, Prasanta Kalita, Roy Campbell, Joyce Tolliver, Catherine Vincent (ex officio as chair of UIC senate)

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND VP PIERRE

The Conference discussed the role of the president of the University with President Easter and Vice-President Pierre. President Easter sees the role of president as largely external: the president is ultimately accountable for all things that go on within the university, but largely delegates internal matters to the vice-presidents and chancellors. On the other hand, the president is responsible to the Board and must also translate the views and needs of the university to legislators.

President Easter expressed the notion that ideally, the role of the president is to be the leader of the discussions on higher education in the state, and added that critical decisions must be made on higher education in the next few years. He said that the president of the University of Illinois must be at the center of those conversations.

In relationship to these conversations, the President mentioned that there was some interest in forming another AAU university in Illinois, and that we should encourage UIC to fulfill this role. The new president must also be engaged with the question of the impact of the state-wide trend of two-year institutions to serve more and more students. Regarding the relationship between the Board and faculty, the President mentioned that the Board plans to discuss its role at its January retreat.

The President and Vice-President Pierre discussed budgetary questions with the Conference, and stated that the projections for next year are similar to those made last year. We are expecting a 1.6% increase, split almost evenly between restricted and non-restricted funds. Funding for sponsored research is expected to decrease by about \$20 million, even without considering the end of funding for Blue Waters. The President hopes for a salary program this year, although his desire is that we not increase tuition.

The Vice-President reported on the profile of the incoming freshman class, noting that student quality is higher than ever but that we seem to be a little below target enrollments. The University aims to increase financial aid next year by about \$7 million next year, but if tuition is not raised, it will be a challenge to find these funds.

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair remarks: In his first meeting as Conference Chair during this academic year, Chair Donald Chambers (UIC) thanked the Conference for their confidence in him, and thanked immediate past Chair Jorge Villegas (UIS) for his leadership.

He noted that, during the 2012-13 academic year, the Conference asserted that it exists for general good of the University, adding that this upcoming year will likely also be contentious, and it will be necessary to remind ourselves of this principle. The Conference, he added, is the statutorily-constituted faculty advisory group to the president and to the Board. Chair Chambers then requested that suggestions for USC retreat topics be emailed to Secretary Sailor and to him.

Statutes revision process: Chair of the USC Statutes and Governance Committee Nicholas C. Burbules presented three proposed revisions to the Statutes originating in that committee. All proposals were approved by the full Conference, with one addition to the Statutes section on FAC to specify that members of any “academic or administrative” unit may approach the FAC. The Statutes Committee will continue its work on preparing all the proposed revisions for eventual consideration by the Senates later this semester and early in the spring 2015 semester.

A report was also given by Conference members serving on the Presidential search committee, which is reviewing candidate files now. The committee has set a target date of November 1 for the identification of the final candidate, and at this point cannot predict whether that target date will be met.

The Conference briefly discussed the situation with pension reform, noting that the attention of the courts is focused on changes to Tier One plans. Members unanimously passed a motion to go on record with a continuing statement of concern about the status of University pensions.

Future conference guests: Chair Chambers announced that Chris Kennedy, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, had agreed to attend the September meeting by phone. He added that he would like us to meet with the Chairman of the Board every other month, although we may meet also with other members of the Board. The Conference also decided to invite each of the chairs of the Board committees to USC meetings. We discussed meeting as well with University lobbyists in Washington.

BOT Observer report: Prof. De Groote (UIC) reported that the July Board meeting was short, with just a few informational presentations, including a campus update from Chancellor Allen-Meares (UIC), the annual USC report given by Prof. Villegas (UIS), and a report on the financial status of the hospital.

Campus updates: UIC: Prof. Vincent reported that faculty leaders have been in regular conversation with their chancellor regarding recent changes in two administrative positions, and that the UIC Senate is making sure the faculty voice is being heard. UIC now has a new interim provost designate, pending BOT approval.

UIS: The new chair of the UIS Senate is Jorge Villegas. Prof. Villegas reported that a Sept. 10 meeting had been scheduled by a group of faculty members who are attempting to organize a UIS faculty union.

UIUC: Prof. Campbell reported on discussion of the proposal for a new college of medicine and on the vigorous discussion regarding the non-appointment of a faculty member. He added that questions had been raised by this case about gaps in our governing documents regarding hiring processes.

Chair Chambers added that at the September 3 meeting of the BOT Health Affairs and Hospital committee, there would be a presentation by Chancellor Wise and also one by Dean Azar (dean of the UIC College of Medicine), both on UIUC’s proposal to establish a new college of medicine. He announced that UIC had hired a consulting firm to provide a response to the Tripp-Umbach report, which reports on the feasibility of establishing a new college of medicine in Urbana.

Committee updates: Prof. Campbell reported that the USC Budget Committee would be concerned this fall with the ramifications of the potential sun-setting of the state income tax increase.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Tolliver, USC Liaison to the Senate