The Senates Conference meeting met in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library for its regular monthly meeting combined with its annual retreat. Events began with lunch on Tuesday, September 17, and continued 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. with the regular meeting of the conference with President Easter, Vice President Pierre, and Visiting Associate Vice President Wheeler. After a break during which conference members visited the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, the retreat resumed with dinner and discussions 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Maldaner’s restaurant. Retreat discussions focused on the overall goals of the conference and the importance of sharing best practices between campuses. The regular meeting resumed at 9 a.m. through 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 18.

During the afternoon session, 1:00 – 3:30 p.m., September 17, the conference met with VPAA Christophe Pierre and Visiting Associate Vice President Wheeler to discuss the upcoming open access to research task force required by SB1900, and to hear an update on the academic program review and campus strategic planning process. President Easter and Special Assistant to the President Dr. Avijit Ghosh joined the conference at 2 p.m. for a discussion of leadership at the University of Illinois, University Administration review, the conference’s role in on-going deliberations about the structure of the university’s health system, and the process for review of vice presidents. The President reported briefly on a couple of upcoming budget items, including planning for salary increases over the next 2-3 years, and the decision to spend several million dollars to replace antiquated donor database software currently in use with a new “Advance Illinois” system.

**Open Access:** Wheeler presented an overview of SB 1900, adopted by the Illinois state legislature in August 2013. The bill requires that each public university in Illinois establish, by January 1, 2014, a task force to study the issue of open access to research. The task force must include faculty, representatives of the library, university administrators, and a non-voting representative of a scholarly publisher, and must complete a report by January 1, 2015. Wheeler said the process of formulating a policy related to open access to research at the University of Illinois should be led by faculty, and recommended that the conference and campus senates develop policy advice through normal governance channels. Mandates for open access to research articles already exist at the federal level (for example, NIH policy “requires scientists to submit final peer-reviewed journal manuscripts that arise from NIH funds to the digital archive PubMed Central upon acceptance for publication” [http://publicaccess.nih.gov/](http://publicaccess.nih.gov/)). Other federal agencies will follow suit in response to a 2013 directive from the Obama administration. Some universities have adopted open access policies, including the University of California and the University of Michigan. Wheeler said varying cultures and economies of publication in different disciplines can make the question of open access complex. There was discussion of impact on scholars and publishing opportunities, common misunderstandings about open access policies (e.g., they need not require publishing in open access journals), and issues regarding intellectual property and patents.
Campus Strategic Planning / Academic Program Review: Vice President Pierre has been working with campuses to develop metrics for at-a-glance assessment of programs. Urbana has established a new web-based program review system, with three units up for full review this year. Strategic plans for each campus have been created (the UIS plan is here: http://www.uis.edu/strategicplan/strategic-plan-update-2013-2016/). President Easter moved central administrative oversight of campus budget processes back to its historic position in the VPAA’s office. The budget process involves a series of several conversations between the VPAA and campus administrations, with the goal of linking resources and revenues to academic priorities. A formal meeting is held in November to close the budget cycle once enrollment numbers and other information are available. The overall goal is to bring budget and strategic goals into alignment. Budget conversations between the campuses and the VPAA’s office are at a very macro level; details of the campus budget are mostly internal.

Leadership at the University of Illinois: President Easter discussed qualities the university should look for in the next president, including solid academic credentials, experience with legislative matters, national respect in higher education, effective engagement in faculty governance, and ability to communicate a vision for the future. In order to develop leadership within the University of Illinois, the President is planning for four meetings per year for a small group of potential campus leaders, including one meeting on each campus and one in Washington, D.C.

UA Review: Dr. Ghosh provided an update on the status of the UA review. Results of the review of seven administrative units have been discussed with a group including the three campus Provosts, VP Knorr, and former USC Chair N. Burbules. This group prepared advice for the President, who has since met with the Chancellors and is developing plans to implement recommendations arising from the review. One focus is on developing a process of annual budget review with campus involvement.

University Health System: The University Health System’s strength is a group of health care colleges located close together; discussions of administrative restructuring to make the most of these strengths emerged from the BOT’s July retreat, which focused on this subject. Priorities guiding decision-making are: to align healthcare and research/academic missions, meet needs of both clinical and academic area, and help the UIC campus to achieve its goals. The conference discussed options under consideration for governance of the academic health center.

During the morning session on Wednesday, September 18, the conference met with Chancellor Susan Koch to hear about opportunities and challenges facing UIS. Chancellor Koch talked about the history, goals, and continued evolution of the UIS campus. She reported that we are a young university with a strong reputation for serving non-traditional and graduate students, and that more than 1/3 of our students are in graduate and professional programs. She emphasized that a UIS priority is to create a firmer foundation for budget planning in part through increasing enrollment, and noted that this year’s first-year class is the second largest in our history, and also the most divers (50% of students in the first-year class identify themselves as African-American
or Latina/o). We currently have more international students than ever before (7% of undergraduates). A major goal is to increase academic options and enhance the intellectual environment for students and faculty by adding programs. Chancellor Koch also mentioned a need to offer competitive salaries to recruit and retain faculty, and identified lack of diversity among faculty as a problem at UIS.

Following the discussion with Chancellor Koch, the conference moved on to its regular agenda. Items included: schedule of faculty reports to the BOT, concern about faculty morale at UIC in light of delayed salary increases, revisions to the UI Statutes currently under discussion by Senates, how to move forward with open access discussions, and an assessment of faculty satisfaction with shared governance at the UIUC campus. The conference agreed to recommend that the campus senates study the issue of open access, and consider the recently adopted University of California policy as a model. Subcommittees of the conference met to develop agenda items for the coming year before and during lunch. Committee chairs reported on these discussions after lunch. Some priorities identified by committees included: budget transparency, assessment of metrics used to compare programs, diversity, MOOcs, faculty development, and campus impact of new limitations on rehiring retirees. Subcommittees anticipate meeting with the chairs of corresponding Board committees to learn about issues facing the Board of Trustees and how the conference can help.

The USC retreat and meeting adjourned shortly after 2 p.m.