I. Remarks from the USC Chair

In his brief comments, Prof. Burbules expressed his concerns that the portrayal of shared governance by members of the university interested in collective bargaining tends to be unfairly negative. The Chair cited examples of how through shared governance the University of Illinois has made substantial changes that favor students, faculty, and staff.

Another issue that has been misrepresented in these conversations is the budget of the university. As the Conference understand well now, the budget is not as flexible or represents real resources that can be used at the discretion of the administration. The best way to move forward this conversation is through openness and accurate data. UIUC’s Senate will talk about the budget to help their members understand the real financial situation of UI.

II. Meeting with President Easter, VP Knorr, and VP Pierre

President Easter introduced Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Comptroller Knorr to the members of USC as an experienced and trusted financial and budgetary manager of public organizations. VP Knorr shared with USC members a draft of the presentation he is preparing for the May meeting of the Board of Trustees. In a nutshell, the financial margins and reserves of the university are improving thanks to calculated and smart steps taken by the administrations. However, the university’s financial situation is not as competitive compared to other universities the size of UI and, more importantly, an extremely large amount of money is tied up to specific uses. There are no degrees of freedom with the use of the resources of the university.

It was discussed that the number of faculty members has consistently eroded in Urbana and Chicago in the last ten years. The problem is grave since it seems likely that the campuses are losing faculty faster than they are recruiting. The net result of this trend is the increase of faculty productivity (in terms such as of class size) as well as dependence of more research dollars coming from a smaller faculty. The increase of productivity combined with UI’s inability to offer competitive compensation is very worrisome.

Another area of concern is the performance-based funding scheme by IBHE. Currently the budget effect of this program is almost symbolic (0.5% of state appropriation) but IBHE is able to increase this percentage unilaterally.

The situation of Illinois pension crisis was discussed again. Since it is highly likely that legislators will act this session it was discussed if it was appropriate for USC to write a statement in support of IGPA’s current proposal toward pension reform. This item was discussed in the afternoon session.
One of the current activities discussed to remedy the budgetary challenges was the review of all budget lines to find expenses that have creep into the budget but do not necessarily reflect the mission and current state of the university.

Members of USC, President Easter, and Peg O’Donoghue and Katherine Galvin, two members of the President’s staff, discussed at length the changes to the article of the university statutes that define academic freedom (Article X. Section 2). President Easter acknowledged the importance of this resolution approved by the three campuses, yet he and his legal staff raised a series of important questions and areas that they thought needed clarification. Some of the questions discussed were related to the objective of the resolution, definition of academic staff, the overlap of first amendment and academic freedom, as well as the possible unintended consequences of the proposed changes. It was decided that an ad-hoc subcommittee will work with the President’s legal staff to clarify the objectives and interpretation of the resolution. The members of this subcommittee are Peter Boltuc (UIS), Danilo Erricolo (UIC), and Joyce Tolliver (UIUC).

III. The minutes of the meeting of March 27, 2013 were approved.

IV. Classification of Senates minutes were presented.

V. Old Business – Actions items

None

VI. New Business

After the conversation with President Easter, VP Knorr, and VP Pierre the members of USC agreed to review the possibility of endorsing the pension framework proposed by IGPA. Since the new plan differs from the framework presented a year ago –a plan that was endorsed by the Conference- its members will review this new plan and decide if endorsing is feasible.

Another issue discussed was the need to develop relationships with legislators interested in higher education. A proactive approach is required.

1. OT-298 Shared governance in a changing environment

Regardless of the personal inclinations of the members of the Conference, this body should be a defender of shared governance. In order to maintain robust shared governance at the university is vital to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the union and faculty, as well as to ensure that the model where collective bargaining encroaches all activities of shared governance does not take hold of the campuses and instead move forward a more desirable model based on peaceful coexistence.

VII. Old business

2. ST-79 Proposed revisions to the Statutes, Article XIII, Section 8 – to authorize the USC to initiate revisions to the Statutes.
No news.

3. ST-72 Proposed revisions to the Statutes, Article X, Section 2 (Academic Freedom)
After the discussion with the President and his legal staff it was decided to organize a subcommittee to interact with the President’s office.

4. ST-77/GR-46 Revisions to the Statutes and General Rules
The process has slowed down. No news to share at this moment.

5. NC-19 Nominating committee for 2013-14 Officers, Executive Committee, and USC committee.
The members of the nominating committee are contacting USC members of their respective campuses to gauge interest in the different positions.

6. OT-223 Annual review of the Vice Presidents
This reviewing process that was interrupted some years ago should be restarted. Traditionally, the conference reviews all the VP positions and focuses on one to do an in depth evaluation. It was agreed that Vice President Knorr should be the first office to be reviewed. The Finance, Budget and Benefits committee should work with VP Knorr during the reviewing process.

7. OT-297 Implications of the Open Meetings Act to the operations of the University Senates Conference
The Statutes and Governance Committee is working on this issue to ensure that USC’s practices follow OMA.

8. OT-291 Recommendation to establish Faculty Advisory Committees for all four Vice Presidents.
No news. Two of four Vice Presidents (Drs. Pierre and Schook) have established Faculty Advisory Committees.

9. OT-123 Discussion of USC guests
Since the next meeting of USC will occur in Chicago, it was proposed to invite Senator Daniel Biss. Senator Biss has shown interest in important areas of higher education.

10. Campus updates
No major updates were shared. Members of UIC mentioned the proposed move toward allowing instructors be elected to their Senate.

11. Board of trustees meeting: May 29, 2013. Chicago
Schedule observer: Lynn Fisher
Faculty report: Donald Chambers
12. Report from USC committee Chairs

a. Statutes and Governance Committee – This committee met with Trustee Strobel. This was mostly a ceremonial visit to initiate a conversation with Trustee Strobel on shared governance and other issues.

b. Finance, Budget, and Benefits Committee – This committee is working on understanding budgetary processes and challenges. One of the challenges is the different practices in the three campuses do not allow for data consolidation at AU level.

c. Hospital and Health Affairs Committee – The committee is interviewing key players of the healthy system: VP Garcia, UIC Provost Kaufman, and UIC College of Medicine Dean Azar.

13. Report from ad hoc committee on SB 1900

Although the Act was not moved forward by Senator Biss, he continues his interest in open access to research performed by faculty and students of state funded universities. The Conference believes that he would be an excellent guest for the next meeting in Chicago.

14. OT-142 Updates on External Committees

No major updates.

15. Review of pending items

None.

Meeting was adjourned.