UNIVERSITY SENATES CONFERENCE

Report to UIS Campus Senate
Prepared by Lynn Fisher
For Senate meeting on August 30, 2013

USC meets every month of the year except for July to review Senate actions, promote agreement between Senates on issues relevant to the University as a whole, and provide advice to the President, to other administrative officers, and to the BOT through the President. Meeting agendas can be found at http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/documents.

Summer meetings of the USC included the following:

May 15, Student Center West, Chicago
June 18, Illini Union, Urbana
August 22, President’s House, Urbana

Brief reports on the May and June meetings are below. Approved minutes for the May meeting can be found at http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/./usc.uillinois.edu/files/minutes/MIN-051513.pdf.

USC Meeting on May 15, 2013 (UIC)

The meeting began with a telephone conversation with President Easter, who was on his way to Springfield for pension discussions and therefore could not attend the meeting. He provided an update on pension discussions. There was a motion to go into executive session to discuss a personnel issue; the conference voted to go into executive session, concluded at 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Jason Kosovski (Senior Communication and Evaluation Coordinator) provided an update on the University Administration review process. Seven teams, each including administrators and faculty, have submitted reports on different areas of the administration. Each has been circulated to the units reviewed for their response. Review teams will receive the unit responses and will be given an opportunity to revise their final reports if needed. The steering team is beginning to summarize the reports, and will forward recommendations to Vice President Pierre and the three campus Provosts. VP Pierre and the Provosts will review reports and present their own view. In response to questions from conference members, Dr. Kosovski said that the recommendations will likely be made public at the point when the Chancellors and the President are ready to act on recommendations.

The conference discussed the campus strategic plan process with Vice President Pierre. VP Pierre emphasized that campuses need to identify priorities and develop plans for strategic use of resources over a three-year time frame. The question is how to retain and enhance excellence to achieve campus missions. VP Pierre has had meetings with the Provosts and Chancellors of each campus. He reported that UIC and UIUC have set up committees involving Deans, administrators, the faculty senate, and at-large faculty members. In this process, UIUC is building on a “visioning excellence” exercise begun two years ago by Chancellor Wise. UIC has developed topical strategic plans related to diversity and other areas related to its mission. VP Pierre noted that UIS is working on developing strategies for meeting enrollment targets and aiming at growth.
Vice President Pierre offered an update on the FY14 budget process, which includes budget meetings on each campus. He noted that in the next year, higher benefit costs amount to an effective salary cut of at least 2%, which will have an impact on the kind of salary program we need. Conference members noted that we need a multi-year strategic plan for salary increases.

**Subcommittees** of the Conference met over lunch.

In the afternoon session, the Conference held its regular **business meeting**. UIUC representatives reported on a task force recently appointed by the UIUC SEC, which is taking up a series of question of interest to campus faculty, including: benchmarking salaries and family leave policies against peer institutions, working with other public universities to protect faculty pension and health care programs, and developing consistent policies for budget review at all levels, from departments to campus and university levels, and ensuring that academic planning in the changing environment for higher education is done with careful thought, appropriate levels of transparency, and review by governance bodies.

Draft documents on USC Confidentiality Guidelines and Guidelines for Conduct of Business were referred to the Statutes and Governance Committee for review in light of Open Meetings Act requirements.

The meeting concluded with reports from each committee of the Conference. The Conference approved a motion from the Finance, Budget and Benefits Committee to urge the VPAA and Provosts to develop and maintain multi-year plans for progressive salary programs at all levels for each campus. The Conference also approved a motion from the Hospital and Health Affairs committee urging the President to conduct a review of the VPHA office, analogous to the UA review process.

Tolliver reported on the work of the Statutes and Governance Committee, which has been meeting informally with representatives of the President’s office to address questions about ST-72, Revisions to the Statutes (Academic Freedom), which has been approved by all three Senates.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.
Chair Burbules welcomed new members of the Conference (see http://www.usc.uiuc.edu/sites/usc.uiuc.edu/files/documents/USCmembers14_0.pdf for 2013/2014 membership). The Conference met with President Easter at 10 a.m. He noted that he would have to leave at 11 a.m. for Springfield for continued pension discussions. The President provided a brief pension update, noting that contrasting House and Senate plans were not acted on during the legislative session but that the IGPA plan seemed to be gaining some traction in on-going discussions. This plan transfers pension costs for the future to the universities (this would be phased in), increases employee contributions, and ties COLA to inflation. The plan also calls for university representation on the SUSR board.

The President talked about plans for the July BOT retreat, which will focus on broad questions about the structure of the health enterprise at the university. The health affairs subcommittee of the USC and the USC Chair have been invited to the retreat. There was a question about the status of faculty members on the Urbana campus who are part of the UIC College of Medicine but have asked to be transferred to the College of LAS at UIUC. This issue has not yet been resolved. The President noted that first year classes for medical students at the Peoria and Rockford campuses are at Urbana.

The Conference discussed the budget process with the President. The President emphasized the importance of faculty engagement in budget decisions, noting that strategic planning needs to be transparent and closely linked to campus visions. The example of the UIUC Campus Budget Oversight Committee was discussed. This is a shared governance committee with a faculty chair that reviews college budget proposals and makes recommendations to the Provost. President Easter noted that Senate budget committees should also play a role in each campus process. The Conference also commented on the need for a salary program to offset increased health care costs.

The Conference asked the President to comment on challenges of planning for budget allocations during an on-going negotiation with the UIC faculty union. The President noted that programmatic budget allocation should be part of the shared governance process.

The President left for Springfield shortly before 11 a.m., and the Conference agenda order was modified. Peg O’Donoghue from the Office of the President was present to discuss on-going discussions with members of the Conference’s Statutes and Governance Committee about concerns about language in proposed revisions to the Statutes regarding academic freedom. Committee chair Tolliver summarized the group’s work to date; the committee met with O’Donoghue and Katherine Galvin from the UIUC Provost’s office to review background documents on academic freedom and first amendment rights and to discuss “applicable academic standards of conduct” mentioned in the proposed revision. The committee, with O’Donoghue and Galvin, is hoping to develop a background document that responds to some of the questions raised by O’Donoghue and Galvin, without changing the language already approved by the three senates. Any such change would require returning proposed language to the senates. O’Donoghue commented that President Easter is a strong proponent of academic freedom. She also noted that at the University of Illinois academic freedom is included in the statutes rather than in a handbook as at some other institutions, which requires careful attention to language and any unintended consequences.
USC subcommittees met briefly before lunch.

At lunch, the Conference met with Board Chair Kennedy for a discussion of challenges facing the University medical campuses. He commented on the ways in which the Cook County Hospital has prepared for upcoming changes in the health care funding environment beginning in 2014. This will be the subject of the summer retreat.

During the afternoon session, the Conference conducted the 2013-2014 organizational meeting, electing a chair and vice chair and executive committee, and appointing members to subcommittees. Kim Graber, Chair of the Nominating Committee, chaired this part of the meeting. Other members of the nominating committee were Jorge Villegas from UIS and Tim Shanahan (UIC). She said the nominating committee put a lot of time into consulting with all members of the conference as they developed the slate of nominees for each office. The Conference had previously been provided with brief biographical statements for each candidate for office. New and continuing members voted by secret ballot. Jorge Villegas was elected as Chair, and Donald Chambers (UIC) was elected Vice Chair. Both are simultaneously elected to the Executive Committee. Remaining members of the Executive Committee are: Roy Campbell and Joyce Tolliver (UIUC), Lynn Fisher (UIS), and Kouros Mohammadian (UIC). Committee slates were also approved, continuing membership of most committees from last year and incorporating new members.

After the organizational meeting, the regular business meeting of the Conference resumed.

The Conference discussed a draft document regarding USC Guidelines for Conduct of Business and Confidentiality. There was discussion of effective communication, transparency, communication with the media, and how to deal with executive sessions when some members are participating on the phone. A motion was made to exclude electronic or phone participants from executive sessions. After some discussion of how to balance broad participation with confidentiality in (rare) executive sessions, the motion was postponed to a later meeting. The Statutes and Governance Committee will review the document and bring it back in the fall.

Burbules shared a draft statement he plans to make to the BOT at their July meeting, focusing on shared governance and collective bargaining. There was a lively discussion of the pros and cons of commenting on aspects of this topic. Burbules commented that he would make clear that the statement reflects his views and not those of the Conference.

Chair Burbules presented plaques of appreciation members whose terms on USC were ending, including Ken Andersen (UIUC, who served two terms as USC chair), Geula Gibori (UIC) and Leslie Struble (UIUC).

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.