

UNIVERSITY SENATES CONFERENCE

September 18, 2012 Meeting
Student Center West, UIC

Report to UIS Campus Senate

The Senates Conference is charged with reviewing actions of the three campus Senates and working to promote consistency on issues of university-wide relevance. The Senates Conference is also advisory to the Board of Trustees through the President, to the President, and to other administrative officers (<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/index.cfm>). The group meets monthly except in July. Current UIS representatives are Peter Boltuc (Vice-Chair, Executive Committee Member), Lynn Fisher (Executive Committee Member) and Jorge Villegas.

Information on conference membership is available online (<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/membership.cfm>), and the agenda for this meeting is here: <http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/Documents/AGN-0918-12.pdf>. Guests at this meeting were President Robert Easter, Vice President for Academic Affairs Christophe Pierre, former UIC Chancellor Donald Langenberg, and Board Chair Christopher Kennedy.

I. Meeting with President Easter and Vice President Pierre. President Easter and VPAA Christophe Pierre joined the conference for the two-hour morning session.

President Easter shared some of his goals for FY 2013 with the conference. Goals include: 1) identify outdated or redundant functions within the University Administration; 2) call on the VPAA to establish procedures for regular evaluation of academic programs; and 3) address ambiguities in administrative reporting structure.

President Easter discussed plans to build on the recently completed Administrative Review & Restructuring (ARR¹) by identifying redundancies and unnecessary or outdated functions in administrative units. The intent is to cut costs and ensure that administration is responsive to the core business of academic programs. Conference members asked about administrative impacts of TEM and other changes that shift work to units. There was some discussion of the importance of having user and faculty representatives on committees that select administrative systems for the university.

President Easter expressed his conviction that the success of the university depends on effective communication between faculty, administration and the Board. He also commented on budget anxieties related to the upcoming federal deadline for deficit reduction, which could result in reductions in budgets of federal granting agencies.

Vice-President Pierre asked for feedback from the conference on a working draft of a process for centralized review of academic programs. He plans to have a process in place by the end of the current academic year. Vice-President Pierre noted that campuses already collect a lot of data

¹ See presentation by Avijit Ghosh at Sept. 14 Board of Trustees meeting: <http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agenda/September%2014.%202012/7-presentation-ARR%20Update.pdf>.

about academic programs through existing processes including IBHE mandated program reviews, accreditation reviews, and campus budget planning. Discussion focused on processes for aggregating data from existing campus review processes to monitor the “health” of academic programs. Possible measures of scholarly, teaching, and service contributions of academic programs were discussed. Conference members suggested that it would be useful to include human resources factors, such as faculty retention and promotion rates. Aggregated data could serve as an early warning of potential problems. VP Pierre emphasized the importance of collaborative definition of metrics and campus-level control of any process of more detailed review.

Former UIC Chancellor **Donald Langenberg** was a guest at lunch with the conference. Professor Langenberg was in town for celebrations marking the 30th anniversary of the University of Illinois Chicago. He discussed the history of UIC and trends in higher education with the conference.

II. Discussion with Board Chair Kennedy. Chairman Kennedy joined the conference for about an hour after lunch. In a discussion of budgetary matters, he emphasized the need for the university to refocus its efforts to preserve greatness, and also to compete effectively for top students and grant funding.

III. Business Meeting. The USC approved nominations for USC committees and talked about how the new committee structure will work. The four committees, which parallel Board committees, are: Academic Affairs and Research; Finance, Budget and Benefits; Hospital and Health Affairs; and Statutes and Governance². All three campuses are represented on each committee. Committee chairs or designees are expected to attend meetings of the appropriate Board committees; the conference also hopes that the new committee structure will offer opportunities for focused discussions with the Vice Presidents. USC Chair Nick Burbules hopes that the new committee structure will contribute to substantive and consistent communication between conference members, trustees, and administrative officers.

UIS representatives on the USC committees are:

Boltuc – Finance, Budget and Benefits Committee

Fisher – Academic Affairs and Research Committee; Statutes and Governance Committee

Villegas – Hospital and Health Affairs Committee

The conference approved a statement congratulating UIC on its 30th anniversary. There was a discussion of topics for the conference retreat in October. An ad hoc committee of three members (Chambers, Fisher, Struble) was asked to propose topics for faculty presentations to the Board.

Respectfully submitted by Lynn Fisher
September 22, 2012

² Committee structures and charges are described in USC bylaws, available here:
<http://www.usc.uillinois.edu/Documents/OT-266OrgFunctions0823-12.pdf>.