FACULTY SENATE MEETING
March 5, 2008

1. and 2. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Chair Robert Best called the meeting to order and asked for corrections to the minutes of the February 6, 2008. There were no corrections, and the minutes were approved as written.

3. Invited Guest

Dr. Christine Curtis, Vice Provost for Faculty Development, presented an overview of the Southeastern Conference Academic Consortium Academic Leadership Development Program. The goals of this initiative, developed under the auspices of SECAC, are to build an academic leadership pool among the faculty of the 12 SEC universities and to prepare current and potential leaders for academic leadership. The program will sponsor two workshops each year, each hosted by one of the SEC institutions. The first of these workshops will be hosted by USC in October of this year, with the second to be held at the University of Arkansas in February of 2009.

Each participating institution will have three to five fellows, with each institution designing its own fellowship. The USC Fellowship carries a two-year commitment, with the first year devoted to the two SECAC workshops and a local leadership program. Fellows in their second year will serve as the selection committee and as mentors for new fellows in the program. Eligible individuals will be tenured faculty members with demonstrated leadership ability. Each applicant will be asked to demonstrate how he or she plans to use the skills and knowledge acquired through the program.   The University will provide funding, so no cost will be incurred by the individual or the unit. The application deadline is March 14. Complete information can be found at http://www.sc.edu/provost/facultydevelopment/aldp.shtml.

4. Reports of Committees

a. Senate Steering Committee, Professor Laura Kane, Secretary:

Professor Kane (School of Medicine Library) presented a slate of nominees from the Senate Steering Committee to fill vacancies for faculty committees, and opened the floor for further nominations.

She announced the following appointments by the Committee to fill vacancies of one year or less:

Chris Robinson (Art) to the Faculty Advisory Committee
Kin Blackburn (Economics) to the Faculty Budget Committee
Vladimir Temlyakov (Mathematics) to the Faculty Grievance Committee

b. Committee on Curricula and Courses, Ina Rae Hark, Chair:

Chair Best gave the report of the committee on behalf of Professor Hark (English) and other members of the committee, who were unable to attend.   He presented changes in curriculum and/or courses within: the College of Arts and Sciences, the Moore School of Business, the College of Engineering and Computing, and the School of Music [see Attachment 1, pp. 7-25]. All motions carried.

c. Committee on Scholastic Standards and Petitions, Professor Jeff Persels, Chair:

Professor Persels (Languages, Literatures, and Cultures) discussed an ongoing initiative whereby the committee is revising the language for academic probation and retention, which has not been revisited in a quarter of a century. He outlined three main goals of the revision:

1. To clarify the language and the process to make it easier for students to know where they stand at any point in the probation process.

2. To raise academic standards in keeping with USC's peer and aspirant peer institutions, many of which are going through the same process.

3. To intervene early, thanks to the availability of the Student Success Center to provide students with the skills to succeed.

Professor Marco Valtorta (Computer Science and Engineering) asked whether the committee had access to information regarding the effects of these revisions on minority students.

Registrar Barbara Blaney fielded the question. She noted that there has never been an early intervention program before now, so comparative effect would be hard to quantify, but that minority students would be affected as much or as little as other student groups in the absence of early intervention. The aims of the early intervention program are to make probation requirements more transparent and to target different student groups, including minority groups, for special help as necessary, thereby reducing first-year suspensions for poor academic performance.

In response to Professor Valtorta's request for the current number of first-year suspensions, Registrar Blaney stated that the number is 55 students.

Professor Francis Gadala-Maria (Engineering and Computing) offered an editorial change to the table describing probation requirements, and the change was accepted.

5. Reports of Officers

President Andrew Sorensen

President Sorensen related the true story of a delightful encounter that began when a USC senior student arrived on the doorstep of the Sorensens' home, and resulted in a lunch engagement for the student with Dr. Sorensen.

The President thanked Dr. Curtis and Provost Becker for their work with the SECAC leadership development program. He noted the under-representation of women and people of color in educational administration, and encouraged applications from these demographic groups to the leadership program.

Peter Beattie, former Premier of Queensland, and his wife Heather are now at the College of Nursing, the Moore School of Business and the College of Arts and Sciences. President Sorensen conveyed to the faculty the Beattie's thanks for the warm welcome that they have received at USC.

The President outlined his continuing efforts to lobby the legislature on behalf of the University. He highlighted the support of the Commission on Economic Excellence, which continues to vote in support of the various programs that the University has under its auspices. President Sorensen recently made a presentation to the House Ways and Means Committee and was questioned intensely on the endowed chairs program. The House voted to extend the program at the current rate of $30 million per year.

The President noted that while 5-year trend data showed a decrease in the enrollment of African American students at USC's Columbia campus, there was an increase in minority enrollment at the 7 other campuses, resulting in a system-wide increase of 3% over the last five years. A focus group of African American students felt that these dynamics resulted from decisions by African American students to attend the universities near their respective homes. The University has launched three programs to address these and related issues:

1. The Gamecock Guarantee Program: USC guarantees to make up the difference between the amount of a scholarship award and the total amount of tuition (including technology fee) for any student who qualifies as coming from a federally-determined poverty-level family. Students are also eligible for work study programs to help pay for room and board.

2. Bridge Program: Students may enroll in one of SC's 16 technical college and, upon successful completion of the 2-year program, transfer in to USC in the third year.

3. Awards from the College of Engineering and Computing: Thanks to the support of faculty, friends and advisory board members, the College will make up the difference for

its enrolling students between the amount of their scholarship support and the total cost of attending the College of Engineering and Computing.

Other 5-year demographic trends at USC include: enrollment of Hispanic American students at the Columbia campus grew by 42% and by 29% system-wide. Enrollment of Asian American students is up at Columbia by 15% and by 12% across the system. Enrollment of Native American students showed the highest increase, up 46% at Columbia and 41% system-wide. President Sorensen noted that USC is experiencing a gratifying increase in diversity at the same time that its admission standards are rising, attesting to the ability of the applicants and the dedication of the faculty and staff who have worked so diligently to affect these changes. The President thanked the faculty and staff for their work.

Professor Matt Miller (Mathematics) asked President Sorensen if any assistance was available to students whose families made one dollar more than the federally-determined poverty level. The President reminded the Senate that 99% of enrolling students have lottery scholarships and that USC offers many types of scholarships as well, and so is able to address students' financial assistance needs.

Provost Mark Becker

Provost Becker recommended to the Senate the website of the University's Ombudsman (http://www.sc.edu/ombuds/). Professor Jim Augustine serves as the University's Ombudsman for the faculty, and acts as a resource person for faculty concerns and ideas. The Provost encouraged the Senators to read Professor Augustine's annual report and to become familiar with the services offered by the office.

Provost Becker thanked Professor Jeff Persels, the Scholastic Standards and Petitions Committee, and Registrar Barbara Blaney for their work on revising the language for academic probation and retention. He noted that the goal of the revision is to reduce the number of probations and suspensions.

The Provost thanked President Sorensen for his vision in organizing the Southeastern Conference Academic Consortium, and for his leadership in moving it forward.

6. Report of the Chair

Chair Best reported on the Presidential Search process, and recommended to the Senate a University webpage that tracks the progress of the search (http://www.sc.edu/presidentialsearch/). He noted that this site contains instructions for making nominations to the Search Committee, and also the fact that the Committee's meetings are open to the faculty, as well as to the general public.

The Chair announced that revisions to the Faculty Manual will be getting underway soon. A page is being developed on the Faculty Senate site for the revisions (http://www.sc.edu/faculty/manual.shtml). Proposed changes will be posted there soon for review before the April 28, 2008 General Faculty Meeting. Any comments or suggestions can be sent to Professor Constance Schulz (History) at Schulz@gwm.sc.edu. Chair Best thanked everyone who has agreed to be involved in the revision work.

7. Unfinished Business

There were no further nominations for faculty committees, and Chair Best moved to close the floor for further nominations. The motion carried. As the current slate of nominees contained only individuals who were running unopposed, those nominees were declared to have won the election, and became members of the committees to which they were nominated.

8. New Business

At the request of Professor William Thesing (English), Chair Best referred to the Faculty Advisory Committee the issues relating to the additions to base salary of various promotional increments for faculty.

At the request of Professor Matt Miller (Mathematics), Chair Best referred to the Scholastic Standards and Petitions Committee the question of using differential admissions standards to decrease the incidence of academic probation and suspension.

9. Announcements

The next Faculty Senate meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2008 at 3:00 pm in the Law School Auditorium.

10. Adjournment.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting.