# USC Faculty Senate Meeting

## Meeting Minutes

October 7, 2026
Russell House Theater
Liam Hein, Chair, presiding

The meeting was called to order at 14:31 EST by Faculty Senate Chair Liam Hein (College of Nursing).
Minutes from September 9, 2026, were approved.

### President's Report:

The President was unable to attend the meeting.

### Provost's Report:

Provost Fitzpatrick provided an update on the development and approval of professional track faculty promotion guidelines. There were 48 guidelines in her office, at various stages of review. She noted that experience with college-level tenure and promotion standards had helped some colleges develop their professional track guidelines. Approved guidelines are available on the provost's website and may serve as examples for units preparing or revising their submissions.

The Provost identified common problems in submitted guidelines, including:

- Provisions that did not align with the Faculty Manual
- Missing or unclear voting procedures
- Omission of required components
- Failure to define performance categories used in promotion decisions
- Resubmission of documents without adequately addressing previous feedback

The Provost reported that her office had returned 34 submissions and resubmissions with detailed feedback. Some units had required repeated rounds of revision, including one that had

undergone six reviews. 26 proposals were still under review in her office, with most having been submitted May 1st or later.

The Provost acknowledged faculty frustration with delays in obtaining new titles and advancing through the promotion processes. She described the implementation as a major organizational change and stated that personnel turnover had contributed to delays. She affirmed that her office would continue working with units to improve the process while ensuring compliance with the Faculty Manual.

In addition to discussing PTF guidelines, the Provost also announced that nominations were open for teaching, research, and service awards administered by her office. The nomination portal opened October 1 and will close November 11. Faculty were encouraged to review award criteria on the provost's website and nominate eligible colleagues.

The Provost also announced that the Office of the Provost Research Competition was open for its second year. The provost described these opportunities to support faculty amid difficult external research funding conditions. She described three funding tracks:

1. **Bridge funding contingent on an external funding decision.** This track supports faculty who have submitted substantial proposals to an external agency or foundation and are awaiting a decision. Funding would become available if the external proposal is unsuccessful, allowing recipients to strengthen their projects and prepare revised submissions. The provost indicated that the amount was approximately $50,000, while expressing uncertainty about the exact figure.
2. **Seed funding.** This track supports preliminary work needed to develop proposals for external funding.
3. **Major field-defining projects.** This track supports substantial scholarly or creative work, including arts projects and manuscripts.

Finally, the Provost announced a reception for recently promoted PTF, which will recognize their service. The reception is October 13th from 3:30-5pm.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

**Alex Lockwood, Department of English:** raised concerns that the new professional track categories could increase expectations, such as student mentoring and higher degree requirements, without corresponding increases in compensation or benefits.
Provost: faculty assignments and the distribution of duties can change across appointment periods. Mentoring may be one way to demonstrate teaching excellence without necessarily being a universal job requirement. Revised categories are a means of recognizing the range of work faculty already perform. Regarding salary increases, compensation decisions occur at the dean's level and faculty need to discuss those questions with their deans.

- During the discussion of mentoring, the provost announced that the artificial intelligence internship program would reopen. The program pairs faculty expertise with students receiving training in AI, allowing them to explore the technology's strengths and limitations through collaborative work.
- She identified participation in such mentoring as an example of an activity faculty could document in their professional records.

**Michael Shtutman, College of Pharmacy:** raised a concern about professional track research faculty being required to relinquish research titles and become staff during research core centralization.
Provost: The Provost stated that she would need to discuss the circumstances directly with the individuals involved to determine the relevant appointment and organizational issues. She offered to continue the conversation outside the Senate meeting.

**Marco Valtorta, Department of Computer Science and Engineering**: As the Faculty manual states, compensation should account for the full range of appointment responsibilities, which ordinarily include service. Faculty may voluntarily undertake uncompensated service. The Faculty Manual is quite detailed on this matter and should be considered.
Provost: Service expectations should be reflected in appointment contracts and that substantial service assignments, such as program leadership, may be compensated through course releases or salary supplements.

## Faculty Committee Reports:

**Faculty Advisory Committee:** Susan Kuo (chair) presented two proposed amendments for notification purposes and announced the withdrawal of a third proposed amendment. Both proposed amendments will be voted on next month.

- The committee withdrew its proposed amendment concerning the Committee on Honorary Degrees. The proposal is no longer before the Senate.
- The committee proposed an amendment to the Faculty Manual to update the University Athletics Advisory Committee's membership provisions. The amendment would reflect the current governance structure of the Board of Trustees and remove an outdated reference to a permanent chair of the board.
- The committee proposed an amendment to the Faculty Senate bylaws concerning summer meetings.
    - Amendments approved the previous spring had removed or modernized references to a regular summer Senate meeting and recognized that any necessary summer meeting would be conducted electronically. A subsequent review identified a related bylaws provision that had inadvertently remained unchanged.
    - The proposed amendment would complete that work by removing the expectation of a regularly scheduled summer meeting while preserving the Senate's ability to convene during the summer when necessary.

**Curricula and Courses Committee**: Bill Knapp (chair) presented 8 proposals—5 course proposals and three program proposals or changes. The proposals had been posted for one week, and the committee had received no comments or concerns. There are approximately 130 proposals in the queue for the committee's next meeting.

The motion for approval of these proposals was unanimously approved.

## Report of the Chair:

Chair Hein reminded faculty of digital accessibility requirements coming in April 2027 and encouraged them to use resources available through the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Available resources include short instructional materials and guidance for making equations and formulas accessible.

Chair Hein noted that an accommodations statement had been added the previous month regarding Faculty Senate participation. Faculty needing accommodations for Senate participation, including sign language interpretation, may use the designated email contact to request arrangements. Captions are available for participants attending online.

Chair Hein announced appointments to fill vacancies and temporary absences on three standing committees, which do not require a Senate vote.

- **Library Committee**: Sabrina Habib, College of Information and Communications
- **Committee on the Carolina Core**: David Cutler, School of Music
- **UCTP**: David Hitchcock, McCausland College of Arts & Sciences (Statistics)

## New Business:

None.

## Good of the Order:

**Abbas Tavakoli, College of Nursing**: announced two Information Technology Committee town halls:

- Friday, November 6: Noon–2 p.m. Russell House, Room 322
- Tuesday, November 10: 3–5 p.m. Russell House, Room 322

The town halls will provide opportunities to discuss artificial intelligence, Blackboard, and other technology matters. Faculty were encouraged to attend and share the information with their units.

The next meeting is Wednesday, November 4, 2026. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 15:01 EST.

## Attendance:

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Submitted by:

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October 28, 2026