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2 **University of South Carolina General Faculty Meeting**

3 April 24, 2024

4 Booker T. Washington Auditorium, University of South Carolina – Columbia Campus

5 **PRESIDENT MICHAEL AMIRIDIS Presiding**

6 The meeting was called to order at 15:01.

7 The minutes of the fall 2023 General Faculty Meeting (held on September 6, 2023) were  
8 approved.

9 **President's Report:**

10 **PRESIDENT MICHAEL AMIRIDIS** (hence: AMIRIDIS) stated that this is the busiest time of  
11 the year for him, but also the most pleasant, because we celebrate the achievement of our  
12 academic community. This celebration had started at the end of March with faculty awards and  
13 would finish on May 14 with staff awards. In between, we would celebrate our students, starting  
14 with the national fellowship awards, including, for the first time in several years, a Truman  
15 scholarship and, for maybe the thirtieth year in a row, several Goldwater scholars: three this year.  
16 We had a university award ceremony on the Horseshoe that included departments and colleges.  
17 Last Friday, students were recognized for their research achievements. The biggest celebration of  
18 all is graduation. AMIRIDIS stated that there would be six commencement ceremonies in  
19 Columbia; they would become seven next year, because of a desire to continue recognizing each  
20 student individually.

21 AMIRIDIS encouraged all to attend the ROTC joint commissioning, which he described as  
22 beautiful. He emphasized that students wanted to see faculty at commencement, because they  
23 knew them best. He encouraged all faculty to sign up to attend one of the ceremonies.

24 AMIRIDIS reminded us that in the past year we celebrated a unique moment in our university,  
25 with the unveiling of a statue honoring Henrie Monteith Treadwell, Robert Anderson, and James  
26 Solomon Jr. The enrollment of these three students, respectively a freshman, a transfer student,  
27 and a graduate student, changed the course of the university's history by achieving  
28 desegregation. The president noted that this is the only people-honoring monument on the  
29 Horseshoe, beyond the Maxcy monument.

30 AMIRIDIS noted that we received, once again, a record number of applications; for the first  
31 time, more than 15,000. He noted that it was particularly difficult to predict how many will  
32 enroll this year, because of late federal financial aid information due to trouble with FAFSA.  
33 Still, he expected the number of incoming freshmen to be similar to last year's.

34 AMIRIDIS expected that a record year in research funding will be confirmed when numbers are  
35 finalized at the end of June. He noted the opening of five university research hubs, the  
36 establishment of the statewide USC Brain Health Network, and the federally funded Regional  
37 Innovation Hub in Columbia and Greenville. He noted that the Innovation Hub was a project

38 coordinated with the SC Department of Commerce, indicating a commitment to improving R&D  
39 as well as manufacturing activities in the state, which would provide demand for more advanced  
40 degrees and better paying jobs.

41 AMIRIDIS noted that fund-raising was on course to reach the best levels in six years and  
42 highlighted the naming of the Joseph P. Rice Law School, the first naming of a college or school  
43 in 20 years.

44 AMIRIDIS thanked the senate for its help in timely processing the approval of new  
45 undergraduate interdisciplinary certificates. He noted the introduction of the centralized  
46 advisement model throughout the university, which adds renewed focus to the degree to career  
47 aspect of advisement. He noted that students appreciate the first-year experience and want it to  
48 be repeated in later years.

49 AMIRIDIS stated that, during the summer, his administration would work on the next steps of  
50 the Health Sciences Campus and on the University Master Plan, which would allow for a  
51 comprehensive approach to the improvement facilities and analyzing its cost.

52 AMIRIDIS stated that progress was being made on finalizing the salary compression study for  
53 faculty (led by the Provost) and staff (led by Human Resources).

54 AMIRIDIS noted that all the activities he listed could not have happened without the support,  
55 dedication, and professionalism of the faculty, thanked the faculty, and invited them to take some  
56 time to rest and recharge over the summer.

57 **Provost's Report:**

58 VICE PROVOST MARIANNE FITZPATRICK (hence: FITZPATRICK) gave the provost report,  
59 in the absence of Provost Arnett.

60 FITZPATRICK stated that Provost Arnett was in Washington, DC, consulting on how we can  
61 advance our research priorities through strategic faculty hiring initiatives.

62 FITZPATRICK announced the election of Professor Susan Cutter of the Geography Department  
63 to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, who joined William Hubbard, Dean of the Law  
64 School, and Professor Nikky Finney of the Department of English in receiving this honor.

65 FITZPATRICK recalled the reception hosted by the office of the provost for the 24 recipients of  
66 Excel grants in the humanities, arts and social sciences.

67 FITZPATRICK thanked the faculty for their work as educators. She noted that the president  
68 would award over 8,000 degrees this spring. She encouraged the faculty to sign up for one of the  
69 commencement ceremonies using the RSVP form on the provost website.

70 Among activities of the past year, FITZPATRICK recalled the hiring of the director for the new  
71 first generation student center, the revamping of the Living and Learning communities and the  
72 associated mentoring relationships. She noted that the new four-year advising model would  
73 foster relations of the academic departments with the advisement center. She highlighted that  
74 our freshman-to-sophomore retention rate was 91%, passing the 90% mark for the first time.

75 She noted the transition to Blackboard Ultra Course View as an LMS and reminded the faculty of  
76 related training opportunities from CTE and the IT group throughout the summer.

77 FITZPATRICK recalled the opening of a mid-career faculty advanced program led by associate  
78 provost Toby Jenkins; this program would include 20 individuals, to be named garnet and black  
79 professors. She mentioned that we hire approximately 200 new faculty members per year. Their  
80 onboarding was facilitated by a new faculty academy and orientation program.

81 FITZPATRICK expressed her hope that all faculty would find the time to relax and recharge  
82 during the summer.

83 AMIRIDIS opened the floor for questions for him and for FITZPATRICK.

84 PROFESSOR ABBAS TAVAKOLI (College of Nursing) asked the president and the vice  
85 provost about university administration plans concerning possible student demonstrations like  
86 those that had recently occurred at Yale, Columbia, and other university campuses.

87 PRESIDENT AMIRIDIS replied that there was a demonstration on our campus the night before.  
88 He expressed the position that the university would support the first amendment rights of  
89 students, faculty, and external constituencies. He noted, however, that disruption of events or  
90 operations would not be tolerated. In case of disruptions, students would be addressed by  
91 student affairs officers and asked to leave and told they would be arrested if refusing.

92 PRESIDENT AMIRIDIS stated that, if students persisted and did not leave after being told to so,  
93 they would eventually be arrested. He said that was standard procedure. He also referred to  
94 existing policies and practices that do not allow camping on the Horseshoe or other locations on  
95 campus.

96 PROFESSOR MICHAEL (MICKY) MYRICK (Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry)  
97 asked whether the number of faculty that we hire per year included just the Columbia campus  
98 and whether it included both tenure- and professional-track faculty.

99 FITZPATRICK answered yes on both counts.

100 PROFESSOR MYRICK asked for a breakdown of how many tenure-track (TTF) and  
101 professional-track faculty (PTF) members there were on campus.

102 FITZPATRICK said that she knew the number but declined to provide it at this time. She stated  
103 that in the last year approximately 100 PTF and 65 TTF were hired.

104 PROFESSOR MYRICK asked about the trend in the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate.

105 FITZPATRICK replied that the leadership team would like to see the retention rate climb to 94%,  
106 which would be in line with elite AAU institutions. She also noted the importance of four- and  
107 six-year graduation rates. AMIRIDIS highlighted the importance of these rates in helping not  
108 only our reputation directly but also our students in their search for good jobs.

109 PROFESSOR AARON DICKER (Department of English) asked about retention rates for  
110 undergraduate students past the sophomore year. FITZPATRICK answered that she did not have

111 these numbers, but that student cohorts are tracked, and expected that numbers would be  
112 provided by the provost in the fall.

113 LIBRARIAN MICHAEL WEISENBURG (University Libraries) asked about the revision of the  
114 budget model: process, hopes, visions, and relationship with the institution of unit faculty budget  
115 committees, which required additional transparency in the budget process.

116 AMIRIDIS stated that he was not a budget model scholar, that he viewed the budget model as a  
117 tool that might need fixing, that he considered the current model to be complicated, and that he  
118 was still in a fact collecting phase. He stated that he would meet with consultants on the budget  
119 in a couple of weeks. FITZPATRICK stated that the faculty senate legislation leading to the  
120 establishment of faculty budget committees in each school and college was an amazing step. She  
121 stated that the current model was difficult to understand, and that the chair of the university  
122 faculty budget committee was doing an excellent job setting up training for unit committee  
123 members. AMIRIDIS stated that his philosophy is that the budget model should not change the  
124 priorities and goals of the university, but that on the contrary it should support the university  
125 priorities and the way the university operates.

126 PROFESSOR MARCO VALTORTA asked the president to clarify which budget group he was to  
127 meet in two weeks. AMIRIDIS responded that this was an outside consulting group, and that the  
128 timing was approximate.

129 PROFESSOR MYRICK asked about the overall trajectory of the university budget. AMIRIDIS  
130 responded that the trajectory had been very positive, both because of strong enrollment and of  
131 funds provided by the state general assembly, not just for tuition mitigation but also for specific  
132 projects and specific schools, such as law and medicine. AMIRIDIS cautioned that this  
133 abundance of resources might not last. He noted that funding from the federal government for  
134 specific projects was strong, although targeted to specific projects and non-recurring.

135 AMIRIDIS introduced FACULTY SENATE CHAIR WAYNE OUTTEN (hence: OUTTEN).

136 **Faculty Senate Chair's Report:**

137 OUTTEN presented two items for approval. Both were proposed changes to the faculty manual  
138 and were posted on the faculty senate page in preparation for this meeting. OUTTEN admitted  
139 that the second (as introduced for vote) item had not been included in the agenda. No objection  
140 was raised to including it for a faculty vote at the meeting.

141 OUTTEN presented a motion on behalf of the senate to approve a 12-page expanded section on  
142 Professional-Track Faculty (PTF) in the Faculty Manual, as posted on the faculty senate website  
143 section of materials for this meeting. The new faculty manual section included faculty titles and  
144 procedures for appointment and promotion. AMIRIDIS called for a vote. The motion was  
145 approved unanimously.

146 OUTTEN thanked the university committee on professional track faculty and the faculty  
147 advisory committee for their two-year work on the just-approved section.

148 OUTTEN presented a motion on behalf of the senate to approve an updated section of the faculty  
149 manual with a procedure for the composition and election of the graduate council, as posted on  
150 the faculty senate website section of materials for this meeting. He noted that the revision  
151 modified the composition of the Graduate Council to at least partially link it to graduate student  
152 enrollment for the units and charged the units to implement an election procedure for selecting  
153 council members. AMIRIDIS called for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously.

154 OUTTEN proceeded with some comments, highlighting some of the achievements of the  
155 previous year. He mentioned the resolution on freedom of expression and academic freedom  
156 passed on February 23 and noted that an official response was both relayed and explained in a  
157 Q&A session by FITZPATRICK at the April 3 faculty senate meeting.

158 OUTTEN reminded us of the establishment of the unit faculty budget committee and of the  
159 training of members of those committees by the university budget committee with assistance  
160 from the university chapter of the AAUP.

161 OUTTEN mentioned the senate work on the transition to Blackboard Ultra Course View and  
162 successful lobbying for the establishment of an exemption request and evaluation process. He  
163 stated that the senate worked with the provost to ensure participation in a long-term Learning  
164 Management System (LMS) review committee, which would consider what to do after  
165 expiration of the current contract with Blackboard. He noted that a related survey had been sent  
166 out to the faculty.

167 OUTTEN stated that in the coming fall, the Senate and the standing committees would, among  
168 other things, implement the next phase of the Carolina Core review process, using the December  
169 report of the Carolina Core Review and Revision Committee. He stated that the Senate and the  
170 Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) would review the post-tenure review process as described in  
171 the faculty manual to ensure that it is fully integrated with faculty governance. OUTTEN stated  
172 that FAC would also be exploring ways in which faculty governance can be leveraged to advance  
173 research and scholarship across the campus.

174 **Old Business:**

175 None.

176 **New Business:**

177 None.

178 **Good of the Order:**

179 PROFESSOR VALTORTA noted the presence in the room of PROFESSOR LIAM HEIN, chair-  
180 elect of the faculty senate. AMIRIDIS invited him to stand to be recognized. AMIRIDIS  
181 congratulated PROFESSOR HEIN.

182 **The meeting was adjourned at 15:40.**

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