

USC Faculty Senate Meeting

Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2026
Russell House Theater
Liam Hein, Chair, presiding

The meeting was called to order at 14:32 EST by Faculty Senate Chair Liam Hein (College of Nursing).

Minutes from January 14, 2026 were approved.

President's Report:

President Amiridis was unable to attend due to illness.

Provost's Report:

Provost Fitzpatrick delivered an extended update on university-wide AI strategy covering governance, campus services, teaching & learning, research support, training, and operational efficiencies. The university has created several initiatives that promote campus-wide AI fluency and foster operational efficiency. As educators, the key question is “what do we want to accomplish with our students?”

AI should be treated as a collaborator, not an authority. Human judgment remains essential. AI can hallucinate, be outdated, lack deep emotional understanding, and is not accountable for real-world decisions. Students need to understand the ethical and social impacts of AI.

The university purchase of ChatGPT is a tool we can use to protect our data. Microsoft/ChatGPT enterprise tools were noted as preferable where they protect institutional and student data (unlike unprotected public inputs). There are four high-use, custom GPTs that our institution uses often, including 1) USC Campus Resource Guide, which is the official guide to resources, events, wellness, etc. 2) Cocky Scholar, which is an AI powered study partner following a Socratic

method; 3) The Garnet Guide to ChatGPT workflows; 4) Garnet AI Foundry is a central training operation for faculty and students, which assists in training on our AI tools available at USC.

In addition to online resources, we have the AI Institute, as well as the IT group is planning on implementing Drop-In hours for people in Close-Hipp Building, near the Apple Computing Operation. CTE set up several training programs for faculty and graduate students, and Thomas Cooper has data AI training programs. There are now 25 Provost AI Fellows who are working in a year-long program to design tools. We have AI communities of practice, as well as the Carolina Grants and Innovation hub, advancing all these AI tools to improve proposal quality and competitiveness. Finally, we had 60 faculty work together for a one-year program—Propel AI—to create a community and learn from AI experts across the country, and the Aspire AI grant.

The Provost put emphasis on the need of our students to become fluent in the use of AI. To achieve that, she is piloting a program to have student interns that will work with a faculty member on a research or teaching project. This is being piloted in the Honors College with 450 students. Students are trained and will be paid to work with faculty. This will program will be part of UNIV 101. All students who complete the program will get a digital badge.

The Office of Student Conduct is issuing academic integrity guidance related to AI. Faculty are urged to clearly state course-level AI policies in syllabi (e.g., allowed / not allowed / conditional use). It is difficult to accuse students of AI plagiarism, thus making syllabus statements so important. The Provost does not support buying AI-detection tools because they are unreliable. Instead, the Provost emphasized designing assessments and reinforcing standards, rather than policing with weak detectors.

We have designed an advising and enrollment tool, ARC, that gives students answers to commonly asked questions, which should reduce transactional advisor load. This also allows time with advisors to be spent on discussing career goals, what they are interested in, and why they chose their major. Our enrollment management group wants an AI-sponsored transfer group

review for admissions. That would make it easier to look for those key courses we require on transfer transcripts.

There is a concern about decentralized, rapid purchasing across colleges. The CIO briefed deans and chairs to coordinate purchases, reduce duplicate spending, and negotiate better enterprise terms. For example: coordinated buying could secure broader licenses or better pricing.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Aaron Dicker, Department of English: We've had larger classes every year since the pandemic, yet our infrastructure has not maintained that growth (e.g. not having enough dorm rooms for all freshman). So, what is the projection for the upcoming first year class?

Provost: We were all told there would be a demographic cliff and we weren't going to get students, but that didn't happen here. We are building several new dorms, but we're currently struggling, especially with sophomores, juniors, and seniors who want to live on campus. We also need to increase our permanent faculty, instead of hiring so many temporary faculty members.

Abbas Tavakoli, College of Nursing: After the loss of one of our students this month in student housing, many students have questions. Can you share any information with us?

Provost: Any time this happens, the Dean and the President notify the parents as soon as possible. We then reach out to every instructor who has the student in class, and we have clinical staff that go into the class. But we don't make widespread announcements.

Alex Lockwood, Department of English: What is the university doing to ensure that AI technologies are being approached critically, in terms of emphasizing the political, ethical, and environmental costs?

Provost: The AI fluency module that will be implemented in UNIV 101 specifically addresses ethical use of AI. And over 90% of our students take UNIV 101. Faculty should be embedding academic coursework in their basic teaching that addresses these issues.

Angela Acosta, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: Where does CircleIn fit into the equation when thinking about AI initiatives?

Provost: We bought a contract with CircleIn, and it has embedded some AI tools. It is basically useless unless the faculty adopt it and want to use it. However, the Athletic Department is thrilled to have it because they have a lot of students in different sections of the same course, so they can see what the students are doing within different courses and their tutors.

Stephanie Ackerson, Biological Sciences: In CircleIn, students have messaging at the top where SIs can post messages about their meetings, etc., but we can't see that from the faculty side.

Provost: That seems like a problem, and the Vice Provost for undergraduate affairs is here and will investigate that.

Faculty Committee Reports:

Curricula and Courses Committee: Michael Dickson presented the committee report and called for approval for 27 new courses. Call for proposals was unanimously approved.

Faculty Advisory Committee: Liam Hein presented for the committee. The committee withdrew the proposed changes to the faculty manual that were slated to be voted on today. The revisions will be presented next month.

Report of the Chair:

Chair Hein began by discussing a letter sent by Brice Bible, Vice President for Information Technology and CIO, and Julian Williams, Vice President of System Affairs and Community Engagement regarding the digital accessibility requirements by the Department of Justice, effective April 24, 2026. The letter is available in the February 4th meeting materials on the Faculty Senate website.

CTE developed many 30 minutes sessions to address this. You can go to the CTE website:

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/workshops/digital_accessibility_microlearning_series/index.php

CPHE open comment period began today 2/4/26. That call will be sent to all senators by Chair Hein, which should be shared with your constituents. You can also go to CPHE.org. Several changes have been made since the last version.

Chair Hein requested that units please elect senators in the spring, so they are available to come to orientation in August and ready to serve for the fall semester. We need nominations for the Faculty Senate Chair-Elect. The call will go out in February and into March; the election will be held in April. Please consider nominating your colleagues. Nominees cannot be in an administrative position but does not need to be a full professor.

We received 89 volunteers for standing committees. Thank you! That is more than can be placed on committees, so if you are not selected, we will share the names with the Provost because several of the standing committees have appointed positions as well. The names of the newly elected members will be presented in March.

Good of the Order:

The next meeting is Wednesday, March 4, 2026. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 15:13 EST.

Attendance:

Stephanie Ackerson	Ackerson
Angela Acosta	Acosta
Dwayne Alleyne	Alleyne
Nakita Barnes	Barnes
Mary Ellen Bellanca	Bellanca
Anna Blenda	Blenda
Katrice Branner	Branner
Laura Brashears	Brashears

Hui Chen	Chen
Logan Cocklin	Cocklin
William Consagra	Consagra
Joshua Cooper	Cooper
Brent Dedas	Dedas
Aaron Dicker	Dicker
Michael Dickson	Dickson
Jean Ellis	Ellis
Kristy Ellison	Ellison
Chaz Evans	Evans
Pearl Fernandes	Fernandes
Kelly Fleming	Fleming
Blair Flicker	Flicker
Michael Gavin	Gavin
Rahul Ghosal	Ghosal
Andrew Gross	Gross
Jie Guo	Guo
Carol Harrison	Harrison
Steven Harrod	Harrod
Liam C. Hein	Hein
Laura Herbert	Herbert
Anthony Jerrells	Jarrells
Ann Blair Kennedy	Kennedy
Elie Kfoury	Kfoury
George Khushf	Khushf
James Kirylo	Kirylo
Laura Langan	Langan
Serena LaRoche	LaRoche
Wuchen Li	Li
Alex Lockwood	Lockwood
Bryan Love	Love
Mark Maltarich	Maltarich
Christie Martin	Martin
Carrie McCoy	McCoy
Heather McDaniel	McDaniel
Joseph McQuail	McQuail
Jill Michels	Michels
Juliana Miller	Miller
Cary Mock	Mock
Kara Montgomery	Montgomery
Candice Morgan	Morgan

Scott Phinney	Phinney
Charlie Pierce	Pierce
Kirsten Porter-Stransky	Porter-Stransky
Amanda Rebar	Rebar
Tom Regan	Regan
Alexandria Reynolds	Reynolds
Sarah Rogers	Rogers
Deborah Rowell	Rowell
Joanna Scoggins	Scoggins
JD Shaw	Shaw
Michael Shtutman	Shtutman
Kimberly Simmons	Simmons
Sarah Slone	Slone
Jonah Steinberg	Steinberg
Todd Stonitsch	Stonitsch
Carolyn Sueling	Sueling
Abbas Tavakoli	Tavakoli
Karoline Boye Thompson	Thompson
Anna Turner	Turner
Kristin Walker	Walker
Guiren Wang	Wang
Kelsey Westbury	Westbury
Kasie Whitener	Whitener
Zachary Winkelmann	Winkelmann
Bongki Woo	Woo
Linyun Yang	Yang
Min Zhang	Zhang
Van Kornegay for Laura Smith	

Submitted by:

Sarah A. Rogers, Faculty Senate Secretary

February 20, 2026