

# UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM (UCOC)

## MINUTES

*December 9, 2020*

2:00-3:30 pm

\*\*\*\*Zoom Meeting\*\*\*\*

### I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Chair Chi Mak welcomed Caroline Muglia, Head of Resource Sharing and Co-Associate Dean for Collections, who attended on behalf of Danielle Mihram and the Libraries Division while Mihram was away on sabbatical. Muglia introduced herself and described her roles at the university.

### II. UCOC MARCH 2020 MINUTES

- *Attachment: UCOC March 2020 Minutes*

→ **APPROVED**

### III. NEW BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES

#### A. Check-In and Priorities for 2021

**DISCUSSED** Subcommittee chairs shared how they have managed subcommittee operations remotely (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), noting that overall efficiency and productivity had been consistent if not increased. It was noted that volume of submissions appeared to be lower, though deadlines had not hit yet. Steve Bucher, Professor in the Viterbi School of Engineering and OSP Chair, shared that a request had been made by a colleague in Viterbi to look into the overlap of a new program offered by Bovard College with a program in Viterbi.

Robin Romans, Associate Vice Provost and WSCUC liaison, gave a brief overview of how accreditation was handled as programs were forced to move online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that ultimately the university was authorized to remain online through June 2021 without undergoing the significant accreditation approval process that would be required under normal circumstances.

Mak noted that the sudden shift to an entirely online modality posed new challenges and questioned if the Provost's Office had been in discussion with faculty to review how the process had been going up to that point. Donna Garcia, Director of Academic Affairs and point of contact for Online Programs, mentioned that the Center of Excellence in Teaching conducted a faculty survey and shared the results with the Online Learning Committee (OCL) and various bodies around campus.

**B. Anticipating and Addressing the Issue of Undergraduate Online Instruction (Continued from previous discussions regarding online curriculum)**

**DISCUSSED** Chi noted that discussion at the March 2020 meeting had also been about online programs and whether the curriculum review process(es) should be updated. The question of whether online programs and online courses should be reviewed independently on the basis of their modality was revisited.

Geoffrey Shiflett, Professor in the Viterbi School of Engineering and SES Chair, explained that the Engineering Distance Education Network (DEN) had been offering online instruction for all programs at the graduate level (and courses at the 400 level) for many years. DEN allows students to attend any lecture in person or watch a reproduced version of the lecture online. Shiflett noted that students enroll in various sections based on modality but there's otherwise no differentiation on the STARS report or the transcript. It was noted the online programs are often assigned a unique POST code for accounting purposes.

Romans reported that, while the prospect of online education at the undergraduate level traditionally has been limited, conversations within USC's newer administration are taking place that might make way for such ventures. It was noted that a prohibition on online education at the undergraduate level—or any level—is not imposed by accreditors, but rather that the undergraduate space and largely doctoral programs traditionally have been reserved for residential offering under past leadership at USC.

Judy Garner, Senior Advisor, Keck Faculty Affairs and HPS Chair, said that, while Keck doesn't have many undergraduate programs, online or partially online minors would provide additional opportunities to collaborate across campuses.

Mak questioned what the metrics for evaluation might be for online majors or minors, which diverge from the traditional residential modality in terms of their in-person experience, and how might the quality of the undergraduate experience be assessed. He suggested that the curriculum review process should not only differentiate between whether a course or program is in-person or online, but it should also account for how the undergraduate (or graduate) experience is different when it's online only or in-person, citing that an online Chemistry program would have to differ in significant ways from the in-person version. Members noted that the undergraduate experience is composed of many more aspects than just courses and course content, so it would seem appropriate to ask program developers specifically what kinds of support will be provided for the online program and what activities will students do that contribute to the educational experience. It was noted that out-of-class components and the social aspect of the educational experience are indeed significant and it might prove difficult to capture them within the review process.

Romans mentioned that, while the number of top research institutions in the U.S. remains relatively unchanged, there are more well qualified students than ever who are in search of a top-tier education, suggesting that, in a sense, USC has a responsibility to scale undergraduate instruction in ways that would help support the increased volume of prospective students and also provide competition for for-profit institutions. He said the broader conversation of whether and how USC should develop online programs at the undergraduate level may go beyond UCOC, but UCOC should have a voice in the discussion.

Mak suggested that UCOC could devise a list of points that departments developing online programs would be encouraged to think about and include the review of these points in the review process. He added that, when thinking about "what defines a USC education," it might be in the interest of UCOC to consult the administrators of an undergraduate program who are eager to move the program online as they may have done research in this area. Mak and Romans agreed that Michael Nichol, Associate Vice Provost of Online Education, would be an appropriate point person to discuss future directions.

C. UCOC's Role in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (Raised by Caroline Muglia)

**DISCUSSED** Muglia suggested that UCOC may have an important role in tackling the “curricular intervention” surrounding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA), potentially in collaboration with offices like CET and others on campus to create curricular rubrics related to DEIA and to make recommendations on how to address broader questions of DEIA. She noted that on a more individual level, faculty and administrators across the university are working diligently and quickly to bulk up syllabi, content and resources to be more inclusive, but she isn't aware of a broader, systematic effort.

Members were supportive of showing an awareness of these issues perhaps by incorporating support of DEIA into checklists and templates. Mak recommended UCOC revisit this issue and will likely invite Muglia back to discuss further. Donna Garcia recommended also being in touch with Stacy Giwa and Sabrina Pasztor, leading the USC Culture Transformation.

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. GE Memos

- *Attachments: UCOC GE Memo 2-20-20 (\*Rec'd 3-4-20)  
UCOC GE Memo 4-4-20  
UCOC GE Memo 5-8-20  
UCOC GE Memo 9-9-20  
UCOC GE Memo 9-15-20*

B. Scheduled Special Topics Report

- *Attachment: October 2020-December 2020 Special Topics*

**Members Present**

Diane Badame  
Matt Bemis (Assoc. Registrar)  
Steven Bucher  
John DeMartini (Support Staff)  
Donna Garcia  
Judy Garner  
Lawrence Green  
Brian Head  
Chi Mak (Chair)  
Robin Romans  
Geoffrey Shiflett

**Members Absent**

Megan Chan (Financial Aid)  
Danielle Mihram

**Guests**

Caroline Muglia (on behalf of Mihram)