The Committee on the Development and Implementation of University Policies (CDIUP) submits the following report to the Executive Board for review and transmission to the Academic Senate for its consideration and approval. This version incorporates comments made at the meeting of the Academic Senate held on April 20, 2011, including changes suggested by Martin Levine, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and friendly amendment by Alex Capron at the May 11, 2011 meeting.

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Guidelines for the Operation of Faculty Councils

A. Introduction

Faculty Councils have been established in all Schools at USC in order to ensure good communication among members of the faculty of each academic unit and between the faculty and the administration of those academic units, as well as to facilitate effective faculty participation in the governance of the units. The Faculty Councils contribute to the intellectual vitality of the University, to faculty governance, and to faculty environment. Although the councils in the various academic units are quite diverse (in size, history, structure, etc.), the Academic Senate believes the following recommended practices can provide useful guidance to assist each faculty council in meeting the above objectives. These recommendations also have implications for the five-year review of each dean that occurs within his or her school.

These suggestions for optimum collaboration between faculty councils and the administration of their schools were stimulated by a survey of faculty councils performed by Mike Nichol, former Senate president, in 2008-2009. In addition, members of the CDIUP had follow-up conversations with Prof. Nichol about these themes as well as discussions with the council presidents of the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences, the Marshall School of Business, and the Viterbi School of Engineering. From these sources, it became apparent that some councils feel that the administrators in their unit provide minimal information and seek little consultation; some councils feel particularly bereft of information about their unit’s budget and about the unit’s overall strategic direction agreed between their deans and the Provost. It may be that some deans worry that councils are not as representative as they might be and could be more effective in furthering the academic goals of the schools. A central objective of these recommendations is to overcome such problems.

These recommendations reflect the conviction that certain conditions and procedures are the minimum necessary in order for faculty councils to represent their members adequately, to support the mission of their school, and to work collegially with the school’s deans and administration. The Academic Senate hopes that faculty and deans will seriously consider these suggestions as starting—and not ending—points for collaboration.
Faculty have a shared responsibility to participate in the management of the academic enterprise. Under the name of “service” this has long been part of the job expectations of being a professor. Faculty councils, along with faculty committees and the Academic Senate, are ways in which faculty can fulfill this expectation. It is vital that faculty whom their colleagues most respect take their turn serving on those bodies.

**B. Recommendations**

1. Faculty councils should be elected on an annual basis (though councils may choose to have members serve multi-year overlapping terms, so that only a portion of the membership is elected each year). All members of the full-time faculty (tenure track and non-tenure track) should be eligible to vote and to serve. As required by Article 5, Section 5 of the Academic Senate Constitution, at least twice as many candidates should be on the ballot as there are open seats; it is also highly desirable to offer a slate that is broadly representative of the full-time faculty of the academic unit. By treating the council as a valued participant in school governance, the dean and senior administrators can help to ensure that the most respected members of the faculty will regard service on the council as a good use of their time, even as their presence will help encourage the dean to rely on the council as a source for wise counsel and representation of faculty judgment on matters of importance to the school.

2. Each faculty council should have a chair (or president), whether elected directly by the faculty or chosen by the council from among its members, as well as such other officers as are needed to discharge its responsibilities; these officers are responsible for gathering the views of their colleagues on the faculty, reflecting them in meetings with their deans, and reporting back to the whole faculty on a regular basis.

3. It is usually most effective if the council members and officers are elected at the end of each academic year so that they are in place to participate with the deans in planning activities and other matters (such as selection of faculty committees) for the upcoming academic year.

4. Academic units should arrange for the council chair (or president) to receive relief from course, clinical and other responsibilities adequate to permit the chair to discharge his or her responsibilities during the academic year in which he or she serves.

5. Academic units should provide their faculty councils at least part-time staff support and access to necessary facilities and electronic lists to assist them in collecting information from all faculty members of their units, as well as to provide adequate mechanisms (e.g., through a dedicated website) to share information with all members of the faculty of each school.

6. The faculty council of every school should meet on a regular basis, chaired by the council chair or president. (Such meetings are in addition to meetings of the whole faculty within each academic unit to consider reports from the faculty council, matters brought forward by the administration, and matters requiring faculty action, such as appointments and promotions). Monthly council meetings are common in many units, but a council may meet more or less
frequently or according to a different pattern, provided that it meets frequently enough to discharge its responsibilities.

7. All faculty councils should be active participants in the governance of their Schools. Areas of primary interest to the faculty, and in which their representatives should therefore be particularly involved, include but are not limited to curricula; services needed to support the faculty in performing their functions; strategic planning for the unit; and the principles that will guide budgetary allocations.

8. As a general practice, deans should attend faculty council meetings when invited by the Council chair, to engage in conversation with council members regarding the subjects on which the dean seeks the advice of the faculty (see #7 above) as well as other matters of common concern. The effectiveness of a faculty council is typically improved when its chair also meets on a monthly basis with the Dean and, as needed, with other administrators.

9. Overall, a proper balance should govern the interactions of deans/administrators with faculty: the emphasis should be on consulting rather than simply on informing. Naturally, the faculty needs information from deans, but the dean’s central objective in meeting with the faculty council should be to elicit the views of council members on behalf of the faculty, and then to take these views into consideration when formulating school policies. The faculty and deans should aim to arrive at a common agreement on School policies, plans and priorities.

10. Especially desirable is closer consultation between faculty councils and their deans on matters of schools’ budgets and interactions with the Provost’s Office.

11. While these suggestions center principally on the functioning of faculty councils and their interaction with the deans of their schools, one duty falls squarely within the purview of the councils themselves: councils should actively invite their faculties to participate in the review of deans that is conducted by the Provost’s Office at five-year intervals of appointment. Implementing this participation requires that councils provide faculty with sufficient information about the review process, a confidential instrument for recording faculty opinion, and a sufficient period of time for faculty response, as defined in the policy on the review of Deans issued by the Provost’s office in August 2010. Finally, and still relevant to this review process, individual faculty members should take seriously the call to participate in the decanal review process.

May 11 2011