Items on which the Faculty Senate voted appear in red.

1. Speaker Simon Lewis called the meeting to order at 5:00. He thanked George Pothering (Parliamentarian), Scott Peeples (Faculty Secretary), and Michelle McGrew (Provost’s Office), who is helping out in the temporary absence of a Faculty Secretariat.

2. The April 2/9, 2019 Minutes were approved by voice vote.

3. Senator Irina Gigova (HSS) was elected Speaker Pro Tempore by voice vote.

4. Reports

   a. Speaker Lewis used his report to introduce President Hsu. He expressed his appreciation to the Board of Trustees for including and listening to faculty in the process of selecting the new president and for hiring someone with a strong academic background. He recognized Board Member Steve Swanson and Vice Chair Demetria Clemons, who were in attendance.

   Speaker Lewis also emphasized the importance of the current strategic planning process and in doing so, reminded the Senate that the College has an obligation to the society we serve. We should think of ourselves as the College of Solutions. And as we examine our present condition and plan for the future, we should assess our performance not only in economic terms but also in terms of environmental impact and cultural/social impact, the “triple bottom line” of sustainability.

   b. President Andrew Hsu gave a report outlining “where we are” prior to strategic planning. He focused on the overall higher education landscape, our place in a fast-changing world, and the future of our college. We are going to continue to see a decrease in the college-age population nationally, leading to even greater competition for students. Meanwhile, students increasingly need remediation when they get to college, and they expect more specific career preparation than previous generations.

   President Hsu provided a wealth of data while discussing recent trends in acceptance rates, retention, SAT’s, graduation rates, tuition, and expenses. We are accepting a higher percentage of applicants (currently hovering around 80%) than we were in the 2000s, and that negatively affects our reputation and rankings. At the same time, our yield rate has declined steadily. He concluded that the current trend of declining enrollment coupled with increasing expenses and tuition is not sustainable.

   Citing Carnegie classifications of colleges and universities --- we are currently classified M1 (Master’s Colleges and Universities --- Larger Programs) --- he outlined three possible
President Hsu emphasized that he was simply laying out options to get the process started, and that it is crucial that faculty and staff participate in the process of deciding on our shared direction. Our future, he said, depends largely on the decisions made during this strategic planning process.

During Q&A, several senators thanked President Hsu for his candor and asked for more information to inform our participation in the strategic planning process.

Senator Irina Gigova (HSS) asked how we approach this strategic plan in light of current financial constraints. President Hsu responded that we need to think about the short, mid, and long terms. Enrollment and student success are crucial in the short term. If we do a good job of stabilizing enrollment, then we can look at our resources and see where we can invest in our future. If we decide to reduce enrollment we have to reduce expenditure; if we want to increase spending we have to increase enrollment.

Robert Lucas (Guest, Building and Equipment Maintenance) said that other South Carolina schools have “left us in the dust” when it comes to facilities. He pointed out that facilities make an impression on prospective students, citing the recent creation of a transfer center, which led to more transfer applications.

Senator Richard Nunan (Philosophy) expressed concern about following the Elon model of pursuing a D/PU (Doctoral/Professional) Carnegie classification. Every time an institution chooses to invest in programs outside its core, it takes away resources from the core, and he is not sure how much revenue we can generate by adding professional programs. He also said that accrediting agencies for certain programs have “hijacked” higher education by stipulating that major programs include a large number of credit hours, squeezing general education.

President Hsu replied that if we did follow Elon’s model, we would have to choose doctoral programs carefully. Elon changed their classification with a law school as opposed to PhD programs. He said that new programs can be a win-win; for instance, the new undergraduate engineering program will not divert resources from core disciplines because it will bring in students we would not otherwise get. Departments that offer general education courses will benefit from having more students overall.

Senator Andrew Shedlock (Biology) asked President Hsu to follow up on the idea that students who are enrolling at R1 schools are students we’re losing. Is it possible that these are students we would not attract anyway?
President Hsu replied that he doesn’t have a detailed analysis of who those students are, but we do share a lot of applicants with the University of South Carolina. Ten or twenty years ago, a student accepted to both schools would have been more likely to come to the College; now they’re more likely to go to USC.

Professor Roxanne Stalvey (Guest, Computer Science) asked about the growth of administration in recent years, and mentioned that one strategy USC has employed is to award some kind of scholarship to almost every student who is accepted, even if the dollar amount is small.

President Hsu said that he hasn’t yet looked at the change in size of administration, but that in higher education generally, unfunded federal and state mandates (for services and reporting) have contributed to administrative expansion.

Senator Jen Wright (HSS) asked what are the major barriers to options 2 (excelling at the M1 level) and 3 (pursuing D/PU or R2 status).

President Hsu replied that excelling at M1 has no immediate obstacles except that we face a great deal of competition, and that our current reputation makes it difficult to compete. The obstacles to achieving D/PU or R2 status include the state approval process, state politics, lack of resources, and internal resistance.

Senator Brian Lanahan (Guest, Teacher Education) added that previous presidential searches have contributed to our image problem.

In response to a question from Christine Finnan (Guest, Sociology and Anthropology), President Hsu said that we have a good strategy for stabilizing enrollments in the short term, adding students to existing programs as opposed to counting on new programs. We expect to see a slight uptick in enrollment and quality of students.

President Hsu, Speaker Lewis, and Interim Provost Fran Welch encouraged faculty and staff to participate in the strategic planning process. They provided information about upcoming sessions and pointed to the Strategic Plan page on the Office of the President’s website.

c. Kelly Shaver and Susan Anderson reported on the Federal Demonstration Partnership, to which the College belongs. The goal of the FDP is to reduce the administrative burden on research, which helps faculty and frees up valuable time in the Office of Research and Grants Administration. The details of their report can be found in this PDF.

6. Constituents’ General Concerns: Senator Richard Nunan suggested that, in light of the regularity with which fall semesters have been disrupted by hurricane evacuations, we should
have a conversation about the way we deal with the lost instructional time, possibly building weather make-up days into the schedule.

7. The meeting adjourned at 6:43.