

Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting
Oct 15 , 2025
MCOB Room 265
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
(Zoom Option included)

Attended in Person (29): Abeynanda, Gayan; Baughn, Christina; Black, Michael; Brock, Casey; Brower, Greg; Davidson, Clay; Dasgupta, Santanu; des Neiges Léonard, Marie; Dzwonkowski, Brian; Ellzie, Joel; Fox, Dalten; Fregeau, Laureen; Hauff, Caitlyn; Hudson, Geoffrey; Lohar, Bhushan; Pavelescu, Andrei; Pramanik, Paramahansa; Pennywell, Gwendolyn; Pettway, Matthew; Rabideau, Brooks; Robertson, Justin; Shea, Allyson; Stenson, Alexandra; Streeter, Donna; Swofford, Jim; ter Horst, Eleanor; Vrana, Laura; Walker, Sean; Wassenaar, Christina

Attended on Zoom (23): Bokhari, Amber; Capasso, Tom; Carmichael, Bishop; Cutchen, William; Daniel, Casey; Davis, Sara; Davis, Tara; Fesenmeier, Michael; Godang, Romulus; Huang, Jingshuan; Huang, Ying (Johnson); Liebertz, Scott; Macdonald, Rebecca; Marass, Ashley; Mbaka, Maryann; Minton, Bonnie; Ochoa, Juan; Pancione, Kirsten; Salvitti Fermin, Mariarita; VandeWaa, Elizabeth; Williams, Katie; Wu, Charles (Kuan-Sheng).

Partially attended on Zoom (< 50 min): Coronado, Yun; Fleck, Lorie

Excused: Bates, Robin; Bunch, Jaclyn; Cole, Tracy; Holliday, Nicolette; Selwyn, Candice; Shaw, Christy; Thomas, Rebecca; Getch, Yvette; Frye, Doris (½ - meeting attendance)

Absent Unexcused: Ferguson, Susan; Gavrilita, Christina; Holliday, Candice
Kumar, Jatinder; Marri, Preethi; McDonald, Tyler; Merritt, Brandy; O'Connor, Tracy; Parsell, Karen; Wilbert, Arik; Williams, Ashley

Preliminary Business

This meeting was called to order ~3:05 p.m. with Faculty Senate President, Christina Wassenaar presiding Quorum (36 senators) was met.

Approval of September 2025 Minutes

Approval of October 2025 Agenda

Guest: Denise Robb, Director of Immigration

Denise Robb answered a number of previously supplied questions (below). She stressed that her office wants success, and very rarely says no to someone as not hireable or not being sponsorable. When that happens, it is almost always because of an export control issue.

1. **Question 1:** did the Office of Immigration get any information from the Administration or departments on how to deal with expiring Optional Practical Training (OPTs) in view of the 100,000. (OPT is temporary employment directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study)

Answer: There is a good bit of uncertainty associated with how USCIS is actually going to evaluate the \$100,000 per H-1B policy; the government shut-down in exacerbating this issue. However, Liberal interpretation of the policy right now is that anybody that is pursuing a change of status is not going to be subject to the \$100,000 fee. We are presently waiting for enough evidence of petitions from other institutions being filed after the official start date of the policy (~2 weeks ago) to confirm this interpretation.

Also since most of South's hospital system's physicians are hired as an in-country change of status to H1B from J1, there is additional incentive for South to advocate for exceptions and seeing what sort of waivers we would qualify for. But, that information hasn't been disseminated yet by USCIS.

2. **Question 2:** Is the determination whether a faculty is qualified for EB1 (extraordinary ability visa) or EB2 (general employer-sponsored permanent residency) visa is done by the department chairs or by Denise's office?

Answer: It is actually done by an outside general counsel, so any permanent residency petition is attorney-filed.

EB1B is faster for certain nationals. Especially for faculty from countries like India and China, it's much faster to receive permanent residency if they go the EB1 over the EB2 route.

However, qualifying for an Extraordinary Ability Visa (EB1) is challenging because it is not field-specific. So, USCIS has very broad definitions of what makes someone an extraordinary scholar, and it doesn't necessarily apply to every extraordinary scholar in every field.

The typical timeline is: Someone initially hired on an F1 OPT one year of work authorization is then, in most cases, eligible for a two-year STEM extension under that visa (at no cost to the University). Then the H-1B twice can be renewed twice, up to 6 years. Once that initial H-1B is sought for renewal is when we would traditionally start the permanent residency process.

EB1 vs. EB2 decision: Because applications are expensive and potential gaps problematic, the International Office makes the determination in connection with our attorneys, based on risk-reward for the University. We work with four attorneys; traditionally, scholars will talk to two or three different law firms to make the determination. If the attorneys determine that someone is a good candidate for EB1B, we'll move forward with that. If they feel that they're less than 60%, then we go with the EB2 route.

Individuals can self-sponsor for an EB1B visa, some will do that concurrently while their department is sponsoring an EB-2.

Travel with pending application: If you have a pending petition, whether it's EB2 or EB1, you can travel abroad. It is more complicated, but you would do that under what's called advanced

parole. USCIS just issued a new policy that you'll have to pay for advanced parole, for a new mentor. There are a lot of new policies that are coming out. However, there are mechanisms for faculty members to depart the U.S. while they have a pending green card petition. The International Office has many conversations with faculty and physicians about this.

Visa Change from "Barred" Countries: if we had a foreign national that was from a country that was on a barred list, and they were in-country on a valid visa, they would still qualify for a status change to H-1B. If that person was outside of the country and they needed to apply for the visa stamp, itself, in order to enter, then it would be very difficult for them to receive that visa. There are some exceptions (waivers), if we can prove that it's in the national interest for that scholar from a "barred" country to come here.

3. **Question 3:** We have been waiting for more clarity on the new H-1B restrictions which may well be extended beyond the initial one-year period. How is the university planning to assist or document employees who were in the process of obtaining or renewing their work authorization under H-1B?

Answer: The restrictions are being challenged; a lawsuit has been filed. Whether it is getting significant traction is unknown; government shutdown exacerbates.

As noted for Question 1, the H-1B policy does not apply to extensions of H-1B status, so individuals that are currently on an H-1B who need to renew their H-1B can do that without paying the fee. We are waiting to see other universities that are also putting in petitions not being forced to pay the fee.

4. **Question 4:** can the University sponsor or support EB2 petitions that employees pursue as self-petition cases? For example, through an EB2 national interest waiver category?

Answer: That is rare but departments have full control over how they decide what they want to sponsor. So, if they want to move forward with a permanent residency process, they can fund a privately funded permanent residency petition, if that is their choice.

5. **Question 5:** Could a department sponsor somebody who is less than 2 years out from their PhD for EB1 or EB2 status?

Answer: There would essentially be virtually no way for a department to only sponsor a green card at the two-year mark after a PhD, because a green card petition would not be approved fast enough. Some departments that will file a green card petition immediately upon hire. That's negotiated by that faculty member during hiring. But, in the process of doing that, we have to file for some other type of visa (H-1B or an O1, so that they have actual legal work status while that green card is pending.

6. **Question 6:** If you are international and do not have permanent residency status yet, is it advisable to travel?

Answer: The Congressional Director of Immigration Recommendation would be more stable and secure for you to stay inside the U.S. If you cannot avoid traveling, the Immigration Office is going to support our faculty and students to the best of their ability to help them come back in a timely way. However, they cannot make any guarantees.

International students may also want to consider travel, especially during semester breaks, in case changes to the "duration of status" provisions on their visas (e.g., 5 years for an I-20) go into effect while they are out of the country. In which case, they would likely have to fill out an I

-539, which is an extension of status request that USCIS would review that on a case-by-case basis.

7. **Question 7:** Enrollment impact

Answer: the average spring, we get an enrollment of about 80 new international students. For Spring '26, only twenty I-20s have been issued so far. We will be down somewhere 60 - 80%.

President's Report:

The full report was made available in writing as an appendix to the agenda before the meeting.

During the Meeting, Christina Wassenaar updated us on:

T&P Procedure Changes: The current state of the document that CAD has worked out as a result of last summer's dean's retreat on T&P (which incorporated FS's T&P survey results) includes much of what we've asked for. This document has not yet been voted on by CAD. The timing of the vote is still a bit up in the air, but Christina will bring it up at the next meeting of CAD (soon). Once the document has been approved by CAD, it will come to FS.

- Discussion during the meeting focused on FS advocating for not switching faculty to new/changed T&P requirements without giving them the choice of whether to stick with the requirements as they were when they were hired or switch.

Old Business:

- Most current updates were covered in committee & caucus reports
- Vote on whether to make the Wellbeing & Retention Committee permanent
 - The motion to make the Wellbeing & Retention Committee a Standing Committee passed, with a vote of 43 yes, 2 abstain, 1 no.
- Faculty One-Stop Site & Workload Plus Survey questions, work in your committees to please peruse & provide suggestions
- Considering whether to initiate awards for outstanding senate leadership or service will initially be assigned to the Mentoring Committee
- Title II, April 2026 requirements - a quick reminder of the coming change in requirements was provided as well as the update that the ILC is working on software that is better at transcribing audio to text for scientific content.
- We were reminded that the next Plenary Meeting will take place at the Strada. It will likely include a tour of the new trauma center.

Reports from Committees (those in writing can be found in the Appendix linked here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14mV7WRe3s_ydbH6cM0CqIwitMECPNM8K)

- Evaluation (Clay Davidson) - *in writing* (**Appendix linked above**)
- FacDev&Ment (Tracy O'Connor) - *in writing* (**Appendix linked above**)
- FacSal&Ben (Geoffrey Hudson)
 - Selection of Peer Institution (for the purpose of a salary survey) is progressing. At present 60 Institutions are still in the running. The FacSal&Ben Committee, through its Chair, Geoffrey Hudson, is advocating for a greater inclusion of aspirational peers.

- Clarification was provided that the salary supplement South faculty will receive this year does not apply to new-hires; however the salary raise does.
- Res&CreatAct (Rebecca Thomas) - *nr*
- Sust&EnvirQual (Dalten Fox) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- Teach/Learn&Tech (Michael Black) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- UnivPlan&Dev (Sean Walker) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- UnivPol&HandBk (Donna Streeter) - *document for discussion in Appendix*
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s9hG10wXmOd9HIRrbJhRi1emh_oClxy/edit
 - Donna Streeter (Committee Chair) gave an overview of the proposed Procedure for an Efficient Policy Exchange Between the Faculty Senate (FS) and the Council of Academic Deans (CAD. The main points are that a timeline is given for review in each body and an avenue of speedy arbitration of any stalemate through the Academic Affairs Policy Committee (AAPC) is incorporated.
 - All Senators are requested to review an updated document in the appendix to the agenda to this meeting (link above).
 - During the next Plenary Meeting a Vote is expected on whether to move forward with this proposed procedure change.
 - In the interim, the Handbook Committee will review the current proposal to evaluate if it needs to be amended slightly to allow for the required two-plenary-meetings for any vote protocol in the Faculty Senate.
- Wellbeing&Ret [*ad hoc*] (Caitlyn Hauff) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- Bylaws Review Committee [*ad hoc*] (Candice Selwyn) - *this committee has been formally approved by FS and is currently in the process of forming the full committee.*

Reports from Caucus Leaders (those in writing can be found in the Appendix linked here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sBg0GMao8RPJoh5VLZuliWiRLCucc2HV>)

- A&S (Eleanor ter Horst) - working w/ Dean on dates for the *Faculty Forum for the College for early 2026 (late January or early February)*. *Caucus meeting to discuss topics for the Faculty Forum and other issues to be called later this month.*
- CAHP (Casey Brock) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- CEPS (Caitlyn Hauff) - *nr*
- CIS (Michael Black) - *nr*
- COM (Greg Brower) - *nr*
- CON (Elizabeth Vandewaa) - *caucus will work on the new workload template in Nursing*
- ENGR (Brooks Rabideau) - *nr*
- LIB (Tracy Cole) - *in writing (Appendix linked above)*
- MCOB (James Swofford)
- SIM (Robin Bates) - *USA Health Simulation Program accreditation initial assessments will begin soon. Coming soon, an informational Canvas that will include a video detailing SIM program's space and learners' experiences.*

Reports from University Committees:

- No reports from current University Committees

New Business:

- Chair will need to be elected for the Chair of the new Standing Committee for Wellbeing and Retention
- Feedback is thought from each caucus on how to improve the town hall meetings with President Bonner and Dr. Kent, including the preliminary meeting with just the FS members of the caucus.
- Dean Search for COM: FS President, Christina, updated us that FS requested that interviews not be scheduled during the break between semesters to all faculty to be part of the process.
- Facilities Master Plan: There will be listening sessions; all senators are asked to help ensure good attendance (especially by faculty, chairs, building/lab managers, well-placed to know about space needs and limitations).

Adjournment

Minutes created by Alexandra C. Stenson with assistance from the Zoom recording and transcript. Denise Robb also read the portion of the document relating to their presentations and confirmed that it accurately reflected what she had conveyed.