

# The University Senates Conference (USC): Its Organization and Responsibilities

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## Overview

The USC is an advisory statutory body in the shared governance structure of the University of Illinois that provides the major link between the faculties of the Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield campuses.

The USC is charged with reviewing all matters acted upon by each Senate and consideration as to whether such actions have broader all-University relevance.

The USC acts an advisory group to the Board of Trustees through the President, to the President, and to the Senates themselves on matters of University-wide concerns.

A special concern of the Conference Executive Committee is to aid in maintaining harmonious relations among such offices and the University.

## Organization

The USC is composed of 20 members based on the relative faculty numbers of the 3 campuses, elected by the 3 campus Senates for 3 year terms. Currently its composition is: UIUC 10 members, UIC 7 members, UIS 3 members.

The USC has a bicameral structure with an Executive Committee comprising 2 members from each campus, including the Chair and Vice-Chair who cannot be from the same campus.

The Executive Committee members are elected from the Conference and serve 1 year terms.

## Functions

1. The USC advises the President concerning changes in the general rules.
2. The USC advises the Board of Trustees on proposed changes to the Statutes initiated by the Board.
3. The USC advises the President on the appointment of University officers.
4. The USC advises on matters of University-wide concern.
5. The USC advises on creation of new units.
6. The USC advises on changes in academic organization.

## Some Recent Initiatives of the USC

1. Our major long-term goal is to work to promote the University of Illinois and the missions and prosperity of its 3 campuses (adopted at the annual retreat in September, 2011).
2. General agreement was obtained that Conference members had a dual responsibility to promote both long-term goals and short-term goals in the interest of the institution and not just as representatives of their own campuses. In addition, an expressed concern is the operational definition of the term 'consultation.
3. The USC identified that major continuing issues and concerns for the institution are the understandable conflicts between concepts of campus autonomy and needs for centralization.

## Proposal for a Cross University Dialogue (Sept. 2011)

The USC, following upon a suggestion from Chairman Kennedy and endorsement by the 3 campus Senates, have proposed a cross-University dialogue to discuss goals of the University, encompassing a number of questions.

1. What are the specific core objectives for the University of Illinois and how can these objectives be achieved?
2. What are the decision making processes that will lead us towards achieving those objectives while maintaining a balance between the authority of the central administration and the scope of self-governance of the campuses, especially over academic policy matters?
3. How do we envision articulation and synergy among the 3 campuses in the future?
4. The uncertainty of state funding including the liability of the state pension system is a primary factor leading to decline in faculty morale and recent departures or early resignations. While working to address these state policies, what can be done internally to sustain and encourage faculty enthusiasm about the Universities future and its ability to move forward and be competitive in the academic world?

## A Word on Dashboards

Dashboards can be meaningful instruments in describing the metrics of reality and establishing how we are doing in relation to our peers.

For example, a universal dashboard used in health care and assessment are vital signs:

temperature

pulse

blood pressure

respiration

oxymetry

## Another common example of a dashboard



Thus, the important concern is that the dashboard we adopt for the University and the campuses reflects the ways that we want to be judged and will be productive in that judgment.