

Annual Report on EFC Activities, 2014-2015

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This past year marked an important milestone for faculty governance within the Viterbi School of Engineering, being the first year in which full-time NTT faculty were full participants with respect to both acting as representatives to the Engineering Faculty Council (EFC) and voting for such representatives. Out of a total of 24 EFC representatives this year, 13 were T/TT faculty and 11 NTT faculty.

The overall goals for the year were to: (1) integrate the NTT faculty into a fully functioning EFC; and (2) help move the Viterbi School forward and be active in representing its faculty. We self-organized into three standing committees – one each for Academic Instruction (Mary Eshaghian-Wilner, chair) Academic Research (Martin Gundersen, chair) and Academic Environment (Satwindar Sadhal, Chair for the first semester) – with a number of ad hoc committees also created as needed.

Three significant reports were developed, with each being approved by the EFC and submitted with recommendations to the relevant organization. Each report is available on the EFC website at the link provided below. Key outcomes from these reports are also itemized below.

1. A subcommittee of the Academic Environment committee recommended a new policy on department chair evaluation and appointment (Satwindar Sadhal and Jesse Yen each chaired the subcommittee for one semester). Link: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/engineering/efc/protected/assets/003/94996.pdf>
 - Submitted to the Dean's office to be taken under advisement by them.
2. An ad hoc committee recommended a path whereby the new Informatics Program could move towards being a world-class academic unit (Craig Knoblock chaired the committee). Link: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/engineering/efc/protected/assets/003/94995.pdf>
 - Submitted to the Dean's office and discussed within the Computer Science Department, the new home of the Informatics Program.
 - Recommendations under consideration by Program leadership.
3. A subcommittee of the Academic Research committee recommended a path towards a more effective technology transfer approach at USC (Martin Gundersen chaired the subcommittee). Link: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/engineering/efc/protected/assets/003/94994.pdf> (Cover letter that accompanied the report:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/engineering/efc/protected/assets/003/94993.pdf>
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- Submitted to USC Stevens, the Dean's office, the Vice Provost for Research, the Academic Senate, and the Keck faculty council.
- The new Provost has read the report and has expressed the intent to discuss it with the Vice Provost for Research, to whom Stevens reports.
- Stevens has indicated that they will continue to consult with their advisory committee, which has to date only met quarterly, has no Chair, and has an agenda determined by Stevens leadership.
- Transparency, accountability and communications remain outstanding issues with regard to essentially all Stevens processes for licensing, patenting and royalties.
- Based on statements by the current President, the Academic Senate intends to consider this issue further next year.

Other motions that were passed by the EFC this year – a number of which originated with the Academic Instruction committee – and any significant impacts, are listed below. When the motion is quoted, it is verbatim what was approved.

1. Each instructor should be able to select the class period during which the online evaluations would be available for their class (for on campus students).
 - A school-wide experiment was held for the Spring 2015 evaluations, in which all instructors had the option of specifying a particular time period during which their class evaluation would be available.
2. "Non-tenure track teaching faculty are professional colleagues who provide a great service to the Viterbi School, the University, and our students, and should not be treated as temporary employees. However, the language currently used in appointment letters gives a strongly contrary impression:
"This is a full-time non-tenure-track appointment for [period]. You are eligible to be considered for reappointment, but there is no guarantee of reappointment, which is at the University's discretion. Unless you are reappointed, your appointment ends on [date] without further notice. You are not eligible to be considered for tenure. Non-tenure-track appointments are also subject to early termination as provided in the Faculty Handbook."

Since notice of reappointment is not always given in a timely way, this wording is productive of anxiety and confusion. We therefore suggest that the language of their appointment letters should be amended to reflect a policy that NTT teaching faculty must be given reasonable notice if not reappointed.

For NTT teaching faculty at the rank of Senior Lecturer or above, we suggest the following amended language:

"This is a full-time non-tenure-track appointment for [period] until [date]. You will be reappointed at that point unless given at least 90 days notice by the University that your appointment will not be renewed. Reappointment is at the University's discretion. You are not eligible to be considered for tenure. Non-tenure-track appointments are also subject to early termination as provided in the Faculty Handbook."

More junior NTT teaching faculty appointments are, in a sense, probationary, and the language of their appointment letters can reflect this fact."

- The Dean's office received approval from the Provost's office to offer the following wording in letters for NTT instructional faculty at the Senior Lecturer rank and above unless circumstances for particular cases should dictate otherwise:

"This is a full-time non-tenure-track appointment for [number] [academic or fiscal] years until *[insert end date of appointment: MM/DD/YYYY]*. You will be reappointed beginning *[insert one day following end of initial appointment: MM/DD/YYYY]* [on the same terms OR for (number) (academic or fiscal) year(s)] unless given notice by the University at least 90 days prior to *[insert initial end date of appointment: MM/DD/YYYY]* that your appointment will not be renewed. Should notice of non-reappointment not be given by [insert date ninety days prior to initial end date (e.g. February 15 for an initial end date of May 15)], you will receive payment of your core salary in proportion to the extent notice falls short of ninety days. Reappointment is at the University's discretion. You are not eligible to be considered for tenure. Non-tenure-track appointments are also subject to early termination as provided in the Faculty Handbook."
- New offer letters within the school are to include this wording, and addenda will be provided for existing letters after the beginning of July.
- This option has also been proposed by the Academic Senate's Faculty Handbook committee for incorporation into the Faculty Handbook.

3. The EFC played a role in the process for evaluating five department chairs this year, primarily concerning establishing processes for the evaluations and facilitating elections of evaluation committees (with an EFC representative on each). Given that we are in transition from a past policy to a new policy that has been in development this past year, the EFC passed a motion for this interim year that: "The Dean's office will solicit nominations from the departments for faculty to serve on the evaluation committees. All full time faculty are eligible to be on the evaluation committee and all full time faculty are eligible to vote for members to serve on the committee and all full time

faculty are eligible to participate in the evaluation process. Vote for the evaluation committee members will be conducted by double blind envelope.”

- This procedure was followed this year.
4. USC should designate specific smoking areas outdoors on campus, with the remainder of the outdoor space becoming non-smoking.
 - The follow up on this to date has focused on working with the Dean’s office to make this happen within the portions of the campus belonging to the Viterbi School; although USC has not yet been willing to become a smoke-free campus, individual schools are allowed to enact their own policies. The issue is complex because parts of the Viterbi campus are needed for pedestrian pass through, but progress is being made in identifying which areas can be non-smoking and which must remain unrestricted, at least for now.
 5. The EFC should hold an open forum every semester at which faculty may discuss with the EFC what is on their minds in a setting that is less scheduled and less formal than a monthly EFC meeting.
 - The first open forum will be held during Fall 2015.
 6. The EFC worked with the Provost’s office to develop a set of questions to be used in soliciting feedback from the faculty relevant to the evaluation of the Dean. This led to passing two motions, one concerned with recommending a particular set of questions that had been developed by an ad hoc EFC committee (chaired by Erik Johnson), and the other recommending to the Provost that the results of the evaluation be shared with the EFC, or at least with its leadership.
 - The recommended set of evaluation questions was used without significant change.
 - There was a mix-up in assumptions between the EFC and the Provost’s office concerning the confidentiality expected for survey results, which led to the survey being set up with less confidentiality than the EFC leadership had expected. Although this was eventually resolved, it is an important concern for the EFC to raise during the next Dean evaluation in five years.
 7. With the Informatics Program being folded into Computer Science, a motion was passed to let their EFC representative continue as a CS representative.
 8. The following recommendation was made on 4/1/15 with regard to faculty participation in mentoring and advisement of all students. “Part of the duties of faculty include the guiding of students about the academic content of courses and programs of study. This role should not be delegated to staff, whose task is to inform students about the rules and structure of the program. Each department should therefore, make faculty mentoring available to all undergraduate and graduate students, in a manner based on the needs of the department’s students at all different levels (undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D.). In larger departments, if a substantial burden falls on faculty mentors, the Dean’s office should provide teaching release proportionate to the work.”

In addition to these more formal activities, the following of note occurred this year:

1. The EFC Clearinghouse went active for suggestions on University services, with the few suggestions that have been made forwarded on to the appropriate administrative units.
2. The EFC contributed to the Joint APT/EFC Merit Review Committee.
3. A new ad hoc committee was appointed to explore the question of NTT faculty sabbaticals (Bill Swartout, chair), with work to begin at the end of Spring 2015.
4. When it came time to vote on new EFC officers, there was confusion over who could vote based on differences between a strict reading of the EFC Bylaws, earlier discussions, and how the vote was run the previous year. It was ultimately decided that all members present from both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 EFCs should vote. Action by the EFC is needed to resolve this question, and it is recommended that a new committee of the EFC be created to propose clear procedures for officer elections. One possibility is to solicit nominations before the meeting where the votes are to be held so that candidates can be prepared to speak at the meeting (as is done in the Academic Senate). Another possibility is to hold the election by ballots after the meeting in which the officers are nominated. Procedures for collecting ballots should also be reviewed.
5. A new ad hoc committee needs to be appointed for next year to explore how to transition confidential EFC votes, such as for representatives, from the current paper-and-two-envelope system to an online system that will sufficiently protect the confidentiality of the votes.
6. Issues with faculty parking were discussed, and brought up with the Academic Senate, but no significant progress was made. [Faculty who come to campus after early morning – whether from the institutes or elsewhere – often have great difficulty finding parking. This problem has continually gotten worse with the replacement of surface lots by buildings, and the increase in reserved spaces in PSA. This got much worse this past year, when much of the first floor of PSA was taken over by USC Transportation, resulting in a move of many reserved spaces from the first floor to the second floor. At an Academic Senate meeting, the head of USC Transportation responded by suggesting parking in the Parking Center to the East of campus or in the new structure to be built on the Shrine lot to the North of campus. Both require significant walks or use of shuttles to reach the Viterbi campus. He also raised the possibility of reserving some spaces on the roof of PSA for general faculty use.]
7. The question of the usability of USC's online administrative systems by faculty (and staff) was discussed, and raised with the Academic Senate. There will be a follow up meeting with representatives of the Senate and the Committee on Information Services.
8. There was a discussion about the need for more complete corporate memory for the EFC, and whether a checklist for future chairs can be created to help them understand what their responsibilities will be during the year.

It is recommended that a paid administrative person, possibly part time, be attached to the EFC reporting to the EFC Chair.

9. Extended discussions occurred on Lab Safety – concerned with faculty responsibilities and liabilities, as reported in the minutes for 12/3/14
10. The assessment of the mathematics capabilities of incoming MS students was discussed.
11. Other topics that came up in one form or another – in public or private discussions – included automation of AFR data collection and validation, and revisions to the latter stages of the faculty grievance process.