



39 AMIRIDIS reported that a compression study by the provost identified approximately 200  
40 faculty members, whose salaries were consequently adjusted in August.

41 AMIRIDIS highlighted the change in the ranks of the professional-track faculty, noting that it  
42 was important to provide them with room for professional development and better conditions  
43 that would entice them to remain and continue their career at the university of South Carolina.

44 AMIRIDIS continued by “looking at the future.” He noted the BOARD OF TRUSTEES (hence:  
45 BoT) had approved a new master plan in August. He reported that phase zero of the plan was  
46 already underway, including renovations in the library, and work on housing and academic  
47 facilities. He stated that this starting phase would continue for two to three years.

48 AMIRIDIS thanked the faculty: “Your success and the success of the students define the success  
49 of the faculty.” He reminded the faculty to remember the work of support staff members.

50 AMIRIDIS addressed the issue of the invitation by a student group of “very controversial  
51 speakers,” which had attracted a lot of attention and a lot of criticism for the university. He  
52 acknowledged that he had already addressed this issue in the general faculty meeting [of 2024-  
53 09-06] but that he needed to repeat his speech, because of low attendance at that meeting.

54 AMIRIDIS stated that he and the chair of the BoT made it clear that this event was not endorsed  
55 by the university and used the words “extremist,” “provocateur,” and “vilest” to describe the  
56 speakers and the content of their speech. AMIRIDIS and the chair of the BoT also made it clear  
57 that they had the responsibility to protect the first amendment right of our students, even when  
58 we are greatly offended by their choices and statements. Since that time, the governor of the  
59 state, the Post and Courier editorial board, and constitutional lawyers all stated that the university  
60 had no choice and a responsibility to protect the first amendment and allow the event to occur.  
61 AMIRIDIS expressed his opinion that “the vast majority” of the faculty agreed with the first  
62 amendment argument. However, several faculty members expressed the view that the event may  
63 go beyond the limits of the first amendment.

64 AMIRIDIS addressed these faculty concerns. Some faculty argued that the Carolinian Creed  
65 should be used to stop the event, which conflicted with it. AMIRIDIS noted that the Carolinian  
66 Creed is a statement of what we should accept as our behavior, not of what we have to accept.  
67 The Creed is not a policy of the university, because we cannot have a policy that in conflict with  
68 constitutional law. AMIRIDIS noted that the student code of conduct, which is a policy  
69 university was similar to the Carolinian Creed, but distinct enough that “the experts that we  
70 have” concluded that the group of students who had organized the event had not violated it.

71 AMIRIDIS addressed a second argument, namely that the event would create a hostile  
72 environment on campus. He stated that federal law allows to university to regular free expression  
73 of speech within reasonable “time, place, and manner.” This required, AMIRIDIS said, for the  
74 university to designate some areas of campus as free speech zones. The Russell House Ballroom  
75 was one of these zones. Attendees to these events are voluntarily choosing to participate, while  
76 knowing that the university could nor regulate the content of speech happening there and that

77 they might find such speech offensive to them. AMIRIDIS further stated that private universities  
78 did not have these restrictions.

79 AMIRIDIS addressed another argument expressed by some faculty members, namely that the  
80 promotion of the event violated obscenity laws. He explained that the university administration  
81 does not have the authority to direct that criminal charges be brought in a case like this one.  
82 Such a decision would have needed to be carried out by law enforcement agencies, who  
83 determined that the threshold for obscenity in this case had not been met.

84 AMIRIDIS addressed the safety concerns expressed by members of our community, which  
85 some had argued, should have led to a cancellation of the event. He explained that that  
86 university takes safety very seriously. Law enforcement was monitoring closely this event.  
87 They were significantly increasing the number of officers. AMIRIDIS also noted that the  
88 organizers of the event would pay for the additional cost of security. He also stated that “the law  
89 does not allow prior restraint as a reason to cancel a speech otherwise protected by the first  
90 amendment,” and according to law enforcement there was no reason related to safety to cancel  
91 this event.

92 AMIRIDIS thanked the senate for its patience and that the dean of students and the chief of  
93 police were available to answer questions.

94 [There were no questions.]

95 OUTTEN thanked AMIRIDIS and called Provost DONNA ARNETT (hence: ARNETT) to  
96 deliver her report.

97 ***Provost’s Report***

98 ARNETT remarked that this is the third fall that she delivered a report to the senate.

99 ARNETT described the Provost check-in call mechanism for communication to the faculty.  
100 These are 15-minute calls taking place with “leadership of the campus” each Monday morning at  
101 8:15. They involve about 160 people who are expected to pass timely information to the faculty.  
102 ARNETT encouraged the faculty to talk to their department chair if they do not receive a report  
103 based on the Provost check-in calls. She gave two examples of topics addressed in recent calls:  
104 how to handle student-athlete absences and (on September 9) faculty actions to improve student  
105 retention. She mentioned that the September 23 call would focus on search committee training, a  
106 topical issue given the 100 tenure-track faculty hiring initiative that was ongoing.

107 ARNETT discussed the issue of student retention. She reminded the senate that the (first-to-  
108 second year) retention rate reached a record 92%. She noted that only 2% of students who drop  
109 out after the first year complete a four-year degree. This is why a high retention rate is so  
110 important.

111 ARNETT stated that she set an ambitious goal of 94% retention, which would match the  
112 university of Georgia and above all other SEC schools except for Vanderbilt and the University  
113 of Florida. She proceeded to list three items that the faculty could do to help the university  
114 achieve this ambitious and important goal. First, “early grading”: provide a graded assignment

115 within the first four weeks to make sure that students could access their chances of success and  
116 drop of withdraw if needed. She reminded us that students cannot drop a course if they have a  
117 hold on their account: they might need time to clear that hurdle before dropping.

118 ARNETT reported on the success of the new first-generation center. The third project she  
119 mentioned concerned reducing the DFW rates. This was important, she said, because of student  
120 retention and potential loss of scholarship if GPA falls below 3.0. The project is a pilot project in  
121 collaboration with a company called CircleIn, which received support from the NSF. The pilot  
122 involved the two courses on campus with the highest DFW rates (30%): calculus and accounting.  
123 They found that active users of the CircleIn app had significantly lower DFW rates, and this was  
124 especially the case for first-generation students and Pell grant recipients. She noted that this fall  
125 nursing and computer science courses were going to be part of the continuing pilot project.  
126 ARNETT reported that the engagement rate in those courses was already at 92%.

127 ARNETT thanked the faculty. She then introduced Dr. SUZANNE SUTTON (Assistant  
128 Professor and Student Success Coordinator in the College of Nursing; hence: SUTTON) and  
129 GERALD MEGGETT (CEO and founder of CircleIn; hence: MEGGETT).

130 SUTTON reported on her experience with CircleIn, which was being piloted in the  
131 pathophysiology course, a high DWF-rate course, where students felt the need to compete, rather  
132 than act as a community of learners. She listed five items that she liked about CircleIn: (1)  
133 MEGGETT and the company chief operating officer are responsive and open to suggestions; (2)  
134 The program is inclusive; (3) The program provides early feedback; (4) It supports interaction  
135 with supplemental instruction leaders and tutors; (5) It supports instructor involvement with the  
136 students, by allowing them to check in at any time, so that they have the “pulse” of the class.  
137 SUTTON concluded that CircleIn is a great way to integrate a (learning) community.

### 138 ***Report of Gerald Meggett (CEO and Founder of CircleIn)***

139 MEGGETT shared that the focus of his company and the NSF funding they received was to  
140 “drive (student) completion and success forward.” MEGGETT shared his family experience and  
141 credited his parents (especially his mother, an educator) and older sisters with the notion of  
142 “circling in” around him to help him with his studies. He developed his belief in the importance  
143 of an inclusive learning community, which led to the CircleIn company and app. MEGGETT  
144 shared results (presented on a slide) on the use of CircleIn at USC in the spring, in the following  
145 courses: CHEM 333, ACCT 225, and MATH 141. In the first two cases, there were statistically  
146 significant differences in final grades between “active” users and low- or non-users. He also  
147 noticed high engagement numbers. MEGGETT reported that initial results for the fall (in the  
148 following courses: CSCE 240, NURS 206, MATH 141, CSCE 211, ACCT 225, and CHEM 333)  
149 indicate a high level of engagement, with the following top three “study actions:” chat,  
150 flashcards, and anonymous questions. MEGGETT concluded by noting that student engagement  
151 using CircleIn at USC was high when compared to other universities.

152 OUTTEN open the floor questions for ARNETT, SUTTON, and MEGGETT.

153 ABBAS TAVAKOLI (College of Nursing; hence: TAVAKOLI) asked for a comparison of  
154 outcomes between classes using CircleIn and other classes and about statistical significance. He  
155 also asked about how CircleIn compares with WeChat.

156 ARNETT answered that experiments were being designed. The existing analysis compared  
157 engaged versus non-engaged students in the same course. ARNETT explained that CircleIn,  
158 unlike WeChat, allowed for anonymous questions. SUTTON highlighted a favorite feature of  
159 CircleIn: the ability for a student to share their approach to learning, by sharing, for example, a  
160 (concept) diagram.

161 MICHAEL STOELTZNER (Department of Philosophy; hence: STOELTZNER) asked whether  
162 there was data that using CircleIn was reducing the use of an artificial peer, such as ChatGPG.

163 MEGGETT replied that they had no data, but that students reported that they preferred to hear  
164 from a (human) peer than from a source that they were unsure of. Use of artificial peers often  
165 leads to cheating and similar issues, and the company's hope was that students would appreciate  
166 human-to-human feedback (also from supplemental instructors) more when using CircleIn.

167 MILIND KUNCHUR (Department of Physics and Astronomy; hence: KUNCHUR) asked  
168 whether there was a move to modify the rules concerning dropping a course even when money  
169 was owed.

170 ARNETT replied that, indeed, this was under review.

171 KUNCHUR suggested that first-generation students be given the opportunity to take an  
172 additional campus tour before enrolling to get a better understanding of campus and what support  
173 would be offered to them.

174 ARNETT agreed that this was a "great idea" and noted that the first-generation center was  
175 Maxcy college, right on the Horseshoe, in a central location. A goal was to create a one-stop  
176 shop for first-generation students.

177 KUNCHUR asked whether the first-generation students were paired, in a buddy system, with a  
178 senior student.

179 ARNETT answered that each first-generation student was associated with a graduate student and  
180 a faculty member who had a first-generation experience.

181 OUTTEN introduced a change to the agenda: adding a presentation by student body president  
182 PATTON BYARS (hence: BYARS).

183 ***With no objection, the change to the agenda was accepted. BYARS addressed the senate.***

184 BYARS announced that there would be a special free and safe event co-organized by many  
185 student organizations for September 18, taking place at Blatt field. Food would be free and  
186 available. BYARS stated that students were mad but, even more, scared, and wanted a safe and  
187 inclusive event. He invited the faculty to attend and to encourage students in our classes to  
188 attend. He stated that this would not be a protest event: it would be safe.

189 MICHAEL BIZINIS (School of Earth, Ocean, and the Environment; hence: BIZINIS) asked  
190 whether there was coordination with the graduate student association.

191 BYARS answered positively and mentioned that there was coordination also with the law student  
192 association and other organizations.

193 LIAM HEIN (College of Nursing; hence: HEIN) asked what would happen at the September 18  
194 event.

195 BYARS answered that there would many “free and fun events” organized by Carolina  
196 Productions and Gamecock Entertainment. He mentioned several, including various ball games,  
197 a DJ and a School of Music band.

198 ***Introduction of Standing Committee Chairs***

199 OUTTEN asked for all standing committee chairs to come onto the stage. He asked them to  
200 introduce themselves. Here they were:

201 STOELTZNER, chair of the faculty appellate panel (formerly grievance committee)

202 AMY FREEMAN (University Libraries), co-chair of the faculty welfare committee

203 ORGUL OZTURK (Department of Economics), chair of the admissions committee

204 DJ SCHEPKER (Department of Management), chair of the university athletic advisory  
205 committee

206 STACY WINCHESTER (University Libraries), chair of the bookstore committee

207 KUNIO HARA (School of Music), co-chair of the instructional development committee

208 MICHAEL DICKSON (Department of Philosophy; hence: DICKSON), chair of the Curricula  
209 and Courses committee

210 BILL SUDDUTH (University Libraries; hence: SUDDUTH) and MARK MINETT (Department  
211 of English; hence: MINETT), co-chairs of the faculty advisory committee. SUDDUTH  
212 mentioned ongoing work on the creation a faculty senate research committee.

213 OUTTEN thanked all faculty committee chairs for their work.

214 ***Report of curricula and courses committee***

215 SHARON GUMINA (Department of Integrated Information Technology; hence: GUMINA)  
216 moved to approve course changes (ARTE 201, CRJU 425, JOUR 312) and new courses (SOST  
217 206 and CSCE 584) listed in the C&C report sent to the senate before the meeting.

218 ***The motion passed.***

219 ***Report of the chair***

220 OUTTEN reminded the senate that he had provided a report at the general faculty meeting one  
221 week previously. He reminded the senate that the officers of the senate include him, chair-elect  
222 HEIN, secretary MARCO VALTORTA, and parliamentarian DAN BRACKMAN.

223 ***Unfinished Business***

224 OUTTEN made two nominations to fill committee vacancies: DICKSON to the curricula and  
225 courses committee, and ANGELA LIESE (Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; hence:  
226 LIESE) to the faculty appellate panel. He asked for other nominations and stated that, in the  
227 absence of other nominations before the end of the meeting these two candidates would be  
228 confirmed.

229 [*There being no other nominations before the end of the meeting, DICKSON and LIESE were*  
230 *confirmed as members of the curricula & courses and faculty appellate panel, respectively.*]

231 ALEXANDRIA REYNOLDS (Department of Psychology; hence: REYNOLDS) asked whether  
232 the changes to the faculty manual concerning titles were approved by the board.

233 OUTTEN confirmed that the BoT had passed the faculty manual changes as approved by the  
234 senate. ARNETT noted that some new titles (involving teaching professors) needed to be  
235 approved at the state level. This approval was being sought and was expected. OUTTEN noted  
236 that the new version of the faculty manual was available on the provost website.

237 ***For the Good of the Order***

238 AARON GLENN (School of Law) reminded all that the Health and Wellness Expo would take  
239 place on Tuesday, September 24, in the Russell House from 0800 to 1400, with more than forty  
240 vendors, and that more information was available on the benefits office website. He also  
241 mentioned the Cocky wellness walk on the Russell House at 1130 on the Horseshoe on that day.

242 MINETT introduced himself as the AAUP chapter president. He invited all to the AAUP fall  
243 kickoff meeting on September 20 at 1400 in Wardlaw room 125 (the Travelstead room of the  
244 museum of education).

245 OUTTEN encouraged senators to ensure that their units elect new senators as needed.

246 OUTTEN announced that the next faculty senate meeting would be on Wednesday, October 9, in  
247 the Russell House and that all meeting from the fall semesters would be held at the Russell  
248 House.

249 ***The meeting was adjourned at 16:05.***