



# Faculty

## F O R U M

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## A Letter from the President

Philippa Levine

President of the Faculty, Academic Senate

As I write, war is being waged in Iraq and the geopolitical future looks uncertain at best. Whatever one's opinions about the war and about US foreign policy, there can be no doubt that universities, along with every other kind of institution, will be affected by the political outcome of this tragedy for many years to come. We may be facing a severe diminution in the number of international students who choose to come, or are permitted to come to the US. We may see significant shifts in government research funding. Certainly, the effects of war on the economy, albeit unpredictable, will be palpable. At its March meeting, the Academic Senate debated a resolution, brought to the floor by a Senator, opposing the war and supporting the people of Iraq. That resolution was defeated by a large margin, although many of those who spoke against the resolution spoke also against the war itself. The majority opinion of the Senate clearly was that it was not the place of this body to involve itself in non-University issues.

In the narrower sphere of university-related issues, the Senate has had a busy few months, and some of its most important activities are outlined in the following pages. In particular, I'm pleased to showcase the new research initiative which has resulted in making faculty regularly aware of new or recurring grant opportunities as these become available. Our regular e-mailing of such information to faculty has produced an enormously positive response, and we'll continue to send these e-mails regularly. If you have not received these messages, please let either me or Robert Steward (rsteward@usc.edu) know, so that we can add your name to the mailing list.

Also new this year is a housing exchange service which can be accessed through the Senate's web pages. We've long heard faculty complain about the problem of finding housing for a visiting scholar or the like, or heard faculty wonder how they might find a house-sitter or renter during their own sabbatical leaves spent away. Here's the answer to that problem, a free advertising service through the Senate. Let us know what you think.

Also this semester, we have co-sponsored a number of events with the provost's office, all focused on the re-working of USC's strategic plan, and seeking an answer to the question of what the twenty-first century will look like. These have been lively events, with genuine intellectual exchanges, and we look forward to more such joint enterprises.

The Senate has also been actively involved in a marked change which tenured faculty members will notice in the coming months. No longer will tenured faculty receive a contract every year. Not only were such contracts an odd practice within the tenure system (since tenure surely implies that the contract continues) but were costly and time-consuming to produce. For those of you with tenure, the new system will mean that instead of the contract, you will hereafter receive each year a letter, signed by the president of the University, which will indicate your new salary and signify that your current contract is otherwise unchanged. When circumstances change (a promotion, a change in job title or responsibilities), a new contract will, of course, be issued. And for those without tenure – whether tenure-track or not – the annual contract will remain in place.



At President Sample's annual State of the University address on Wednesday February 26, President of the Academic Senate, Philippa Levine, unveiled a scroll containing the text of a resolution, passed unanimously by the Senate, and praising Sample for the significant improvements made to the University under his leadership. The full text of the resolution is as follows:

To President Sample:

**Whereas** you are the only university president ever to have garnered four gifts of \$100,000,000 or more; and,

**Whereas** the University's endowment has more than quadrupled since your arrival here in 1991; and,

**Whereas** the campus is undergoing the most ambitious construction program in its history; and,

**Whereas** the average SAT of entering freshman has improved by more than 250 points during your tenure; and,

**Whereas** it can be said that you literally wrote the book on leadership both inside and outside of academe; and,

**Whereas** you have led the University in its dramatic advance in academic stature; and,

**Whereas** throughout these achievements you have been an uncompromising defender of academic freedom and the tenure system, while repeatedly expressing pride over your own instructional achievements in the classroom;

therefore

**Be it resolved that** The Academic Senate wishes to record its thanks for your superb leadership and exemplary stewardship of this great academic institution.

As ever, you can find information on the Senate's activities – the text of resolutions, the roster of members, current issues under consideration – as well as documents and other resources helpful to faculty on our recently re-designed web site at URL. We're always happy to consider your suggestions for change and improvement; if there's something you'd like us to be including at the site and which you don't see, don't hesitate to let us know.

Finally, I'd like to introduce my successor as Senate president, Ed McCann of the School of Philosophy. Many of you will know Ed; as a citizen extraordinaire he has sat on many USC committees and those of you who know him from these will also know him to be a fair-minded as well as a wonderfully engaging colleague. The Senate will be in wonderful hands, and I retire from the Presidency with great optimism about the Senate's future in such wise and good hands.

### The Senate Listserv

The Academic Senate operates two listservs:  
SENATE NEWS - for official communication from the Senate to USC Faculty  
USC FORUM - for free discussion among USC faculty

To join these mail lists send the following two messages to LISTPROC@usc.edu:

SUBSCRIBE SENATENU-L <Lastname  
Firstname>

SUBSCRIBE USCFORUM-L <Lastname  
Firstname>

Once you have joined, and wish to post, send messages to USCFORUM-L@usc.edu or SENATENU-L@usc.edu.

To learn more about the Senate Listservs, please visit our website at:

<http://www.usc.edu/acsen>  
and go to "Resources" and then click on "Academic Senate Listservs"



*USC is in the process of reshaping policy on e-mail storage, and the following two articles present two very different opinions on the procedures now under discussion.*

## Email Deletion Policies

James E. Moore, II

*Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Public Policy and Management, and Industrial and Systems Engineering*

The University has been working for over a year to develop an email deletion policy. Formulating this policy has been challenging. Multiple agendas are involved, the policy has the potential to strongly affect all of the University's computer users, and the effort requires a combination of expertise in the areas of law, information technology, and the business and scholarly functions of the University.

A draft policy circulated in the Spring of 2003 focuses on restricting the amount of time that the University is willing to store email files on the University's central servers. The draft indicated that among other reasons, the University needs to take this action in order "to help the university limit the growing costs of maintaining the full archive...and to better insure the privacy of members of the university community." These motives and the consequences associated with the various ways the University might proceed deserve careful examination.

The lead objective refers to "email back-up files." These back-up files are not resident on the central servers. They are copied periodically, usually more frequently daily, to other media such as tape, and stored in secure locations off campus. Most USC users do not realize that the email messages they have deleted from the central servers have already been backed-up to tape, and thus still exist. USC's archive of these daily back-ups may be very extensive, but no one seems to know. The Information Services Division (ISD) Infrastructure Core has not been able to provide a definitive report. In any event, it is clear that no deliberate policy exists concerning the disposition of these email back-up files. It is even clearer that, in the current legal environment, email back-up records should not be kept indefinitely. A back-up record should exist for 100% of the email messages present on the central servers, but these back-ups should not persist for long after a user has elected to delete any email message from the central servers.

It is standard practice at USC to create back-up records of email files and all other central system and research data simultaneously. This was a novel technical choice when first implemented. This procedure remains efficient in a number of respects, but it also presents a problem. Such tape back-ups are essential to ensure disaster recovery, but the fact that email messages and system data are combined in these back-ups makes it impossible to establish separate back-up retention policies for email messages and these other data. Fortunately, there is a technical fix available. ISD can and should back-up system data and email data to separate media. Back-ups of email files should be kept only briefly.

This change would require more discipline from USC's computer users. At present, ISD can generally be cajoled into retrieving deleted messages from the archive of back-up tapes if a sufficiently compelling need arises. This provides a small convenience to users at a substantial risk to the institution. This user option should be sacrificed to make it possible to eliminate most of the email tape archive, and thus protect the University "from the potential use of email back-up files in court actions."

Automatic, involuntary deletion of email files from the central servers would also serve to limit creation of new email back-up files, but this would be

a Draconian and ultimately counter-productive step. Further it would not meet the University's objectives unless the current archive of email back-up tapes was also purged. There is no need to take both steps, and many reasons not to.

Computing simplifies nothing. It extends our reach and expands our objectives. Email has been no exception. The information transmission, filing, search, and retrieval functions provided by the University's email system have made it possible for faculty and staff members to organize, execute, and track activities they would not otherwise attempt. For many faculty members, the email facility provided by the central servers has become the equivalent of an electronic desk. In many cases, email has become the dominant method of disseminating working information, interacting with research colleagues, communicating interim research results, managing research projects, supervising research assistants, and communicating with students and teaching assistants.

Funded research activities provide special constraints. As principal investigators pursuing funded research, faculty members have a duty to communicate with research sponsors on behalf of the University. Many research project records involving commitments to sponsors and/or other faculty and graduate student investigators may exist only in the form of faculty email messages, and such research projects may span multiple years. Involuntary deletion of relevant emails messages could easily cause the University to fail to meet its contractual obligations to research sponsors.

Email records that faculty and staff members deem relevant to ongoing work activities, or potentially relevant to future activities, should not be arbitrarily deleted from the central servers. They should stay right where they are, under the control of the faculty and staff members who need them. Faculty members should not be expected to bear the expense and distraction of duplicating information management systems to ensure access to records the faculty needs to perform its work on the University's behalf.

Some faculty members would not attempt to cope with involuntary elimination of their email messages. These records would be lost as they were automatically deleted, and the activities faculty members would otherwise undertake if they had access to this information would not occur. This is a very heavy price for the University and for these faculty members to pay, and all the more objectionable because it is easily avoided by proceeding in a better way.

The language "central servers" is ambiguous. It applies variously to the USC computers managing email files, to the computer cluster designated the Research Computing Facility, and to the Student Computing Facility. It also might logically include more specialized high performance computers, and by any reasonable definition should very likely include the servers ISD uses to provide local area network services to many subscribers in academic and nonacademic units. These local area services have grown in recent years, and ISD is in the midst of upgrading the technology for this service to a Storage Area Network System to permit much more file storage at lower cost. One of the advantages of using

this ISD campus-wide local area network for data storage is that the information stored on these network servers is backed up daily.

As a result of access to these other central resources, some faculty members would cope with forced deletion of their messages by adopting strategies that would inadvertently subvert the University's objectives. Hard disk drives in desktop computers are like motorcycles: They all fall over eventually. Rather than copying their email files to desktop hard drives or portable media, many faculty members would elect to store files more conveniently and safely on the ISD Research Computing Facility, or to contract for space on the ISD local area network servers.

Despite continuing improvements in technology, there is evidence that the University will soon be facing technical constraints on the message storage capacity of the central servers. ISD reports that their transition to the web-based iPlanet email system has been a great success, and that email is a more popular medium than ever. The ISD Infrastructure Core also reports that email demand for central server space has grown much more quickly than they expected. ISD is concerned that demand will grow to the point that it will be a technical challenge to manage sufficient supply of central server space.

ISD is relearning one of the valuable lessons that we try to teach our undergraduates. Reducing the price of a scarce resource to zero does not make the resource less scarce. If we do not use prices to allocate scarce resources, other rationing mechanisms will emerge. ISD has learned to make use of pricing strategies as it has fielded new services, such as its local area network service. Access to the local area network server is priced, and the more space a user consumes, the higher the charge. Faculty and staff access to ethernet ports is priced, and these revenues became the principal mechanism for funding growth in the campus network.

In contrast, older centralized computing resources such as accounts on the Research Computing Facility have historically been unpriced. These central computing resources were paid for with indirect charges to Deans and Directors. This model was extended to the new iPlanet email system, and this was probably a mistake. ISD's central server space problem will be permanent so long as server space remains unpriced from the perspective of the user. Rather than trying to suppress demand for central server space by adopting Draconian, automatic, involuntary email deletion policies that interfere with the legitimate work of faculty and staff members, ISD should focus instead on using price to manage the intense demand for central server storage space. A generous central server space quota can be made available at a zero price to all users. This allocation might vary by user group (faculty, staff, and student). Message space in addition this base allocation should be purchased before the fact by either the user or the user's department, rather than paid for after the fact with indirect charges. This is not an exotic scheme. This is ECON 203g.

The University should adopt an email policy with the following elements. First, tape back-up copies of email messages stored on the central servers should be consistently eliminated shortly after users

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## In Support of USC's New Email Retention Policy

Jerry Gates, Ph.D.

Member-at-large Academic Senate

The university will no longer indefinitely retain e-mails on the ISD center server. Is this something faculty members should be concerned about? The simple answer is yes. This policy, when it goes into effect, will impact every faculty member by forcing us all to take individual responsibility for our own electronic correspondence, just as we now do with our other correspondence and documents. I believe this is a good policy for us as faculty as well as for the university as a whole. It reminds us that only we as individuals should be responsible for our own correspondence and documents.

Dean Campbell has developed a new electronic mail retention policy which will affect all USC faculty, staff, and students. The policy will go into effect December 1, 2003. The policy simply states that all e-mail, attachments, calendars, and other forms stored on ISD's central server will be retained for only 180 days. That is, any e-mail and/or attachment on the server more than 180 days will be automatically and permanently deleted. The policy also states that all individuals have the right to save copies of e-mails and attachments before the 180 day period, transferring them to other electronic environments and/or copying them on paper.

There are three main reasons for this new policy. First, to protect faculty, staff, and students as well as the university itself from use of stored e-mail files in potential court actions. Second, to help limit the costs of responding to subpoenas (that is, the administration will not have as many e-mail files to search with the 180 day deletion policy). Third, to reduce the growing costs of maintaining large archives. Dean Campbell reports an average of 1, 200,000 pieces of mail pass through the central server each day. Multiply that by 360 days by X years – well you get the picture. And fourth, to better insure the privacy of members of the university community, since the passage and early stages of the implementation of the "Patriot Act."

To retain e-mail or not to retain e-mail is not in question. The policy affirms that every faculty member has the right to retain e-mail sent and received. Further, except for cases where there are legal requirements to retain documents, every faculty member has the right to discard his or her e-mails at their discretion. The only questions are, if a faculty member chooses to retain e-mails where should they be stored and who should control the process? I would say it is best to have the choices directly in the

hands of individual faculty members and not with the University Administration. I will return to this point later, but first I will address some of the other issues raised with this new policy.

I am willing to wager that most faculty members have not given e-mail retention much thought. I would bet that most had the perception that once deleted, an e-mail it was gone forever. Not true. Remember Oliver North when he was at the White House? Currently, e-mails on the center ISD server are being retained on tape as part of a backup policy. Dean Campbell states that archiving e-mails is beginning to cost the university too much. I don't know what it costs, but every time I hear that the university has to spend funds on administrative functions I know there is less money to spend on direct education and on faculty. So I am generally in favor of keeping all administrative costs down.

Another reason stated for the new policy was to limit costs related to potential court actions and current costs of responding to subpoenas. It is my understanding that the sheer size of the e-mail files on hand costs much time and money whenever there is a subpoena for such a search. And, again, I would bet most faculty members didn't know that they had documents retained that could be included in such searches. Some have argued that whenever the university receives a subpoena for information does it not have to search all places for that information? Thus, what is gained by shifting e-mail files to other electronic locations? Evidently this is not true. Many of the subpoenas are just "fishing for information" and are, therefore, directed at the Chief Information Officer. He is only required to search the documents he has under his control.

The policy states that only retaining e-mails for 180 days will help maintain the privacy of members of the university community in the post-Patriot Act era. From my conversations with university administration, I believe that they are truly concerned about the potential negative impact this Act will have on faculty and students, as well as the operations of the university. I think they feel it is in the best interest of everyone within the university to enact policies now that will help protect individual privacy before it may be too late.

Before returning to the right to archive one's own e-mail, I want to address whether retaining e-mail for 180 days interferes with research and

teaching efforts. I would argue that most correspondence with students doesn't need to be held for six months. In the case of graduate students who are working on theses and dissertations, it seems to me that most all of these documents are in the form of attached files and should be backed up anyway. I remember that when I was working on my dissertation it was my responsibility to keep providing fresh copies of drafts to my chair and committee members. I don't think things have changed that much with the advent of e-mail. Regarding ongoing research efforts, I would again argue that it is to be less than responsible to have data and related correspondence stored in only one place. And the last place I think one would trust his or her data is on the university's central server

Now, to return to what I see as the main issue: the right of faculty to retain or discard e-mail at their own discretion. As I mentioned above, this policy affirms the faculty member's right to retain e-mail; but it cannot be retained on ISD's central server. One can download files onto other servers within a school, department, and/or unit if so desired. One can download files into one's own computer, zip drive, or other storage devices. Or one can make paper copies of e-mail files. Heaven forbid that this is the preferred method of storage. I would guess there is not enough room in any of our offices and homes for this paper, nor are there enough trees on this planet. My point here is that we don't want to retain much of our e-mail, but it often gets retained because we don't think about deleting it once we have read it. What did we do in the days before e-mail?

I am willing to bet that each of us put most of the correspondence in that trash can by our desks when we only dealt with paper. Of course we kept everything that was important and filed it appropriately. Now some of us filed things neatly away in cabinets while others of us just created piles around the office. I once shared an office and that unnamed faculty member would pile everything on here desk for the entire semester. At the beginning of the new semester she would throw everything in the trash and start over again. However, one chooses to store his or her e-mail is part of one's own basic personality. However, if nothing else, this new e-mail retention policy reminds us that we each should be in control and responsible for the retention of our correspondence and documents, and not just leave it to the university to decide for us by default.

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## Email Deletion Policies

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delete these files, within a matter of weeks at most. The messages that are deleted should truly disappear, and no-one should expect ever to see them again. They would become unrecoverable. Second, those messages that are stored on the central servers should be backed-up daily so long as the messages remain on the servers. This is necessary for disaster recovery. Third, the University should manage demand for central server space by pricing access, thus providing revenues for growth and suppressing irresponsibly high demands for server space. And fourth, the University should continue to leverage the work advantages provided to faculty and staff by advances in email technology, and not second-guess the

decisions faculty and staff members have made about which email messages are relevant enough to be temporarily retained on the central servers. This judgment should be left to individual investigators and support staff.

These four steps will provide the faculty and the institution with a much better email retention policy than that previously proposed. They will protect the institution from the high costs associated with maintaining and managing a tape archives of daily email back-ups, because these archives will be mostly eliminated. This will also better protect the privacy of the faculty by making sure that deleted email

messages truly disappear. These steps will conserve resources and reduce the total cost of system management, though the most intensive users would pay a premium if they choose to consume a disproportionate share of central server space. And, most importantly, these steps will ensure that faculty members have continued access to a communications and information technology resource on which many have come to rely, and which has extended our collective reach and effectiveness in our work. In contrast, any strategy relying on automatic, involuntary deletion of email messages from the central servers provides fewer benefits in all dimensions.

