Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Jan 10, 2018)

Date: January 10, 2018
Room: Irani Hall, Rm. 321

Present (16): Rebecca Broyer; Jessica Cantiello; Robert Chernoff; David Crombecque; Shannon Gibson; Assal Habibi; Michael Hadjidaniel; P.T. McNiff (secretary); Dan Pecchenino (vice-president); Geraldine Peters; Gioia Polidori; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; Carolina Sitnisky-Cole; Trisha Tucker (president); An-Min Wu; Emily Zeamer

Absent (3): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Antonio Idini

Guests (2): Ange-Marie Hancock Alfaro, Dean’s Leadership Fellow (Social Sciences); Emily Anderson, Dean’s Leadership Fellow (Humanities)

Dialogue with Dean’s Leadership Fellows

Trisha welcomes the council back for a new calendar year and introduces our guests.

Emily A. discusses the development of the newly created DLF position within the Humanities division and how the role is still being shaped. She notes she will be working closely with the Divisional Dean of Humanities (currently Shari Velasco until Peter Mancall returns), serving to offer assistance to that dean while also acting as a liaison between faculty and the dean. The first project she has worked on with Dean Velasco is developing a stronger mentoring program for tenured Associate Professors.

Ange-Marie introduces herself as the DLF in the Social Sciences division. She notes that the Divisional Dean of Natural Sciences is still developing his vision for the DLF position and that no DLF has been appointed yet. For the Social Sciences, she reiterates the same plans that Emily had discussed, adding that a look into the way the tenure system works might be part of this initial project. She and Andy Lakoff have spoken of the academic planning process and how it will shape research and collaboration in the social sciences going forward. She also notes that she will be working with the new Chief Diversity Officer on mentoring and planning issues, as this ties into her own research.

During the discussion, Michael asks whether the focus of their work on promotion will be focused solely on tenured faculty or also include RTPC. The response is that the current focus is indeed on tenured faculty, but could expand in the future.

Carolina inquires about how the DLFs plan to advertise the help they can provide and what kind of outreach they plan to do. Emily says they will be speaking at
division meetings and also going to departmental meetings to augment communication via chairs.

In response to inquiries by other council members, the DLFs note that, as these positions become more established, they will be able to expand their role as mentors. They also note that, while they will be involved in professionalization issues, they will not have any involvement in personnel or human resources decisions.

**Discussion of Priorities**

*Trisha* opens the floor for this discussion of what priorities the Council should have for spring 2018.

Issues around RTPC teaching and promotion are brought up. *Gioia* raises concerns about unclear policies on payment for RTPC faculty teaching graduate level classes. Other members discuss concerns about RTPC faculty being advised not to go up for promotion for unclear reasons, or faculty being dismissed before they would receive the raise associated with a promotion.

*Carolina* mentions hearing reports that RTPC faculty will no longer be allowed to teach GSEMs. *Carolina* and *Emily Z.*, wonder if some centralized clarification could be made on teaching and promotion issues from the dean level.

**Discussion about Departmental Best Practices**

*Trisha* and *Dan* report on their meeting with Dean Miller and Vice Dean Mackey. Discussion focused on questions and concerns about how departments are facilitating faculty success. The Council mentions that both identifying problem areas and noting the successful work of departments would help with this process. Members share suggestions on how training could be improved to best support department chairs.

Various members discuss the processes in place for how chairs are selected. *Dan* notes that a long-term project for a DFC caucus could be to investigate Dornsife’s current leadership structures and offer suggestions for improvement.

Transparency comes forward as a primary quality desired in departmental leaders. Other stated qualities include interpersonal engagement, the ability to delegate, a clear understanding of Dornsife policies, and an understanding of the merit review and promotion needs of all faculty within a department. *P.T.* and *Dan* note the need to have departmental leaders who are able to follow all these moving parts, but caution against creating such a demanding wish list that almost no one could—or would want to—fill the job.
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David wonders if conducting a study to do some external benchmarking on these issues of chair qualities and training would be helpful.

Discussion of Other Issues

Questions arose around the issue of “super T.A.s” and their status as RTPC faculty. Trisha notes that this topic came up in a meeting with Deans Stott and Finkel. Shannon and An-Min both share that RTPC faculty in their departments have been asked to serve as super T.A.s when classes they were scheduled to teach did not run.

Bob brings up questions about merit review, the connection to student evaluations, and compensation decisions. The members discuss the current policy and the need to have clearer guidelines for chairs on how to implement it. Dan, Rebecca, and Bob have a conversation about what steps will be taken to help chairs and faculty reviewers read and understand these new evaluations. An-Min notes that CET has material available to help with faculty peer evaluation; Dan adds that CET will be playing a centralized role in bringing uniformity to the merit review process.

Gerry mentions that the DCAP guidelines for RTPC faculty need to be updated, as the posted version from 2013 lacks current information necessary for chairs to accurately and fairly handle promotion files and other RTPC issues.

Emily Z., Dan, and Assal discuss Dean Miller’s proposal for hiring more tenure-track professors over the next ten years, and the resulting effect that may have on graduate student work.

Announcements and Updates

Trisha reports that progress is being made on the distinction between the RTPC Lecturer and Professor paths. A proposal was made to the dean to switch everyone with a terminal degree (even if it is not directly related to their current position) to the Professor track. Gioia and Carolina question whether people left on the Lecturer path (i.e. those without terminal degrees) can or will be allowed to teach lecture or lab classes.

The issue of getting more TT faculty involved in faculty governance is addressed. Trisha and Dan are reaching out directly to faculty as well as to chairs in advance of the upcoming Council elections. They express the hope that the administration will assist in promoting the importance of full participation in faculty governance going forward.

Trisha, Dan, P.T., and Shannon update the council on the Breaking Bread program and Andrea Hodge’s appearance at the December Academic Senate meeting. Suggestions for changes were made in the Senate meeting, though it is unclear what the updated version will look like.
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Assal, Gioia, and Sergio discuss getting the word out about the need for a tenured faculty member on the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. A willing person has not been found as of yet.

Trisha shares a request from Dean Stott about identifying Dornsife point people for the new USC Autism Spectrum Conditions Committee. Bob and Assal say they will discuss it at their departments next faculty meeting. Emily Z. and Michael also will forward it around to colleagues.

Trisha notes that Kimberly Freeman, the new Chief Diversity Officer, will be a guest at the next Council meeting in February. Sergio, Gioia, Dan, Shannon, Trisha, and Bob propose possible subjects for that conversation.

David and Jessica share an update from the Faculty Affairs Caucus, discussing the salary bench-marking project and the timeline for completion of a draft.

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

Trisha submits the minutes of the previous DFC meeting, on Dec. 6, for approval. Of the 16 members in attendance, 15 approve the minutes; one abstains.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

P.T. McNiff, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council