Minutes of the Dornsife College Faculty Council Meeting

February 1, 2017

Present: Jeff Chisum (President), Trisha Tucker (Vice President), Daniel Pecchenino (Secretary), Emily Zeamer, Matthew Kahn, Shannon Gibson, Rebecca Broyer, Bob Girandola, Antoine Bechara, David Tompkins, Lori Mesrobian, Geraldine Peters, Michael Hadjidaniel, Gioia Polidori, Sheila Briggs, Maura Crowley (guest), Samantha Broitman (guest)

Absent: Nathalie Burle, Alison Dundes Rentln, Iva Bozovic, Wiebke Ziebus

I. Approval of Minutes
   a. Motion to approve Dec. and Jan. meeting minutes by Rebecca Broyer, seconded by Lori Mesrobian
   b. Dec. and January meetings unanimously approved (14-0)

II. Academic Senate Meeting Reports
   a. Provost Quick addressed the Senate
   b. The Benefits Committee gave a report on the rising costs, particularly the costs of USC’s medical plan
      i. Lots of uncertainty around medical plans because of the general uncertainty around the health care law
   c. Report from Campus Climate Committee
      i. Draft of report was circulated before the meeting and discussed by the Senate

III. Discussion
   a. Diversity and Inclusion Week
      i. Jeff Chisum reported on the Shuan Harper talk
         1. It was in part on the experiences of African-American males at different kinds of institutions
      ii. Trisha Tucker brought up the potential for how the DFC might get more involved in these events
         1. Jeff mentioned that Michael Quick is concerned that he basically sees the same people at these events
            a. How can we get more people there?
            b. Sheila Briggs brought up the issue of these events being at inconvenient times
               i. Might we be able to sacrifice some, let’s say, faculty meeting time for these events?
               ii. Is there a way to make these trickle down to the department level?
                  1. Maura Crowley brought up the potential of there being Outreach Coordinators in each department
2. Emily Zeamer proposed the idea of having something like CET-style workshops around these issues

b. Report from Research, Policy, and Documentation Caucus
   i. Potential bias in Merit Review process
      1. Issue of Merit Review Committees being appointed by Chair as opposed to being voted in was raised. Departments where it seems to be by appointment are (as reported by DFC members):
         a. International Relations
         b. Biology
         c. Chemistry
         d. Economics
      2. Are there basic oversight problems we need to address?
         a. For instance, are people serving on the Merit Review Committees given enough time to review files?
         b. What about Dornsife policy language that seems to be aimed at limiting “inflation” in the Merit Review scores?
         c. Are TT faculty in the best position to make evaluations of course design and other pedagogical issues for RTPC faculty?
         d. The Committee will collect criteria from Merit Review Committees around Dornsife and include them in their final report
         e. Michael Hadjidaniel brought up the murky language around mentoring of RTPC faculty with regard to Merit Reviews
            i. Perhaps those given low merit reviews and rejected promotions should be entitled to specific advice as to how to remedy this in a future review
   3. The Committee would like to survey faculty to find out where the “pain points” are

ii. Gap Funding for Research Faculty/Sabbaticals
   1. Geraldine Peters brought up the different ways that Research Faculty are paid compared to others
      a. There is a cap (approved annual salary) in the amount one can be paid from grant funds. A comment was made from a committee member that this might disincentivize going after larger, more competitive grants
      b. 95% of approved salary comes from grants, 5% from USC
      c. You are allowed to go down to 50% and maintain benefits
      d. So how do we cover researchers in very lean years?
         Federal funding is affected by changes in government policies (e.g. NASA has changed focus in recent years)
      e. Should research faculty be able to “bank” fringe benefits money in order to either take a sabbatical or fund themselves in down years?
i. Jeff noted that issues surrounding sabbaticals are very complicated across the board

ii. Gioia Polidori brought up the option of thinking of this in relation to unemployment benefits

iii. Antoine Bechara brought up the idea that money does exist for this, but that it isn’t advertised widely

iv. It was suggested that Geraldine talk with the new Natural Sciences Dean

Meeting adjourned at 4:50PM

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Pecchenino, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council