

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting

Date: September 2, 2020

Location: Zoom meeting

Present (19): Douglas Becker, Jasmine Bryant, Julia Chamberlin, Monalisa Chatterjee, Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch, Jim Clements, David Crombeque, Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus, Jerry Davison, David Ginsburg, Tracie Mayfield, Sri Narayan, Andrea Parra, Stephanie Renee Payne, Gioia Polidori (*president*), Matthew Pratt, Alisa Sánchez (*secretary*), John Vidale, Emily Zeamer (*vice-president*)

Absent (0)

Guest (1): John Carlos Rowe, USC Associates' Professor of the Humanities and Chair of the American Studies and Ethnicities Department

*Approval of minutes from previous meetings:*

May 2020 19 of the DFC present vote to approve, zero oppose, and zero abstain

June 2020 19 of the DFC present vote to approve, zero oppose, and zero abstain

*Discussion with John Carlos Rowe (**John R**), Chair of American Studies and Ethnicity Department*

**Gioia** welcomed **John R** and noted all DFC members had received documents in preparation. **Gioia** invited **John R** to discuss recent work in the American Studies and Ethnicity Department (ASE), including the proposal for a Center for Black Studies, and how the DFC could support this work.

**John R** introduced ASE and the proposed Center:

- **John R** expressed concern at how dispersed discussion was about what was to be done at USC to develop better antiracist education in response to national and international Black Lives Matter movements and to address the treatment of people by race and gender and sexuality in the US and around the world.
- ASE offers an African American Studies major and minor, PhD emphasis, and has 40 PhD students, and yet very few administrators were turning to ASE or recognizing faculty expertise in considering what USC should do.
- **John R** appointed a departmental Task Force on Anti-Racist Education at USC which drafted the documents circulated to the DFC. The departmental task force was superseded by the Dean's Task Force, appointed by Dornsife Dean Amber Miller. The Dean's Task

Force includes 6 members, 5 from ASE: Francille Wilson (chair), Lydie Moudileno, Edwin Hill, Oneka LaBennett, and John Carlos Rowe; the 6<sup>th</sup> member is Ange-Marie Hancock-Alfaro, the new Political Science and International Relations chair.

- The Dean's Task Force produced a proposal for a Center for Black Studies: a center that would give emphasis and coherence to Afro Caribbean and Africana studies including the African Diaspora. The proposal envisions a public-facing profile for the Center through hosting postdoctoral fellows, distinguished scholars in residence, and high profile programming that would bring the public to USC. The Center would unite existing interests across the College, enhance courses, and show that USC is committed to antiracist education. Manuel Pastor said it was criminal that USC does not have a Black Studies Center, like the UCLA Ralph Bunche Center, which has a public profile and is well integrated into UCLA.
- **John R** is pursuing Mellon funding for the Center through the Provost-announced funds.

**Gioia** expressed that the Center is a university-wide issue and suggested that ASE faculty present the Center proposal in the Senate. **John R** agreed.

**Stephanie** asked if the Dean's Task Force was working with the community, given the desire for the Center to be public-facing. CAAM (California African American Museum) has a graduate level research center, for example. **John R** agreed the Center would like to work with CAAM and community at the same time as being thoughtful about community and undergraduate student involvement. The Dean's Task Force envisions the Center as doing research and curricular innovation, not as competing with community or student groups.

**Jerry** recalled the \$50 million Provost Diversity funds; Provost Zukowski reported at the last Senate meeting that \$21 million had been spent. **John R** agreed the Center would welcome these funds and would use a modest amount to do quite a bit. **Jerry** suggested the University should create an endowment with a steady annual yield to support the Center; this would be significant fundraising but could get done with vigorous leadership from the President and Provost. **Douglas** shared that some recent USC centers – Korean studies, Armenian studies – started with donations from members of community. **John R** stressed that the central administration work on making the Center a permanent part of USC endowment; from experience, it is exhausting to constantly be raising money. **Emily** offered that Dornsife can provide arguments to take to donors but it is the job of central administration, not Dornsife, to find donors. **Emily** suggested asking departments for statements on the need for this Center in terms of research and curriculum. **Douglas** proposed the DFC craft an endorsed resolution for the Center to bring to the Senate.

**Gioia** noted 3 main points where the DFC might support ASE's work: the Center, curriculum, and faculty recruitment and retention. In terms of curriculum, **Gioia** shared updates on the Diversity designation for courses. Last year, the DFC learned that Dornsife is reluctant to revise the GE requirement again, given how costly and time consuming it would be, though Dean Stott has endorsed the idea that each department include diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in stated departmental learning objectives. **Stephanie** noted that faculty need funds and resources to

be equipped to bring DEI into the curriculum; faculty have implicit biases. **Gioia** started a discussion with Dean Stott on a program wherein faculty experts in DEI could train other faculty on infusing DEI in curriculum. **Jim** expressed concern about calling this a Diversity requirement, not an antiracist requirement; it is important that everyone teaching GE is aware of how to structure and conduct their classes, not that only some do it. **Emily** agreed that all of us need to do this work.

**Melissa** noted the explicit purpose of the Black Studies Center is to address anti-Blackness at USC and that focusing on URM (underrepresented minorities) is not the same as countering anti-Blackness. **Melissa** asked to hear more about the realistic timeline for establishing the Center and emphasized the urgency. **Stephanie** agreed that diversity is not the same as addressing anti-Blackness and added that we need to address and take direction from the Black\_at\_USC Instagram, working with urgency and focus. **John R** reported that the Dean's Task Force asked for the Center to be initiated this year, with a founding director whose first task will be a search for a longer-term director.

**Gioia** suggested developing a proposal for a course release for faculty on developing curriculum which counters anti-Blackness. **Tracie** noted we need to get this initiative underway as soon as possible so that people leading courses can prepare over the winter break; it will be a ton of work to prepare. **Matt** asked **Melissa** what she considers the biggest anti-Blackness problem – DPS, curricula? **Melissa** responded she could not point to any one problem, but noted that people feel disrespected and there is no safe space for them on campus. This does not only affect students, but staff and faculty as well. **Stephanie** expressed it is all of the above, an overarching misunderstanding of what it is like to be a Black person in America. **Matt** asked how faculty training could be improved and **Stephanie** noted that students who have asked for support through USC reporting systems have been retraumatized. She added that faculty need to conduct interior work, examining implicit biases and stereotypes they hold.

**Andrea** expressed that departments are isolated and the University could support collaborations, such as each department having a facilitator that could lead the department in addressing biases, not only in classes but also how staff are treated. **Jim** wondered if a course release is an ambitious enough request. **Stephanie** responded that someone from outside the department may not understand the nuances of resistance and fear within the department.

**Monalisa** asked why the reporting process was not effective and insisted there needs to be a way to address implicit bias and penalize people who continue to act in biased ways. **Stephanie** shared that the effectiveness of Title IX and OED depend on the institution. **Douglas** considered that accusations of racism can be weaponized within a department and it may be easier to hear from someone outside who is positioned as helping faculty to grow.

**Douglas** noted three issues arising in discussion: how to increase understanding the nature of race in our fields; how to improve the process of filing complaints and addressing distinct acts of racism; implementing training on implicit racism that is framed as a growth opportunity, not as punitive.

**Sri** observed that we have been learning from student anecdotes about mistreatment from faculty. What if Dornsife management are not hearing about these problems in the same tones as we are talking about it in this room? What if we compile 3 pages of incidents and ask for Dornsife management's response? **Emily** added that each anecdote indicates a failure of the institution and supported the idea of collecting stories, having faculty review them and select ones that are representative. **Stephanie** stated that presenting a document contextualized with stories would be hard to ignore. **Gioia** suggested a document that starts with anecdotes, then advocates for the Center, training for faculty, and any other actions. **Alisa** proposed that each department be required to prepare a statement on their departmental plans for combatting anti-Blackness in the classroom and curriculum, with a follow up report. **Sri** considered a working group that could gather and classify the anecdotal data to identify say, ten issues and ask Dornsife deans for their response.

**Gioia** thanked **John R** and reiterated she would ask the Senate President to invite him to speak.

#### *Announcements*

- **Gioia** announced that the DFC EB (**Gioia**, **Emily**, and **Alisa**) decided against recording meetings so that everyone could speak more freely.

*Approval of minutes from May and June 2020* [see above for voting record]

#### *Updates*

- *Retirement benefits suspension:*
  - **Gioia** reported updates from Dornsife Dean of Undergraduate Education Andy Stott: furloughs are off the table, but it is very likely that retirement benefits will be suspended starting January 2021.
  - **Gioia** also reported on meetings with Academic Senate President Paul Adler: Paul will invite USC Chief Financial Officer James Staten to discuss budget matters at a Senate meeting. Many faculty members present at the August Senate meeting were upset that President Folt and Provost Zukowski did not address the suspension of retirement benefits. **Gioia** has asked Paul for an update on this matter.
- *Dornsife funds:*
  - **Gioia** reported updates from Dean Miller on Dornsife funds: Dornsife cuts are going to be much lower than what had been expected; the financial loss is not as significant as had been feared. Dornsife is asking departments to make cuts of only 4%, which will be absorbed by refreshment and travel cuts.
  - Dornsife will have faculty development awards and promotions as usual.

- Merit Review is opt-in for Dornsife faculty this year. Faculty not opting in the Merit Review process this year will have last year's evaluation considered for a merit raise this year.
  - Dean Miller agreed to a 3% average merit raise for faculty. The 3% merit raise was arrived at last year, following a study on faculty taxation, which refers to the way that central administration taxes the schools. Dornsife pays more taxes to central administration than other schools, partly due to Dornsife's higher number of undergrads, who are counted as more expensive than Masters students.

*Discussion on classroom observations for online teaching:*

- **Andrea** noted that the promotion process usually involves some sort of class observations, but there is a lack of clarity on this matter for this year. Asking Dean Stott about this issue, **Andrea** reported that Dean Stott said observations would not be mandatory. However, she is trying to get confirmation that observations are not mandatory.
- **Emily** reported that Dean Stott welcomes the DFC to weigh in on this matter: if you know faculty who have a strong opinion, share it. It sounds like Dornsife is leaning towards an opt-in approach. **Melissa** noted that the English department was carrying out online classroom observations.
- **Gioia** reported that Vice Provost Elizabeth Graddy said Zoom recordings may be used as part of observations but did not provide much detail. Last year, Vice Provost Graddy stated that recordings were not going to be used for faculty review, but it seems more likely now that we have two semesters of online teaching. **Gioia** will ask Paul to look into this as a university-wide issue; the Senate could draft guidelines on how to use Zoom recordings for promotion.

*Updates continued*

- *Senate Resolution on Support for Caregivers*
  - **Gioia** reported the Senate passed a resolution on Support for Caregivers in COVID Conditions in the August Senate meeting. Before the Senate drafted a resolution, **Gioia**, **Emily**, and **Alisa** started drafting a resolution on scheduling flexibility, which they sent to the EWG on Teaching. Based on this work and discussions with Paul over 4-5 days, Paul added 3 amendments to the Senate resolution. The DFC appreciates how responsive Senate leadership was in quickly incorporating input into the resolution. **Gioia** noted the resolution is not a panacea, but a good start.
- *Faculty Hiring – URM Hiring*

- **Gioia** reported that the hiring was finalized for a professor in Psychology, following an extended process of DFC advocacy. The hiring process had been dropped in its final stages last Spring in response to COVID. At the request of Psychology faculty, seeking to finalize the hire as critical to meeting research and pedagogy needs as well as diversifying departmental faculty, the DFC advocated for the hire; **Gioia** discussed this issue with Paul and deans. **Gioia** recognized this as a victory of DFC advocacy.

*Discussion – centering on suspension of retirement benefits*

- **Jerry** asked about the justification for suspending retirement benefits, given that there is good student enrollment, the apparent ability to hire administrative positions, and that overall the outlook is not as bleak as forecast in March and April. **Jerry** hoped to make this more of an issue with the Senate. **Gioia** agreed that the DFC and Senate will keep pushing for fuller explanations and transparency on university finances, although the central administration has yet to respond to the COFE report. **Emily** characterized the lack of information as signaling a lack of concern for communicating with faculty about compensation, and that part of the DFC’s role is to press on these issues.
- **Emily** recommended writing a succinct statement, “we believe these statements should guide financial decision-making.” **Douglas** agreed, suggesting a declaration that not meeting obligations for retirement is unacceptable. If the central administration argues these are necessary cuts, then the burden of proof is on them to explain.
- **Jerry** observed that faculty have been working very hard, without any real vacation, instead teaching and preparing for online teaching. Faculty are professionals but suspending retirement contributions is a significant financial loss. How are faculty being recognized for working so hard, keeping students engaged? **Tracie** expressed that free faculty labor was an issue under discussion even before COVID; for example, added DSP benefits for students, which are welcome, have meant that faculty end up working significant additional hours.
- **Jerry** recommended the President ask the Board of Trustees to approach donors about using the annual yield from endowment for specific purposes, such as not cutting compensation of hardworking faculty. We are in an existential crisis and at risk of losing great faculty.
- **Marianna** suggested contacting Jim Moore, who has written a message pushing back on retirement suspensions, and collaborating with other schools so faculty voice is stronger. The DFC has a good example from May, for the statement, led by Devin, that faculty would not be required to teach in person.
- **Emily** reported that Dean Stott said Dornsife considers the retirement suspension a done deal and that departmental cuts are factoring these compensation cuts into account. **Gioia**

considered a petition against the retirement benefits suspension and **Emily** suggested using petitions strategically, perhaps for next year if retirement is not reinstated. **Gioia** stated the DFC would strategize with the Senate.

- **Gioia** stated discussion on caucuses would occur over email. She recommended adding a Teaching and Curriculum Caucus and deciding how to incorporate the Emergency Working Groups (EWGs).

The meeting is adjourned at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alisa Sánchez,  
Secretary  
The Dornsife Faculty Council