

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting

Date: February 3, 2021

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)

Guests (2): Jessica Parr and Gayle Stuart Fiedler Vierma

Approval of minutes from previous meetings:

January 2021 15 of the DFC present vote to approve, zero oppose, and one abstains

General updates

Gioia shared updates:

- Senate representatives: Dornsife is eligible to send two additional senators to the Academic Senate; **Stephanie** expressed interest in serving
- April meeting reschedule: to avoid meeting on a university Wellness Day, the DFC will meet on April 14th instead of the originally scheduled April 7th
- Review of Dean Amber Miller: **Gioia** was appointed to Dean's Miller Review Committee, which is being charged with soliciting feedback from faculty, staff, students and the community to understand the general sentiment of all these stakeholders and to summarize the information received in a document. **Gioia** views her participation as a faculty representative, departing from her role as the DFC President, and seeks her contribution to the committee to be informed by as many people as possible.
- Senate President Paul Adler at next DFC meeting: Paul will attend the March DFC meeting from 4:15-5pm. The DFC can collectively generate agenda items to discuss with Paul.

Caucus updates

Curriculum and Teaching Caucus

Julia and **Doug** shared updates:

- **Respondus monitor:** **Julia** explained that language classes, like some others, ask students to acquire rote knowledge as part of the overall learning objectives. For example, to memorize verb conjugations that are critical to further learning in the language. The only way to know that students have acquired this knowledge is to test them on it and the tool used starting with moving online in March 2020 was Respondus. **Julia** shared the Provost's announcement to suspend the use of Respondus out of concern for equity issues. The Caucus understands the decision but takes issue with how the decision was made – the languages departments were not contacted and this affects a number of students. Also, faculty had included Respondus on their syllabi, students had already downloaded it, and no other tools were offered in its place. This issue speaks to a broader concern of faculty not being consulted in decisions, especially issues of pedagogy.
 - **Gioia** appreciated Julia for raising this, to learn that this question of testing online was a more widespread issue; it is also an issue for classes like Anatomy, which requires memorizing terms that are easy to search. Jason Dove, a Blackboard expert for Dornsife, has created a standard operating procedure to use Zoom and a lockdown browser together
 - **Julia** added that faculty agree with the suspension of Respondus, but that the timing of the decision was an issue – faculty prepared classes during the winter break with Respondus as the standard tool to use. **Doug** emphasized that this matter raises concerns about faculty consultation on pedagogy, how faculty were informed about the issue, and how they were left scrambling on what to do
- **Academic integrity:** **Doug** reported that faculty feel they are receiving mixed signals about academic integrity from the administration: on the one hand, wanting faculty to be concerned with cheating, but on the other hand, not knowledgeable about the challenges faculty contend with in adapting pedagogy online. For example, adjusting some assessments to material that is not searchable online heavily increases TA workload. Overall, **Doug** called for faculty to be a part of these conversations, rather than instructed to police academic integrity in the classroom. **Melissa** agreed that enforcing academic integrity is not the main work of faculty
 - **Jerry** has transitioned to open-book “thought” essay questions in hopes of giving exams that require more than regurgitation, although this makes for far more work in grading
 - **Andrea** shared that the Latin American & Iberian Cultures department is not using Respondus on exams, based on the thought that it added an additional level of stress

- **Stephanie** stated the need to consider how to practice academic integrity in a 21st century, Google context. A policy should be put in place considering how fundamentally the world has changed
- **Jim** added that the university does very little to address the causes of cheating (anxiety, hopelessness, students' lack of investment in their own education), and instead looks only at stopping those already committed to breaking the honor code, or punishing those who already have; **Melissa** and **Tracie** agreed
- **Sri** considered that the solutions will not be one size fits all, depending on the discipline and course, and that faculty need more personnel support for doing testing in a reliable way
- Teaching in Fall 2021: **Doug** questioned how teaching would operate in the Fall – would the university compel faculty to teach in person? How much would caregiving responsibilities be taken into consideration? What will be the norms guiding decisions about Fall?
 - **Matthew** noted that COVID vaccines will protect people from infection, and if not from infection, then from getting so sick as to go to the hospital. People should have confidence that things will be pretty back to normal. In the next couple months, further information about the vaccines and transmission will be available
 - **Gioia** reported that the university is not currently making detailed schedules for Fall, while operating under the assumption that instruction will be in person.
 - **John** asked about COVID permutations, which appear to be more contagious; **Matthew** responded that tests thus far show that the vaccines protect enough against permutations to avoid hospitalization
 - **Melissa** emphasized that regardless of vaccines, childcare demands are untenable and course releases would be extremely helpful

Additional discussion

Summer classes: **Jessica** shared that the Provost's scholarship will support students who have been impacted to take 8 units of summer classes, as long as the classes are online. **Andrea** asked if departments will be given additional funding to offer online summer courses. **Jessica** responded it could likely be negotiated. **Emily** recalled that Dean Stott had wanted to offer a full slate of classes for students during the summer.

Salary and Merit: **Gioia** reported that she and Devin Griffiths, Maggie Switek, and Sergio Sañudo met with the Senate Salary Task Force about salary benchmarking. It is uncertain if there will be merit or promotion raises this year; last year, promoted faculty did receive a raise. Dornsife is trying to find a way to have merit raises this summer. **Jerry** called for using the yield from some endowments to offset some budget issues and was not aware of any serious response

from the administration regarding this proposal to address the budget crisis. **Jerry** noted that other universities are doing this. **Gioia** proposed strategizing on this issue with Paul in the March DFC meeting.

RTPC and PT Caucus

Jessica reported that the Caucus has divided into two subcommittees, focusing on RTPC and PT faculty. **Jessica** is leading the PT faculty committee. The committee would like actual numbers on how many PT faculty there are; why some departments rely a great deal on PT faculty; why some departments have PT faculty teaching a full load and paying PT faculty for the overload course, but not amounting to being paid as much as full time faculty; why additional full time positions are not being approved at a higher level, or why they are not being requested.

Gioia discussed this issue in November with then-Dean of Undergraduate Education Andy Stott, who opposed PT faculty having a full time load or even an overload; Dean Stott shared then that the Writing Program (which has a high number of PT faculty working full time loads) would hire 4-5 full time positions. **Stephanie** responded that hires must be national searches for equity reasons; Harvard got into trouble in the 90s for only hiring within its institution. **Stephanie** added that we owe our PT faculty training in how to be competitive on the market. **Jessica** shared that PT faculty understand why a call for applications must go outside the institution, but are told they cannot use internal letters. **Gayle** added that it is not fair to favorably evaluate PT faculty in the job they are doing with a full time (or full time plus) load, and also ask PT faculty to compete with someone active in research.

Gayle stated this problem is not new in Dornsife and imagined it exists across USC. **Gayle** described the current state of affairs as effectively a caste system, that this concerns faculty who are de facto full time but relegated to PT status; faculty who have been disenfranchised over a number of years.

Stephanie asked what protections are in place for PT faculty – if there is language that if you're PT over a period of time, you have protections. **Jessica** responded that currently, there are not many protections for PT faculty.

Gioia suggested writing a proposal and bringing up this matter with Dean of Undergraduate Education Emily Anderson. **Gioia** recalled that the main issue with PT hiring is that PT faculty are hired semester to semester in order to meet demand for the following semester. This is understandable when teaching a course for the first time, but this issue is coming up year after year. **Gayle** called for more data from Scheduling and Staffing. For example, does the Writing Program genuinely get increased enrollment every semester? If the university is holding people to PT positions when there is need for FT positions, then the university is disenfranchising them.

David C. asked what the criteria are to be called PT faculty – are there laws about what is and what is not PT? The Math Department has two PT faculty with a clear understanding that they do not have a full-time load, but it seems like other departments find loopholes, or are unaware of rules about PT status. **Jessica** responded she would need to find out how PT is defined, but has

heard from several PT faculty that they have a FT load, and given that, they should be a full time employee; this is an equity issue.

Emily asked for clarification – an administrator had suggested that some PT faculty working a full load would be paid more than if they were on a full-time contract. **Jessica** assumed that FT faculty would be earning more than if they put together their salary from units, at least since instituting the salary floor for new hires.

Gioia and **Jessica** noted that PT faculty can go up in rank according to guidelines instituted two years prior. However, **Jessica** raised concerns about mentoring for PT faculty.

Gayle concluded with announcements that the Caucus hosted an informal mentoring session with good sharing across disciplines; the next session will be divided by disciplines. **Gayle** and **Jim** are working on clarifying the process of awarding summer teaching and how rank comes into play.

Gioia stated she would meet with **Gayle** and **Jessica** next week to follow up on issues raised today.

Fighting anti-Blackness and DEI Caucus

Stephanie and **Tracie** shared updates:

- the Anti-Racism Learning Community proposal is progressing; it encompasses trainings to be more culturally competent and a certificate that could be included in dossiers, as well as an informal place to strategize with fellow faculty. It is deliberately a peer to peer model instead of an event model, available to us when issues arise – we have heard so many anecdotes about when issues arise in the classroom, and this proposed LC can address them in real time. We hope this program can serve as a model institution-wide so other schools can have their own antiracism learning community
- some Caucus members are erecting an antibias library for Dornsife
- **Gioia** added that she and the Caucus co-chairs would discuss this proposal with Dean Anderson in the beginning of March

Research Caucus

Sri asked if any research faculty or TT faculty members had any input for an upcoming meeting with deans. **Matt** inquired about initiatives to fund equipment that had been underway before COVID – would these initiatives return? **Andrea** asked about an RTPC colleague applying for a CA Humanities grant; the colleague was told to ask the university for a 1 or 2K gesture of support, and USC's response was that there were no funds available for RTPC faculty for those kinds of grants. **Sri** committed to bringing these issues to the deans' attention.

Anti-racist Practice in the DFC

Alisa and **Stephanie** led a session building foundations for anti-racist practice for the remainder of the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Alisa Sánchez,
Secretary
The Dornsife Faculty Council