

DORNSIFE FACULTY COUNCIL ADVOCACY AND OVERSIGHT CAUCUS

Arising from our meeting is the following proposed petition to be sent by the DFC to the President and the Provost, with copies to Dean Amber Miller, OPE head, Michael Blanton, and OED head (and, we believe, also head of the Office of Conduct, Accountability, and Professionalism [OCAP] Gretchen Means

DRAFT 1-15-19

(Current draft includes revisions proposed by faculty from the Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, the Gould School of Law, and the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences)

OPEN LETTER from the subscribed faculty councils:

We allege that the newly established Office of Conduct, Accountability and Professionalism (OCAP), one of the divisions of the Office of Professionalism and Ethics (OPE), has not properly described its procedures to faculty and staff and that any decisions from that office therefore lack fairness and legitimacy. Without making any judgment on the substantive complaints that OCAP has been adjudicating, we hold that its procedures lack due process, have not been adequately explained to the university community or outlined in the relevant governing documents, and therefore that the decisions of that office lack prima facie legitimacy and pose a danger to the well-being of the faculty and staff as well as USC's good name.

The core mission of the faculty of the University of Southern California is to carry out teaching, research, and service that supports the intellectual and personal development of our students, improves the lives of our patients, and adds to the knowledge and wellbeing of our community and the wider world. In order to best serve that mission, we believe that all of USC's administrative procedures should reflect: core values of fairness, appropriate transparency, due process, and the norms of academic freedom; must be clearly articulated and readily accessible; and must be administered in a consistent, even-handed, and respectful fashion. What is needed is a mechanism that aims both to avert and to remedy breaches of our duties to colleagues and students, not to enforce a criminal ordinance, and that does not weaken academic freedom or undermine the vital academic and economic security of tenure and long-term employment contracts.

We understand and agree that hostile work environments outside of the purview of both the Title IX Office and the Office of Employment Discrimination do exist at USC. And we agree that the administration continues to improve its procedures for addressing this crucial issue.

In order to reform USC's culture moving forward, it is vital to correct problems in the recent past and to establish a robust and fair mechanism to address them moving forward. For this to work, however, the procedures for redress need to be transparent and respect due process for all of those involved. This must include adequate discussion with faculty and staff representatives before the procedures are set in

place, and a careful and deliberative analysis of best practices for handling workplace complaints at USC. Instead, the central administration quickly organized and launched OCAP in spring 2018 without meaningful input from faculty that we know of. The procedures have never been adequately explained or communicated to faculty and staff. (Ironically, even the official policy statement that accompanies the “Harassment Training” that faculty recently had to complete includes nothing about the OCAP procedures.) Equally disturbing, OCAP has been staffed in part with former police investigators whose interview strategies and tactics are better suited to criminal settings than to conflicts in an academic environment, and who have a poor understanding of the administrative and academic specific to universities. The choice of criminal investigators for human resource inquiries has not been explained.

For these several reasons, we assert that the current configuration of OCAP is unsupportable and its activities should be suspended and reviewed immediately by a specially appointed committee of faculty selected by the Academic Senate, staff from the Staff Assembly, and representatives from central administration. All past and ongoing sanctions against faculty based on OCAP investigations should be included in this review, including an examination of how investigations were conducted, and when appropriate, the committee should have authority to revise or nullify previous and ongoing sanctions. Further, and taking appropriate account of the principles, objectives, and cautions set forth above, the central administration should work with the Academic Senate, as well as the Staff Assembly, to construct new means to address problems of the sort that had been assigned to OCAP and that cannot be handled by the school deans or the University’s Human Resources Office.

Signed,

USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences Faculty Council

USC Annenberg School of Communication Faculty Council

USC Dworak-Peck School of Social Work Faculty Council

USC Rossier School of Education (?) (Rob Filback)