

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (October 4, 2017)

Date: October 4, 2017

Room: Irani Hall, Rm 321

Present (17): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Rebecca Broyer; Jessica Cantiello; Robert Chernoff; David Crombecque; Shannon Gibson; Assal Habibi; Michael Hadjidaniel; Antonio Idini (*secretary*); P.T. McNiff; Dan Pecchenino (*vice-president*); Geraldine Peters; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; Carolina Sitnisky-Cole; Trisha Tucker (*president*); An-Min Wu

Absent (2): Gioia Polidori; Emily Zeamer

Reports

Report on Academic Senate's September meeting

Dan discusses the main topics addressed during the AS meeting on Sept. 13. Provost Quick addressed the diversity strategic plan initiative. Eventually, diversity plans from each college will be published online. There will be a Diversity/Inclusion retreat in January. **Jessica** comments that perhaps such a retreat should be convened in the summer, because of hiring in the fall.

Provost Quick also addressed RTPC issues, such as longer appointment terms for teaching faculty, and continuity of employment for exceptional teachers who have reached the Full Professor rank. Provost Quick also said that the \$ 42,000 salary floor for full-time faculty has been raised this year to \$ 50,000; the increments will continue to \$ 55,000 next year and hopefully to \$60,000 the following one. Provost Quick seems aware that there is also an issue of salary compression affecting faculty that have been at USC for many years, but indicated that this will be addressed later on.

The Provost also commented on the actions taken by USC as a result of various national political events: the ending of the DACA program; the ban on immigration; the changes in Title IX. The university has seen a good turnout at its events to support permanent residents who want to become naturalized citizens. The Provost also reported on a national AAU meeting with 60 provosts in attendance. The Title IX issues were addressed, but what he found most disheartening was the lack of trust in the value of college education among the general public. This trend was highlighted in a recent Times Higher Education survey. Among other types of misperception, the lack of awareness of the general population that research universities are indeed involved in doing research was conspicuous. Since public attitudes towards higher education have shifted, our task is to explain better what we do and our relevance.

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Finally, Provost Quick repeated previous comments he publicly made on the events that led to the dismissal of the Dean of Keck School of Medicine. He accepts responsibility for public perceptions of the university, its leadership, and its culture. In his opinion, even the mere perception of there being a cultural problem is an obstacle that needs to be addressed.

P.T. wonders what steps could be taken to make people trust the process initiated by the administration to investigate this situation, as well as to trust that the university will respond in good faith to future reports of issues and problems.

Check-in with Bob Chernoff

Bob updates the DFC members on the plan to offer psychological support to students affected by the DACA cancellation and the travel ban. One possibility would be to have a presence in Kaprilian Hall, such as a stand that offers psychological support groups, or one-on-one meetings with faculty or graduate students. The Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic was contacted, and we will follow up later on in order to check if psychological support is needed for the population they serve.

In other immigration news, **David** shares that USC is changing the help it offers faculty who are applying for green cards. USC's Faculty and Staff Visa Services office (FSVS) used to shepherd—and fund—the process as a courtesy to faculty. Federal rules have recently changed, however, and greencard applicants are now required to take part in an interview. The FSVS recently advised international faculty to retain outside counsel to help with the process.

Sergio maintains that we should find out how many faculty are affected by this change.

David says that he is not sure if this new rule applies only to our college or to the whole university.

Check-in with Caucus Co-Chairs

Trisha explains how our caucuses work and notes that co-chairs do not have to wait until the spring to submit a report; reports can be submitted during the academic year and presented to the Dean and/or used to inform the drafting of DFC resolutions.

Discussion Points

Reconfiguring DFC voting blocs

Trisha highlights the complexity of reforming our voting blocs. People working in various USC Dornsife institutes represent one of the various challenges. She has reached out the Dean's office to determine if institute faculty are eligible to vote in the DFC elections and if the number of DFC representatives will be affected as a result of their participation. At any rate, because

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the DFC voting blocs are not equal, the DFC bylaws need to be amended to ensure proportional representation for the voting blocs.

Trisha; Carolina; P.T.; Shannon; Sergio; Dan; and David engage in a discussion about the possible solutions to address representation:

- have a proportional representation with a minimum number of representatives;
- follow the AS example, which has a minimum and a maximum number;
- have +50% of proportional representatives;
- define low and high limitations for each bloc;
- revise the numbers every two years.

The Council will vote on possible changes to the bylaws during our next meeting (Nov. 1).

Issues to discuss with Dean Miller during November meeting

Trisha announces that Dean Miller will attend our next meeting on Nov. 1. She will come for the first hour. We will be sending a survey to all the faculty members in Dornsife to solicit topics that should be brought to Dean Miller's attention. She also asks the Council to identify topics to be addressed.

Bob and Brian bring up the ongoing shortage of teaching assistants.

Assal maintains that we should require that all graduate students to teach one year, regardless of fellowships they may have.

Assal points out that the Merit Review process **for Research faculty** should be clarified, since the criteria used to promote through the ranks are not well defined. It seems that the principles implemented are the same as those used for Merit Reviews and promotions of Tenure-track colleagues.

Sergio and Gerrie discuss the difficulty of writing grants and doing research, and that Research faculty devote a lot of time and energy is devoted to secure grants.

Trisha and Dan indicate that the Senate's RTPC Faculty Affairs Committee is discussing that issue.

Sergio would like to discuss efforts to increase the number of minority faculty, particularly in the Natural Sciences.

Research, Policies, and Documentation Report

(See report on pages 5-6 of these meeting minutes →)

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Suggestions for new business

Sergio suggests that we invite the three Dornsife divisional deans to meet with the DFC in the spring.

Announcements and Action Items

Soliciting faculty feedback before Dean Miller’s visit to DFC

Trisha reiterates that we will send a survey to all Dornsife faculty members to solicit topics that should be brought to Dean Miller’s attention.

Senate VP visit to DFC

Trisha announces that Yaniv Bar-Cohen, The AS’s Academic Vice President, will visit the DFC in December.

Upcoming DFC leadership meeting with Dean Andrew Stott

Trisha announces that the DFC leadership will meet Dean Stott on Oct. 10.

Approval of minutes from last meeting

Trisha submits the minutes of the previous DFC meeting, on Sept. 6, for approval. All the 17 members in attendance approve the minutes.

Trisha reminds the DFC that our next meeting will be on Nov. 1.

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The meeting is adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonio Idini, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council

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Dornsife Faculty Council - Research, Policies, and Documentation Caucus

Final Report for 2016-17

Caucus Members: Miranda Barone (At large), Samantha Broitman (At large, co-chair), Maura Patricia Crowley (At large), Geraldine Peters (DFC, co-chair), Gioia Polidori Francisco (DFC), Ekaterina Svyatets (At large), Emily Zeamer (DFC).

Overview: Activities of the Research, Policies, and Documentation Caucus of the Dornsife Faculty Council (DFC-RPD Caucus) were centered on three broad issues: mentoring programs for RTPC faculty, gap funding/sabbatical leave focused on the research faculty, and the inclusion of discipline-related publications as an item for promotion for the teaching faculty. These are discussed below.

I. Mentoring Programs for RTPC Faculty

Rationale: Successful mentoring programs can have a profound impact on the professional development of junior faculty and improve faculty recruitment and retention, in turn contributing to USC's excellence. Such programs need to be established for RTPC faculty at USC.

Proposal: Faculty members would choose an academic mentor within the first year of appointment. Mentors could be RTPC faculty at a higher rank or tenured faculty from the mentee's department or from another department. Mentors that participate in mentoring activities receive credit that goes towards their university service. Mentors would advise junior faculty on matters pertaining to professional development and help mentees identify short and long-term career goals. Mentors would provide mentees with supportive guidance and constructive feedback as well as catalyze networking opportunities. Mentees would be responsible of keeping the mentor informed of concerns as may arise. Mentees and mentors would meet regularly (twice a year, ideally before evaluation dossiers are submitted, and after evaluations). All interactions and discussions should be kept confidential.

II. Gap Funding/Sabbatical Leave for Research Faculty

Rationale: Research faculty are expected to secure up to 95% of their salary from external grants. USC will pay 5% for time spent writing proposals and committee service. In order to be eligible for benefits, the research faculty member must be able to support him/herself at the 50% level or above. Research

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faculty who are PIs on externally-funded contracts & grants pay an indirect cost of 65% to the University on most every expense, unless the site of the research effort is off-campus. There is a 33% charge on salaries for Fringe Benefits, on which there is also a 65% overhead assessment. Sabbatical leave is covered by the Fringe Benefit pool. Unless the research faculty member receives health/dental benefits and also has a child who is getting tuition remission he/she is paying much more in to the pool than he/she receives. This is taking into account the 10% that USC contributes to a retirement fund and social security/medicare contributions. Considering the long-term, it is likely that a research faculty member will encounter periods of lean or no funding as external programs, especially Federal ones, are continuously changing in focus and availability of government funds.

Proposal: Develop a policy where research faculty who are PIs on external grants can accumulate credits for Fringe Benefits paid into the pool. The specifics would have to be worked out. After 6-12 years of funding the PI would be eligible to take a sabbatical which could be used to explore emerging opportunities for funding in the future. The sabbatical could be arranged to coincide with a period of lean/no funding. The program would be available only to full (or associate) research faculty. A PI whose grants fund more junior research faculty could opt to transfer their sabbatical credits to this person. A policy on gap funding is essential since a researcher who has maintained external funding for decades can abruptly be forced into a non-exempt status with loss of all benefits that can be restored only once per year if new funding is secured.

III. Discipline-Related Publications

Rationale: The Dornsife RTPC-track Faculty Guidelines revised on February 10, 2013 include as one criteria for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor (Teaching) the following: “Published substantial education-related materials that make a significant contribution to the profession”. Yet, the caucus is concerned that the area of expertise of faculty members is the discipline as well as the teaching of the discipline and thus would like to propose a language that allows for greater flexibility.

Proposal: The publishing of teaching material or educational books for the general public, such as books or textbooks, would positively reflect on faculty’s teaching competence and therefore we suggest to include it in the criteria for promotion. Therefore the criteria could include the following: “published materials that contributed to their own pedagogical development or to the teaching of their discipline for academic or non-academic audiences that make a significant contribution to the profession”.