

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (December 6, 2017)

Date: Dec. 6, 2017

Room: Irani Hall, Rm 321

Present (15): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Jessica Cantiello; David Crombecque; Shannon Gibson; Assal Habibi; Michael Hadjidaniel; Antonio Idini (*secretary*); P.T. McNiff; Dan Pecchenino (*vice-president*); Gioia Polidori; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; Carolina Sitnisky-Cole; Trisha Tucker (*president*); Emily Zeamer

Absent (4): Rebecca Broyer; Robert Chernoff; Geraldine Peters; An-Min Wu

Guests (2): Yaniv Bar-Cohen, Academic Senate President-Elect; Stefanie Bogart (Human Biology)

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Announcements and Action Items

Trisha announces Antonio's resignation from the DFC, due to his leave of absence in the spring of 2018. Thus, the council votes unanimously to elect P.T. McNiff as the new secretary.

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

Trisha submits the minutes of the previous DFC meeting, on Nov. 1, for approval. Of the 13 members in attendance, 12 approve the minutes, one abstains. (Two members arrived late and did not vote on the minutes approval.)

Reports

I. Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Trisha reports on the Dornsife diversity and inclusion plan. Earlier in the day, she met with Vice Dean Steve Mackey about this issue. Dornsife just hired an Associate Dean and Chief Diversity Officer, Kimberly Freeman, who will be starting in January. Associate Dean Freeman will be launching a committee focused on diversity issues, which will have a DFC representative; Trisha will also invite her to attend a DFC meeting in spring.

Also, Provost Quick extended the deadline for all colleges' diversity and inclusion plan drafts to January 15, 2018. During the rest of the spring the plans will be completed; the final deadline is in May 2018.

Sergio asks for clarifications regarding the implementation of the diversity inclusion plan.

Trisha explains that each college has to present a plan to support diversity and inclusion among faculty, but also in regards to other under-represented categories, for instance, doctoral students.

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II: Academic Senate Meeting

Dan reports on the last Academic Senate meetings, held on October and November. Still on the topic of the diversity and inclusion plans, he relates Ginger Clark's comments. She said that during last summer, over the course of numerous meetings, four drafts were selected by the Provost's office as models. These diversity plans are supposed to be holistic, highlighting the guiding principles in research, teaching, hiring, and recruitment. There will be a diversity and inclusion seminar in January, as well as various information sessions, similar to what was done in the past.

Ginger Clark also talked about the process of improving the end-of-semester student evaluations of courses and instructors. The pilot study will be implemented in the fall of 2018, with 16-18 questions selected from the ones previously disseminated, and it will continue in the following spring. A question was raised regarding the promotion process during this interim phase. There is no clear answer yet; however, it seems that students' evaluations will play a lesser role in the future, compared with classroom observations and dossier materials submitted.

Brian, Iva and Carolina comment on the need to monitor in the future the weight placed on students' evaluations in the promotion and merit review processes.

Dan also reports on Ginger Clark's comments on the evaluation of RTPC salary benchmarks. At this point the Provost does not have enough usable data from peer institutions. Part of the challenge is represented by the different profiles USC RTPCs have when compared to NTT faculty at other schools.

The Academic Senate also discussed the possibility of restricting the circulation of bikes on the UPC campus.

Provost Quick commented on the effect the new tax bill will have on institutions of higher learning such as ours: tuition benefits for graduate students and charitable contributions are some of the aspects that will be adversely affected.

Provost Quick also said that the project to establish a two-day Fall Break was approved at different administrative levels and will most likely become effective in the fall of 2019.

Regarding the leadership issues at the School of Medicine, Provost Quick said that the external review is still going on. He anticipated a possible outcome, i.e. institutionalizing an ombudsman figure in charge of dispute resolutions. This figure would have investigative privileges, which would be expanded in cases involving non-protected categories. Dan emphasizes that this suggestion was also formulated within our DFC, so it is encouraging that this project may be applied to the university as a whole. Finally, Provost Quick reiterated the two key issues to be addressed: a) the balance of communication and privacy rights, which makes it a very sensitive issue to advertise actions taken; b) changing our institutional culture—in this respect the work done at the University of Miami seems to represent a positive source of inspiration.

III. Reports of the DFC Caucuses

Gioia reports that the Research, Policy, and Documentation Caucus has focused on the mentoring of faculty, point 1 of their agenda. After realizing that different departments have dissimilar ways to address this issue, the caucus found a positive model in the system set for TT

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faculty. In Dornsife College, three Tenured full professors have been designated "Faculty Development Directors"; they are tasked with ensuring that all TT faculty have a mentor. This model could work for RTPC as well. Directors of RTPC faculty development would have three major goals: a) connect new hires with mentors; b) ensure that mentors are properly trained; c) provide assistance to faculty members in small departments, so that they may work with a colleague from another unit. The directors should have course releases and receive input from all professional RTPC components: clinical, practice and research, not only teaching. Gioia will prepare a proposal to be shared with the other DFC members in January. It is crucial that all faculty are aware of the requirements for success at the beginning of their career, not when they are up for a promotion.

Michael reports that the Curriculum Caucus has been working on the issue of student mentoring. A students' survey to assess how they perceive mentoring is part of what the caucus is working on. The caucus has been reaching out to its members, and is in the process of finalizing the list of items caucus sub-groups will work on. The caucus co-chairs had a productive meeting with Dean Stott earlier in the fall and have found common interest in many issues considered by the caucus.

P.T. reports that the Part-Time Faculty Caucus has not met yet. They plan to check the existing rules regarding Part-Time faculty and their implementation. Dan adds that he is the Senate RTPC Committee's representative on the Senate Part-Time Faculty Committee. They will do a survey soon, so that more data will be available.

Jessica reports for the Faculty Affairs Caucus, which includes 12 members. Regarding the issue of salary benchmarks, the caucus has focused on three main research areas: the UC system; liberal arts colleges; our RTPCs, (i.e. defining what they do). This comparison will include salary, professional status, security of employment, teaching load, and perks. In addition, the caucus will look into the matter of alternative intellectual productivity. The caucus plan is to obtain the data over the winter break, reconvene in January, and possibly have a definite plan in February.

Trisha mentions the issue of vivarium research space, which was suggested anonymously during our survey by a TT faculty in the Biology Department. The unit in charge is the IACUC (Institutional Animal Care Use Committee). She invites everyone to let her know about any TT colleagues who might be willing to volunteer to serve on the IACUC.

She also mentions that the Senate Faculty Environment & Employment Committee, on which she serves, is focusing on improving the situation of instructors who teach online courses and may live far away. She invites DFC members to reach out to any non-resident colleagues in their department and bring any concerns they hear about to her.

Conversation with Academic Senate President-Elect Yaniv Bar-Cohen

Carolina raises the issue of transparency in RTPCs promotions. Right now RTPCs are evaluated differently from one department to another. It is not clear if publications count, and, if so, what kind and how much. Promotion to the rank of RTPC Full Professor seems especially subject to a broad range of interpretation.

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Yaniv says that this issue is particularly complicated, because comparing diverse categories is always a challenge. Indeed, in defining the single categories USC is already better equipped than most institutions.

Sergio laments that large technological equipment is not replaced as often as it should. If faculty want to move up the ranks, they have to spend their own research money. The key issue is that there is no budget to replace obsolete items. Positive models are offered by UCLA and Cal Tech, both of which devote a percentage of their budgets to replacing equipment.

Yaniv agrees that top researchers must have the proper equipment.

Assal remarks that the issue is broader than just replacing equipment. Unlike TT faculty, RTPCs do not have any initial resources available. At a minimum, RTPCs should have the possibility of working with graduate students who already have fellowships. She also maintains that the expectation of productivity should be matched by adequate resources.

Dan brings up the new role the CET will play in coordinating and evaluating teaching. It actually applies to both TT faculty and RTPCs. Thus, it is crucial that the discussion be shaped in a way that does not lose the TT colleagues' involvement in teaching improvements.

Yaniv agrees that it is an important issue to be addressed.

Gioia emphasizes the need for more office space for faculty.

She also raises a question about how teaching graduate classes affects TT and RTPC teaching loads, and whether faculty are compensated in ways that make designing and teaching Master's courses attractive.

Dan adds that the issue of office space comes down to prioritizing fund-raising efforts.

Shannon mentions the difficulty to create interdisciplinary courses, which proves to be quite a logistical challenge because of the lack of a clear system to co-teach.

Yaniv acknowledges all the issues raised.

Dan says that the DFC relationship with Dean Miller is quite good. He agrees that communication with TT faculty is still an unresolved problem.

Brian adds that most TT colleagues are not aware of what the DFC does. Junior colleagues also tend to be incentivized to do less service. But Brian believes that participation in the DFC offers quite a few advantages: for instance, a perspective unfiltered by the department chair.

Yaniv underscores that more empowerment for faculty always results in higher levels of participation.

Brian, Sergio and Dan comment on the necessity to have more TT faculty involved in the college councils. The deans could play a key role in encouraging more participation.

Carolina asks what is being done at the Academic Senate level to address the safety issue, especially in light of the false alarm recently experienced at Fertitta Hall.

Yaniv answers that necessary improvements are being considered very carefully.

Announcements

Trisha announces that Dan and she will meet with Dean Miller the following week.

She also invites the DFC members to read the document about changing the Undergraduate Grade Dispute policy and disseminate it among TT faculty. (The document was sent along with today's agenda.) The main idea is to deal with grade disputes at the departmental level before they reach the dean's office.

Finally she reminds the DFC that our next meeting will be on January 10, 2018.

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The meeting is adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonio Idini, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council