Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Caucus 2019-2020
Dornsife Faculty Council

Final Report
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OVERVIEW

The following report outlines work completed by the Caucus during AY 2020-21, which includes our key outcomes and recommendations and is organized under two main foci: Faculty Issues and Student Issues. In addition to standard AY reporting and wrap-up, we have added supplemental reflections and recommendations regarding the COVID-19 crisis as the 2020 pandemic has already upended current and upcoming academic cycles, and will continue to impact our students and faculty for the foreseeable future.

Given the disrupted Spring 2020 semester, the Caucus considers its primary audience to be next year's DEI Caucus. Some of the recommendations below are directed towards the 2020-21 Caucus, indicating where to carry on from in its work next year. We also recommend reviewing the 2018-2019 DEI Caucus report, which outlines many of the arguments for addressing the issues below.

In continuation of the work done by prior DEI Caucus cohorts, we utilize the following definitions of diversity, inclusion, equity, and equity mindedness from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU).

- *Diversity:* Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

- *Inclusion:* The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity — in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect — in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

- *Equity:* The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

- *Equity-Mindedness:* A demonstrated awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff (Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California).

It is imperative that we do not lose ground on progress already made towards diversity, equity, and inclusion for our students and faculty. As resolved by the Academic Senate on May 26, 2020, "COVID budget pressures should not lead to a loss of ethnic, racial, gender or any other kind of diversity in the faculty ranks" (Resolution 19/20-08).

FACULTY ISSUES

Although the AY was interrupted by social distancing measures, the Caucus was able to make progress towards our goals as well as identify new questions and data requirements necessary to continue working towards an equitable workplace.

The faculty are (and will continue to be) tasked with carrying through with promises made to our students by University leadership during the COVID-19 global pandemic. To this end, the report includes a special section addressing our concerns about diversity, inclusion, and equity with regard to upcoming (and understandably necessary) augmentations to faculty job descriptions, pay, physical and virtual work spaces, and the rapidly increasing list of new expectations from both students and administration, which may be novel now, but will very likely become everyday practice for the foreseeable future.

Online DEI Resources Hub

The 2018-2019 DEI Caucus Report identified a need for DEI information and resources in a centralized, accessible place (see recommendation #5 in that report). For example, information such as a dashboard on faculty and student demographics, current DEI initiatives in Dornsife, and resources such as how to conduct equitable job searches.

During 2019-2020, this work began through Dornsife participation in the year-long Racial Equity Leadership Academy (RELA). Offered by the USC Center for Race and Equity, RELA is a year-long institute in which participants both learn about DEI issues in higher education and design a project to meet DEI needs in their units. With a DEI Caucus member, Alisa Sanchez, on the Dornsife RELA team, the Caucus was able to inform the rehaul of the Dornsife DEI website, particularly resources for faculty. The revamped Dornsife DEI website will contain a section of resources for conducting an equitable job search, including a page on expectations for the **Diversity Liaison role** - this advances work in meeting recommendations #5 and 6 from the 2018-2019 DEI Caucus report.

The pilot website is planned for September 2020 and the full roll out for Spring 2021.

Department Bylaws

All Dornsife departments are required to develop department bylaws (12/4/19 Dornsife Faculty Council meeting). The DEI Caucus membership reported some departments crafting bylaws during 2019-2020, with more departments planning to write bylaws during 2020-21. While department bylaws must not undermine any college rules or policies, they are excellent mechanisms for departments to address issues specific to them.

Department bylaws are a DEI concern in two respects:

- *An equity issue:* having department procedures written down helps these procedures be known and accessible to all.

- *Integrating DEI at the department level:* bylaws can be used to emphasize or reiterate policies that promote DEI; see recommendations below.

Recommendations for developing departmental bylaws:

1. *Hiring:* Bylaws should indicate that a Diversity Liaison *must* be on every hiring committee. Bylaws can draw attention to this Dornsife policy, which departments have followed inconsistently. Bylaws can further prescribe the hiring process to follow DEI best practices in hiring, such as instituting a discussion among the hiring committee or department on how each faculty member plans to review the hiring files.

2. *Leadership positions and Merit Review:* each department should consider how leadership positions and critical committees such as Merit Review select their faculty membership, to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3. *Network of people across Dornsife involved in crafting bylaws*: at the College level, the Caucus recommends that the College and/or the DFC ask for faculty volunteers to form a resource network of faculty with either experience working on bylaws, or who plan to be closely involved in developing departmental bylaws during 2020-21. While each department has its own issues to address, having the opportunity to discuss approaches across departments will assist in the work. This resource network can take the form of an email listserv. This recommendation is inspired by how faculty within and across departments quickly identified themselves as online teaching experts to assist faculty transitioning to online instruction during Spring 2020 (see, for example, the list of faculty experts in online teaching developed by the Center for Teaching Excellence: "WE CAN HELP: Faculty Mentoring Faculty" http://cet.usc.edu/we-can-help/).

The DEI Caucus encourages departments to consider how DEI can be integrated into their bylaws. Bylaws serve not only as a procedural guide, but also an accountability mechanism which enables departments to set in place practices it wants its members to abide by and an overall culture to uphold.

DEI Literacy among Dornsife Faculty: Targeted DEI Speaker Series and Dornsife DEI Learning Community

The Caucus recognizes a need to have structures in place supporting faculty's development of DEI literacy. The two options below both serve to a) equip faculty with greater knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion; b) build a culture in Dornsife of sustained learning and discussion on DEI.

The Caucus can collaborate with Assistant Dean and Chief Diversity Officer Kimberly Freeman's Office for Strategic Initiatives to design and promote these options.

Options for next year:

1. *Targeted DEI Speaker Series:* Speakers can address discipline-specific groups, in recognition of the fact that departments greatly benefit from learning and addressing DEI issues specific to their discipline, in addition to College wide recommendations. We recommend that different departments rotate in hosting DEI speakers, to be chosen from a variety of research backgrounds throughout the year. For example, a background in physics or physics education would put a DEI speaker in an ideal position to relay the most relevant experiences and discuss issues specific to physical sciences, and is likely to peak the interest and match the jargon of that particular group.

    a. Given likely budget constraints during 2020-21 on honorariums for invited speakers, departments can turn to options such as viewing a recorded talk or reading an article and discussing together.

2. *Dornsife DEI Learning Community:* The Learning Community can connect faculty with one another, bringing together faculty across Dornsife who seek to learn more about DEI and have the opportunity for regular discussion of DEI issues. While the DEI Caucus serves as a body to research and make recommendations on current DEI issues in Dornsife, the Learning Community would operate more as a reading group.

    a. Meetings could be once a month and include reading articles, listening to podcasts, viewing talks, etc

    b. The Learning Community can include graduate students and staff

    c. The Caucus can collaborate with Librarian Elizabeth Galoozis, who helped lead Anti Racist Pedagogy workshops during 2018-2019

    d. The Caucus can explore offering participants a certificate at the end of year, for attending 8 of 9 sessions

Syllabi: Including DEI Statements

The Caucus recommends that faculty include an explicit statement of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their course syllabi. The statement can be a 1 paragraph blurb and provide 2-3 resources for students to seek out DEI conversations, communities, resources, etc. In its work next year, the Caucus plans to:

1. Collaborate with the USC Center for Excellence on Teaching (CET) on developing a guide for faculty in crafting a DEI statement for their syllabi. The CET provides extensive evidence-based guides on its website.

Faculty Searches

Many Caucus goals focused on integrating DEI practices more comprehensively into faculty job searches. The university-wide hiring freeze instituted in April 2020 has reduced a sense of urgency in implementing these measures for Fall 2020, and likely the attention that stakeholders can and will afford to revising the job search process. However, the Caucus retains a long-term vision to promoting DEI in hiring College-wide and will continue its work from this year in the areas below, as well as advance additional recommendations in hiring in the 2018-2019 DEI Caucus Report.

- *Diversity Statements-Incorporating Diversity Statements into Dornsife Departments' Faculty Searches*

  During 2019-2020, the Caucus considered how to have Diversity Statements incorporated in all Dornsife faculty job searches. Diversity Statements are short essays asking applicants to describe their experiences with and/or commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; see recommendation #1 from 2018-2019 DEI Caucus Report. The Caucus determined a pathway forward through *advocacy* and *equipping departments* with resources:

  1. Advocacy: it is unlikely that Diversity Statements will be mandated for Dornsife searches, so the Caucus will advocate to department chairs to include Diversity Statements as part of the required application.
     a. Recommended plan: during the summer, Caucus members send an email to department chairs announcing: Caucus members will attend the first (early Fall) Dornsife All Chairs' Meeting to present the case for Diversity Statements and offer resources and mentoring

  2. Equipping departments: to support departments in implementing Diversity Statements in job searches,
     a. Caucus members will volunteer to serve as mentors to departments implementing Diversity Statements in their job searches; the Caucus hopes this experience can help make the case for investing in an institutionalized role of DS mentors.
     b. resources on the Diversity Statement will be available on the new Dornsife DEI website

- *Training in DEI Search Practices for Faculty Search Committees*

  While the hiring freeze reduces the immediate need for a massive training in DEI search practices, the Caucus continues to recommend such training as a crucial routine to establish. The Caucus recommends:

1. Caucus co-chairs to communicate with Assistant Dean and Chief Diversity Officer Kimberly Freeman during Summer 2020 to inquire about the anticipated need and plans for training during Fall 2020

2. Following up on the revamped Dornsife DEI website to ensure resources are available starting Fall 2020 for search committees and Diversity Liaisons

- *Exit Interviews-Establishing Exit Interviews for Faculty Searches*

The Caucus further considered how an institutional entity (e.g. human resources) would conduct exit interviews of job candidates, as a way to learn more about Dornsife searches in practice and serve as an accountability mechanism (see recommendation # from 2018-2019 DEI Caucus report). Exit interviews of job candidates, as well as retention data more generally, will provide a fuller picture of what happens after the job offer - who does and does not accept a job offer and why, and who is leaving and why. The Caucus calls for both quantitative and qualitative data to shed light on whether and how specific populations, including faculty of color, queer faculty, single parents, and others, are more apt to have to leave for financial or family reasons, or their experience of USC's DEI climate. The Caucus recommends that:

1. the College collects quantitative and qualitative data about 1) who is turning down faculty positions if offered and why, and 2) ongoing retention data on who is leaving, why, and how long was their tenure. Qualitative data would be gathered via exit interviews.

2. an aggregated data report is provided to the DEI Caucus at the end of each AY and a representative from the institutional entity charged with exit interviews attend a special session of the DEI Caucus to present the data and answer clarifying questions we may have for our own reporting purposes.

3. the Caucus is included in the process of developing exit interview protocols and designing questions and data points that will help shed light on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- *Cluster Hires*

While there is currently a hiring freeze, the Caucus recommends cluster hires as a long-term hiring strategy. The Caucus paid close attention to the UC Berkeley Life Sciences cluster hire from 2018-2019 and will continue to follow this hiring closely. Five points about the Berkeley cluster hire are important to emphasize:

1. First, the actions they took were successful in terms of hiring candidates from underrepresented groups; this can be backed up by quoting the numbers they quote in the Report.

2. Second, there seem to be many benefits of a cluster-hire strategy. Notably, it makes it more likely for successful candidates to accept the offer, if they are coming as a part of a cohort; also, it makes evaluation of candidates a more systematic and fair process,

since it's more likely to have representation from minorities amongst the outstanding candidates, if the group of applicants is very large (larger than for a single position, they had almost 1000 for 5 positions).

3. Third, the key step of the Berkeley process was to *first* select on the basis of DEI merit, and then narrow down the selection based on academic/research/teaching merit criteria. This means that DEI engagement was a necessary (but not sufficient) criterion for candidates to even be considered for a position. A major research university should be able to attract many great candidates to be able to afford such a strict cut. This is a really important point.

4. Fourth, the candidate selection involved committees amongst different departments and divisions, which may have made it easier for committee members to hold each other accountable and control for biases more effectively.

5. Fifth, the Berkely initiative also included other aspects, such as efforts to increase representation of minorities in the applicant pool, and DEI training of the committee members.

COVID-19 Concerns: The New Normal

The likelihood of having to (possibly frequently) move between in-person/on-campus and distance teaching and research is high as we move forward. Faculty will now be required to develop courses that are resilient and can be carried out seamlessly, without any confusion to our students, and with the same pedagogical vigor, no matter the platform.

We cannot forget/abandon DEI strategic plans as we negotiate this new space with both students and administration. Faculty already marginalized in the University - for example, faculty who are underrepresented in their field in terms of race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex; faculty with less contract stability and lower salaries relative to senior tenured faculty; and always understanding these and other positionalies in an intersectional way - are likely to experience more hardship due to preexisting, longstanding institutional and societal inequities. The Caucus calls for this point to be central to addressing COVID-19 issues at every level at USC - University, College, and departmental.

Faculty are, of course, willing to take concessions in order to help during this crisis and have already shown our professional resilience (even with no plan and at a moment's notice), but any current/upcoming concessions we take must have a clear, documented path back to 'being whole'. For example, if the University is going to save funds by not matching 401k, what are the metrics that the University needs to meet in order for those benefits to be reinstated?

We need to insist on real, documented goals from administration in order to guarantee that our economic, personal, and additional non-paid hours for new requirements do not set precedent for administration to rely on free labor from faculty. Even before this crisis, there has been an increasing reliance on free faculty labor to carry out promises made by administration to our students; many

times without seeking advice and consent from faculty before making those promises. For example, keeping a small DSP staff and minimal test-taking spaces, requires faculty to spend what can amount to hundreds of unpaid hours a year for those who teach 200+ students a semester.

- *Layoffs, Pay Cuts, and Furloughs:*

  Knowing who is getting pay cuts (and what amounts), furloughed, or laid off will be an important metric to which the faculty should have access. All universities have 'artifacts' of historical hiring practices. These historical practices could potentially skew layoffs and furloughs towards the retention of long-term faculty and administration hired before more standardized DEI protocols (e.g. search requirements/transparency) were implemented. These historical artifacts could potentially result in a faculty population that looks much like it did 25 years ago, which is not only discriminatory, but also projects the wrong optics to our students who are paying to attend a progressive and modern institution.

  Partial furloughs in particular are problematic because faculty already work in excess of 40 hours a week, including every weekend, and over every break, for which we do not receive compensation. So giving us 'time off' in lieu of payment is a pay reduction, plain and simple.

  Legally and semiotically speaking, 'furloughs' and 'pay reductions' are different things for tax and policy purposes for the University; and present differently to the public for marketing purposes (e.g. saying the University has implemented furloughs and not layoffs is a marketable asset that holds social social value, which in turn adds economic value to the University). It is imperative that the faculty understand why certain verbiage is being used by administration and what effect that verbiage will have on the economic and professional lives of faculty going forward.

  Special Notation: As of late May, leadership has discussed <u>both</u> a pay cut (~5% for most faculty) and rolling/partial furloughs. If this is the case, having low percentage wage reductions compared to other regional universities would be a great selling point to students who are (rightly) concerned about the quality of their education if their professors have to pick up extra work to make ends meet. But, in reality if we have both a pay cut and furloughs, the actual 'pay reduction' is likely closer to 7% or more.

  - <u>Gathering Metrics for Negotiating with Administration:</u> One issue faculty will have when negotiating our part in this 'new normal' is communicating to administration the actual hours worked by faculty; which was already problematic pre-COVID both within university environments, but also with the public at large. In a recent Forbes article, which clearly points out general misconceptions about the amount of time we spend doing our job, the author states that universities should "first, furlough faculty and staff. Although typically paid to work year-round (administrators) or nine months (faculty), many in fact are idle on some days when they are paid to work. Faculty, for example, may teach Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but not show up on campus on Tuesday and Thursday. Do what the University of Arizona is doing, furlough them for maybe one day a week for the academic year, implying perhaps a 15% pay

reduction." (Six Ways to Keep American Universities Alive (Richard Vedder) https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardvedder/2020/05/04/six-ways-to-keep-american-universities-alive/#15bc9caa6c98)

We recommend that the 2020-21 Caucus create an online entry system with overarching time categories (e.g. lecturing, lecture preparation, new course or content development, student & administrative emailing, student advisement, etc.) that can be accessed and populated by *volunteer* faculty considering current time constraints and additional job responsibilities due to the COVID-19 crisis. One issue would be sample size, so while the Caucus members can gather our own data as part of our Caucus duties, our findings would be much more impactful if we could get 200+ faculty to participate.

To this end, we recommend that the Caucus apply for DFC funding to supply a small stipend to faculty who would be willing to spend a few hours a week contributing to this data set. These data were already important to diversity, equity, and inclusion, but will be even more so as we negotiate through the pandemic and beyond.

- *Online Teaching Concerns:*

  Online/asynchronous learning requires that faculty have access to the right equipment and office supplies at home. The Caucus recommends that faculty receive clarification as to what can be expensed to the University. For example, video editing and closed captioning software, upgraded hardware that can handle graphics creation and large files, audio and video equipment, and other instructionally-necessary materials.

  *Of note here, in an email to students from the Office of the Provost (5/7/2020), leadership promised students that: "We will be fully operational Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, offering our full roster of courses and degrees, as we have been and will be doing this summer. We also will be welcoming our incoming classes. We are exploring a range of scenarios, with significant public health provisions, **that will allow us to offer our courses in person, while also ensuring most, if not all classes will be available, in parallel, online.**" This suggests that while faculty are taking pay reductions and furloughs we will likely have to produce two sets of each course, which has the potential to double the time spent on course preparation.*

  Additionally, all courses are now required to have a backup professor in case the main instructor gets sick. We need to establish what happens in this scenario and how we are compensated if this unfortunate circumstance occurs.

- *On-Campus Health and Safety Concerns*

  Faculty are clearly concerned with returning to campus and need to have better information about how we will be protected. Questions to be answered include:

- ○ Will we be provided PPE and cleaning kits? These materials are currently expensive and hard to aquire by individuals, which would be a huge burden on our already reduced pay. Faculty will need to clean the podium areas before and after our classes and it is the opinion of this Caucus that those materials should be provided by the University.

- ○ What protections will the faculty have while teaching as we are directly in the path of potentially hundreds of students a week, breathing and coughing directly in our direction?

- ○ Rights of high health-risk faculty? What if an individual simply cannot cannot teach on campus due to health concerns? What is the protocol for requesting online only courses? Would this be considered a disability to be accommodated or is it grounds for being let go because it is not covered under current disability-eligibility standards?

- *On-Campus Class scheduling (times & locations):*

  There needs to be more attention paid to the times and locations of classrooms by the USC Classroom Scheduling Office within the Office of the Academic Records and Registrar, *automatically* and without having to be prompted by department and program administrators.

  Faculty frequently do not have enough time to take bathroom or food breaks for upwards of 6-8 hours because while 10 minutes is enough time to walk across campus between classes, it is not enough time to wrap up a class, answer student questions, take a bathroom break, eat something & hydrate, walk to the next class, and set up before starting lecture. *This becomes even more important due to the COVID-19 crisis because faculty (and students) need to wash their hands and clean up even more frequently, and will have to clean work areas before and after.* While individual departments can request certain classrooms/times after they have been assigned by the Registrar's Office, these issues are rarely resolved, leaving faculty to restrict food and liquids or take on other methods to mitigate this issue, including having to announce to students that class will always start 5-10 minutes late due to scheduling. Unfortunately and even when the reason for late start times is announced to the students, this issue is frequently attributed to the 'laziness' of the faculty member in their student evaluations who 'could not even show up to class on time'.

  Overlapping class scheduling is also problematic. Many faculty have to deal with changing a class time/location on their own by contacting all the students individually to try and find the best time because administration's response to scheduling issues is frequently sluggish and we lose students in our classes because the new time/location -when finally assigned (usually within just a few weeks of the beginning of the semester)- is not amenable to the rest of their schedule and it is easier to drop our courses and find something else instead.

  To this end, we recommend that representatives from the USC Classroom Scheduling Office and Office of Academic Records and Registrar be asked to attend a meeting with the Caucus to answer questions about how to improve this process, as soon as possible.

- *Privacy and intellectual property rights*

  An important element of distance learning is producing digital and audio content/intellectual property. Faculty need clarification as to our rights and what action/s will be taken by the University if students misuse those materials; including, but not limited to, using a screenshot of us teaching in a meme or disseminating our work to non-students or the general public at large without our permissions.

- *Childcare*

  The COVID19 crisis and the subsequent shutdown of childcare facilities have a disproportionate impact on faculty with small children. Although the University has made great strides towards making childcare a priority in the past few years, this milieu presents a unique and serious challenge to the University's DEI mission going forward.

  The approved blanket tenure-clock extension will help alleviate long-term consequences to tenure-track faculty, but is not in itself sufficient to account for the highly-variable, and individual nature of challenges faculty (tenure and RTPC) currently face and will continue to face for many years as a result of the current situation. We strongly encourage leadership to recognize this aspect of the crisis by establishing an emergency working group tasked with how to ensure that future merit reviews can account for individuals being impacted by the crisis differently and to consider ways to help faculty who have to teach but have kids at home.

  - <u>Dependent Care:</u> Just as with childcare, the COVID-19 crisis has and will continue to have an effect on dependent care, including, but not limited to, the care of aging family members whose pre-pandemic care would have largely been taken care of by professionals at home or at a specialized facility. Many faculty now have added in-home family members and added responsibilities, which must be addressed. Our recommendation is to include an expansive, comprehensive understanding of dependent care in working groups and policies on this issue, since the real-world effects of dependents -no matter the age- on the personal and professional lives of faculty are similar.

STUDENT ISSUES

This past year--before COVID-19 upended everything--we saw some good progress regarding DEI Student Issues. And we hope to use that momentum for the next academic year. Below is a summary of recent initiatives and actionable aims for the upcoming year.

Improving Follow-Through for Student Housing Insecurity

Students who cope with housing insecurity confront "material hardships" (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Prevalence rates for housing insecurity varies across post-secondary institutions, but available research indicates that housing insecurity not only affects students at elite universities (Jack, 2015) but is now *greater* among college students than in the general population (Broton, Frank, & Goldrick-Rab, 2014). Universities are not mandated to gather data on housing insecurity, and accordingly, the only national level statistics--the number of people who mark "unaccompanied homeless" on their FAFSA--significantly underestimates how many college students face housing insecurity (Hallet, Crutchfield, & Maguire, 2019).

Several research centers and post-secondary institutions have attempted to gather data on the size and scope of housing insecurity among U.S. college students. This research has yielded a range of estimates: between one third and one half of students surveyed report experiencing housing insecurity at some point (Hallet, Crutchfield, & Maguire, 2019). It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated disruptions to housing for vulnerable students, but the extent of this additional damage is as yet unknown.

Unfortunately for students who face housing and food insecurity, locating resources is only the first step in a fraught and uncertain process. In AY 2019-2020, the DEI Caucus has been learning more about what happens after a faculty member connects a student with resources. Abigail Leung, the co-founder/co-president of Trojan Shelter, spoke to us about the organization's mission and its successes and struggles. Trojan Shelter seeks to assist students dealing with housing insecurity.

However, Trojan Shelter has had difficulty in filling their few available spaces. They have 18 spots/beds for students, and even retention with those in the program has been a struggle. We believe a part of the issue is that there needs to be more awareness of Trojan Shelter. Therefore, we shared a small blurb with faculty in the Writing Program and Thematic Option regarding Trojan Shelter to include on the Student Resources section of their syllabi. In AY 2020-21, we intend to remind our faculty to include the blurb on their syllabi. Additionally, we plan to reach out to the University Committee on Curriculum (UCOC) to include Trojan Shelter on the campus-wide stand list of support services for all syllabi. Additionally, we want to get Trojan Shelter linked on the USC Housing and on the USC SEIP webpages. Finally, we will continue to discuss several ongoing concerns, including: does the service (Trojan Shelter) satisfy the demand? What barriers exist to access to Trojan Shelter? Are concerns about privacy or stigma operating as barriers to access? And what else can be provided for students dealing with housing precarity? What, if anything, does the university do to help students locate safe and affordable off-campus housing? Are there co-ops or co-housing options? What steps could the University take to make these options more available? Approaching these

questions will require ongoing research into current services and input from students who have used or attempted to use these services.

Identifying & Consolidating Resources for Transfer Students

Another student issue we highlighted to focus on was mapping out current resources for and outreach to transfer students. In AY 2020-21, we want to collaborate with others on campus to advocate for transfer student resources, including mentorship. Specifically, we look forward to exploring the possibility of co-authoring a document transfer students about their needs.

Additionally, we will be collaborating with Amanda Bloom, an Assistant Professor in the Writing Program, so that these efforts might benefit from her expertise working with transfer students and the Fisher Fellows program. Ultimately, this work could lead to a comprehensive transfer student website that acts as a hub of all the information relevant to these students. Possibly, we could fold it into the RELA project's Dornsife website.

One known disparity that transfer students currently confront involves the option to retake a course with a low grade. Currently, 1st year students can do this with 3 classes during their first year, and 1st year Spring admits can do this with 1 or 2; but currently, transfer students don't have this option.

At the end of Fall 2019, the USC Undergraduate Assembly (student government) put forth a proposal to the Academic Senate about including for transfer students the option to retake a class with low grade (D and lower). This proposal was well-received by the Academic Senate. Additionally, earlier and more engaged advising may be beneficial, since grades in this range frequently indicate concerns related to submitting assignments and attending class. Students who are struggling with these fundamental tasks may be experiencing significant challenges that an advisor could help them navigate more effectively.

Learning through Listening to Students' Needs

Our final goal for the coming year is to learn more about students' ongoing concerns by listening. No one understands better than they do where the obstacles, shortcomings, and fault lines are. We hope to gain knowledge of students' needs and perceptions via two methods: (1) An Online Survey about various forms of hardship and precarity, including the specific issues mentioned above, and (2) Listening Sessions, wherein students are invited to attend designated DEI Caucus meetings to talk with faculty about how they are attempting to access resources and what obstacles they are encountering. These two sources of data can then form the basis of further collaboration with students in setting priorities for future years of DEI Caucus work.

CONCLUSION

The Caucus is committed to advancing DEI issues identified during 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 as well as insisting on keeping DEI centered during USC's response to issues raised by COVID-19.

It is necessary to insist on oversight and transparency from leadership so that the faculty are not burdened by opportunistic sanctions and additional unpaid job requirements, especially ones that stay in place once the University is on its way to recovery; <u>a recovery that is completely dependent on our faculty as the ones responsible for realizing the research and teaching missions of the University.</u>

With that said, the current crisis is an opportunity to "do things we have never done before" (Ran Emanuel 2008 *in* "How to Bridge the Mutual Distrust Between Leaders and Professors Amid Covid-19" Dever and Justice 2020, https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Bridge-the-Mutual/248642) because "faculty members are the experts in figuring out how to deal with curriculum, hiring, teaching responsibilities, and research support in light of the pandemic, and should continue to have the major role in those areas" (Denver and Justice 2020).

The DEI Caucus calls for centering diversity, equity, and inclusion as a response to the crisis. If the College and University are guided by DEI, we truly can come from this crisis stronger than before.