

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUBJECT: Faculty concerns regarding unit level cuts at Dornsife

TO: Dean Amber Miller
Vice Dean Renee Perez

FROM: Faculty Members of the Emergency Working Group on the Financial Impacts of COVID (listed below in alphabetical order)

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I. INTRODUCTION

On June 4th, 2020, Dean Amber Miller held a faculty forum during which she discussed budget cuts that are being defined by the central university leadership team. According to Dean Miller's presentation, Dornsife will have control over a small fraction of the cuts. Given that Dornsife's budgets are lean, departments will have to contribute to the operation budget cuts controlled by Dornsife.

The Emergency Working Group on the Financial Impacts of COVID was formed by the Dornsife Faculty Council as a faculty-led initiative to voice faculty needs and promote transparency during the COVID pandemic. Our Working Group is composed of a diverse range of faculty

from several departments and programs and includes Lecturers, RTPC faculty, as well as tenure-track and tenured faculty of Dornsife.

On June 16th, 2020, the Emergency Working Group on the Financial impacts of COVID sent an email with a list of questions to the Chairs and Directors of Dornsife's departments and programs asking about their main financial concerns related to the upcoming cuts. This report summarizes the main concerns voiced by the Chairs and Directors of Dornsife's departments and programs, and provides recommendations based on these concerns.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assure timely and clear communication of all information related to timing, magnitude, and impacts of budget cuts implemented by Dornsife and central USC administration.

Faculty and department/program leaders at Dornsife are concerned with the lack of clarity regarding budgets for upcoming year and for the future. Items where more clarity is needed include:

- Ability to access leftover funds (from fundraising and cancelled events, among others) in accounts during the upcoming fiscal year.
- Size of the cuts (1-10 million is a big range) and extent of flexibility given to departments/programs to direct these cuts to areas where they create the least damage.
- Adequate provision of PPE equipment and N95 masks to faculty and researchers. Chairs and Directors want to ensure that their faculty are safe, and they are concerned that central administration has not been clear about the procedures and timeline for procuring necessary equipment to ensure timely delivery.
- The time-period during which the cuts will be in place. Faculty are concerned that "temporary" cuts may become permanent, which would be highly destructive to their research, graduate programs, and overall scholarly activities.

2. Secure sufficient funding to support teaching in whichever modality (online, in-person, or hybrid) is implemented.

As mentioned above, faculty and department/program leaders at Dornsife are concerned with lack of clarity on how safety will be ensured in case of in-person activities in the Fall 2020 semester. Sufficient funds need to be directed to provision of PPE and N95 masks, and information about how these resources will be provided should be available to all faculty.

For classes and events that remain online, there is a need for software and training for faculty and teaching assistants (TAs). Funds are needed to pay remote guest lecturers and speakers, and to provide students with access to materials needed to complete their education remotely (e.g. books, rental equipment, licensing fees for films, experimental lab material, etc.).

Remote teaching has also increased the need for student mentorship and additional resources (such as additional in-house undergraduate advising) are needed to support them.

In case of in-person classes, faculty expressed concerns about funding for childcare support and about the loss of furloughed staff and graduate TAs who cannot travel to the US. Graduate students abroad cannot receive salaries and therefore will not be able to perform TA duties. All this puts additional pressure on faculty who are already working year-long to adjust to new teaching requirements, while in many cases being paid 9-month salaries.

3. Direct sufficient funding to support access to online research materials and off-campus research activities.

Many of the departments and programs at Dornsife rely on access to archives and libraries for their faculty and graduate student research. Funds need to be directed to support access to online library catalogues and archives, where possible. Where access to online resources is not possible, funds are needed to hire researchers at remote locations to pay for copying, scanning, and digitalization costs.

Other departments and programs rely heavily on experiments, field research, and access to laboratories. If teaching in person is not possible, training and preparation to move research and laboratories online is required. This requires financial and logistical resources that go beyond CET tutorials.

4. Continue funding for faculty development initiatives.

Faculty are very concerned about funding for faculty development initiatives. Faculty development funds are crucial for continued research in many departments and programs. Chairs and directors voiced a strong concern about the negative impact that the financial cuts are having on faculty morale and research. This already growing problem would be further aggravated if insufficient funds are provided to Faculty Development Grants and Awards.

In addition, departments and programs that rely on external funding expressed concerns about the continuance of funding for their research. When possible and needed, “bridge-grants” should be provided for faculty with graduate students whose funds have run out.

5. Keep up our commitment to the Graduate student body by directing sufficient resources to support them in these difficult times.

Graduate programs at USC require resources and support to maintain their high quality standards. Senior graduate students may want to delay graduation to avoid facing the currently adverse job market. Funding opportunities (through teaching assistantships and fellowships) should be provided to these students.

Current graduate students need to be supported by assuring remote access to research materials and equipment for in-person research. Since graduate students abroad cannot be paid salaries, in some cases funding through additional fellowships may be needed to avoid losses among our graduate student body. Funds are also needed for recruitment of incoming graduate students and for promotion of our graduate programs.

6. *Assure sufficient funding for diversity programs.*

The faculty and students at Dornsife contribute greatly to diversity across campus. Graduate students of color at some departments have been working on diversity initiatives, and departments need resources to help reform their cultures and curriculums to provide for a more inclusive academic environment. Support for such initiatives should not be affected by budget cuts.

7. *Complete recruitment of faculty and staff needed to continue each department's and program's operations.*

Some departments and programs were in the process of recruiting faculty when the COVID crisis hit. Recruitment for these faculty positions is essential to scholarly continuance in departments and programs who have recently experienced faculty departures and whose faculty are on leave with administrative appointments. The current hiring freezes should not apply in cases of recruitment of faculty and staff needed to replace departures and to continue key operations as defined by each department's/program's leadership.

8. *Resume travel for scholarly purposes as soon as possible.*

Many departments and programs rely on travel to external archives and to international locations for their research. Travel to conferences and other scholarly events is crucial to the long-term quality of research in all departments and programs. Funds to support travel for research and other scholarly purposes should be provided as soon it becomes possible to avoid long-term impacts on the research community at Dornsife.

9. *Protect small departments and programs essential to USC's mission.*

Dornsife is unique at USC in terms of the broad range of areas and sizes of our departments and programs. Smaller departments and programs with small operations budgets could suffer devastating consequences if additional cuts are imposed on them. These departments and programs are essential to USC's mission and should be assured sufficient funds to continue their operations.