

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

Date: November 7, 2018

Room: Irani Hall, Rm. 321

Present (17): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Jessica Cantiello; David Crombecque; Gerald Davison; Shannon Gibson; Bob Girandola; Devin Griffiths (*vice-president*); Assal Habibi; Yuka Kumagai; P.T. McNiff (*secretary*); Joe Palacios; Jessica Parr; Dan Pecchenino (*president*); Michael Petitti; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; An-Min Wu

Absent (2): Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch; Sri Narayan

Guests: Elizabeth Durst (The Writing Program); Kimberly Freeman (Associate Dean, Chief Diversity Officer); John Holland (Dean of Undergraduate Education's Office); Dean Amber Miller (Dean of USC Dornsife); Renee Perez (Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operating Officer); Gioia Polidori (Biological Sciences); Andrew Stott (College Dean of Undergraduate Education); James Valentine (Director, American Language Institute)

### **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings**

**P.T.** submits the minutes of the October 3 DFC meeting for discussion and approval. **Jessica C.** motions to approve; **Assal** seconds. 11 of the members present vote to approve them, with zero nays and one abstention.

### **Discussion of Parental Leave Issues**

**Jessica C.** discusses the Senate Faculty Environment and Employment Committee's work on the university's parental leave policy. Their focus is on inconsistencies in how policies are implemented, specifically those between child-bearing parents and other parents. The committee is looking for any testimonials, especially those related to the experiences of child-bearing parents who give birth in the middle of the semester. The FEEC is meeting with Human Resources the week after Thanksgiving, and want to be able to discuss all experiences (whether good, bad, or neutral).

There is a suggestion to look at the experiences of people in different faculty tracks. Another member asks if this is only about faculty, or also about post-docs. **Jessica C.** says they want all information possible.

### **Report on Academic Senate Meeting**

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

The members present who attended the Academic Senate meeting give an update on it. **Dan** begins by noting that the meetings have been structured more around having dialogues and discussions, which he views as a positive development. The last Senate meeting in October had one such discussion about the differences in responsibilities and related issues between TT and RTPC faculty. The conversation seemed productive insofar as it got down to fundamental important questions, which included compensation/salary issues for RTPC faculty, protecting against the erosion of tenure, and ensuring both academic freedom and job protection for all faculty. There was also concern expressed related to the prominence of RTPC faculty in governance bodies, though there was pushback to that concern from both TT and RTPC faculty. It is agreed that there was strong support for job protections in the room, which leads to a discussion of the still-new concept of Continuing Appointments for RTPC faculty, as outlined in the faculty handbook. The Senate meeting also made it clear that there are situations in the university where policies related to multi-year contracts for promoted RTPC faculty are not enforced, which needs to be rectified.

### **Dialogue with Dornsife Deans**

College Dean of Undergraduate Education Andrew Stott, Associate Dean and Chief Diversity Officer Kimberly Freeman, and John Holland of the Dean of Undergraduate Education's Office join the meeting. **Dan** brings up the input and ideas from the DFC survey about teaching assessment. He inquires what Dean Stott has heard from Dornsife departments. **Andrew** says his office is being hands-off for now and has set no hard deadlines, with the goal of separating out the nuts and bolts of assessment from the expressions of frustration related to the rollout of the concept. He notes that the Provost, in September's Academic Senate meeting, iterated that this was never meant to be a mandate and that each department needs to figure out how they go about doing this. Provost Quick also sent a memo to academic Deans re-setting the clock; the timeline for chairs has been moved to look at the 2019-20 academic year. They are looking at peer institutions to see what is being done, whether and how to do peer observations and review, and also how to ensure that student voices are included. Andrew's office will launch "Teaching @ Dornsife" to show resources they've gathered from top 25 schools, as well as research on student evaluations. He has not seen formal plans from any departments yet.

Dean Amber Miller and Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operating Officer Renee Perez join the meeting. After a round of introductions, **Devin** shares some big picture ideas about shared faculty governance and related communication, noting that having process and communication working together would fix many issues within both Dornsife and the university as a whole. He notes that reflecting on the teaching assessment rollout to see where things went wrong can be instructive to help Dornsife avoid making similar mistakes. While the Academic Senate will have more concrete suggestions about shared governance in the near future, some early ideas include ensuring faculty involvement decision-making, an emphasis on having a diverse range of faculty to serve (meaning rank/track but also

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

race/gender/ethnicity), and having clearer recognition for service in promotion process. He also notes the importance of having an annual budget that is shared for transparency and for a clear basis of communication. Communication must happen at all levels, from departments up to the college administration; to that end, guidelines must be developed for what good governance can look like at the departmental level. These policies will help the DFC function better as advocates, both for the faculty within Dornsife and for Dornsife within the larger university.

**Dan** reiterates that the Academic Senate is working on this, including having the faculty council chairs develop a model for how the councils should function. This includes determining what needs the input of faculty governance bodies, what work must happen in conjunction with chairs, and what needs full faculty input. These ideas are in the beginning stages, but will be developed more going forward.

As an example of these issues, **Dan** mentions a lack of consistency in terms of how RTPC faculty are allowed to be involved within departments, with some shutting them out of curriculum and other such discussions. This falls out of line with the faculty handbook, which states they should be involved in all department discussions, save for those related to tenure. Such problems speak to how it would help to improve transparency and share documentation.

**Amber** responds by saying she is glad to hear of the idea of the DFC as an advocate for both faculty and Dornsife as a whole. She notes hearing about the Sustainability Committee in the Academic Senate including proposals from other schools which largely ignored the efforts of Dornsife, and that she hopes the DFC could alert her to such issues in the future. She relates this to issues of transparency.

**Dan** says that the way Dornsife positions and incentivizes service creates issues with involvement, as it's a lot of work to be on DFC, Senate, and especially the Senate's Executive Board. Incentivizing this work in promotion and tenure (as well as through course releases) would make it less difficult to get faculty (especially TT faculty) to serve. **Amber** says it would help to get benchmarks from peer institutions, as Devin noted in his remarks, to find where things have worked better somewhere else. She emphasizes that would be better than benchmarking within USC, as other schools are not in a similar position as the college.

Moving back to sustainability, **Amber** says the academic planning process identified eight themes, with sustainability being one of them. She convened a group of leaders of individual efforts within the college along with the divisional Deans of Natural Sciences and Social Sciences as well as one of the communications people to see how the efforts can be brought together within Dornsife. The aim is to get a one-pager from everyone within the University who is working on this to see how the efforts can fit together to work together. She emphasizes that process is important for these kind of things, and that it's important that Dornsife is at the head of this rather than playing catch-up.

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

**Dan** shifts the discussion to RTPC salaries, noting that this issue came up repeatedly in surveys related to teaching assessment rollout as well as the Dean's visit to the DFC. There is a great deal of anger, frustration, and sadness around issues of salary compression and salaries in general, relating to cost of living in Los Angeles and what the expectations had been of what would happen after the union vote versus what has happened. The DFC put together a report with benchmarking for our part of trying to improve this – then it broke down somewhere between the Dean and Provost levels. The raises in the salary floors are appreciated, but that did not affect the people who feel the most passionate about salary issues: faculty who have been here 5+ years who have not seen their salaries raised much while the floor has gone up. Returning to previous themes, this is another process that is unclear. All faculty see is how their salary hasn't gone up, and they do not feel valued.

**Amber** responds saying that the administration goes to salary setting with a very restrictive budget, which is painful for everybody. They have to decide how to apportion the small increases they have to give out; they have very little unrestricted budget, referring to information that was sent out. She asks if it would work if she asked the DFC people every year where the pain points are and how funds should be directed.

While there is agreement this would help as a start, members ask why there is such a limited budget. **Amber** says she wants to be transparent about it. She knew there was a hole when she arrived, due to GE being socialized across university (which happened before she arrived) along with central taxes and fees increasing faster than Dornsife revenue. These factors caused the college to go from a surplus to deficit. She said Dornsife needs a stable, predictable number for going forward. They now have that, but the number creates a very tight budget with little money available for big growth. She notes she could not be transparent on budget issues before because there was no budget to be transparent about. She aims to be transparent now that one is in place. The budget is heavily dominated by salaries, with very little discretionary resources. Her focus is on raising funds to cover things.

She also ties this issue into presidential search. She states she came here because USC was ready to make a play for research preeminence across university, with Dornsife as the scholarly heart. But the college has lacked the resources to do that. A new President who understands scholarly mission, and knows the arts & sciences core, might be the advocate we need to get more money. She encourages the council to chime in on the presidential search website and/or in-person forums to say we need a true academic leader who will support the academic mission of Dornsife.

In relation to references to the rankings of PhD programs, **Brian** asks for more clarification on that issue. **Amber** speaks of looking at all the US News & World Report programs that were individually ranked, comparing our programs with the top 10 universities on the list. What you see is the average PhD ranking in Dornsife is 40-something (despite being #17 overall); the schools that are #1-10 overall have PhD programs in the same top-ten vicinity. Due to this, she is focusing on that as a

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

core academic strength, tracking research productivity of programs, with a need to put money into programs to get them to publish more and get more grants. The productivity per research member is strong; but don't have enough faculty doing that.

**Dan** notes that the disparity between USC's overall ranking and those of the PhD programs must mean the undergraduate experience is what elevates the college. He then notes that undergraduate experience is largely driven by teaching faculty who feel under-appreciated and under-paid.

**Dan** returns to questions of process fueling the feeling of faculty being undervalued, connecting to the lack of transparency and communication made the cuts in faculty development funds particularly galling. **Amber** says she heard the faculty about that and that it won't happen again.

**Dan** relays that a desire for documentation about policies as they are built is something that has been called for at both the Dornsife and Senate levels. Having a document people can point to see criteria for adjustments, development funds, etc. would give faculty something concrete to discuss about rather than having toxic rumors and speculation spread. **Amber** agrees, noting this would also be good as a way to get input on the criteria being used. She notes that the only limitation is that she has to review all those communications carefully to make sure they are right. She does not want to have to realize later that something was missed. This can create a bottleneck of information because of the time required to review everything. This, however, is the only limitation she sees.

**Gerald** notes that budget issues and rising university tax rates have been issues for decades, and were present when he served as a Dean. He laments that the central administration has chosen to spend millions of dollars on poor responses to bad behavior. This includes creating numerous new administrative offices, which creates a pinch at the level of actual academic work. He recognizes this is outside the Dean's control, but wants the problem to be noted, hoping a new President will move towards spending money to improve the school. **Amber** agrees that better lines of responsibility need to be drawn, in order to ensure things are not falling through the cracks without sacrificing efficiency.

The discussion shifts to issues of diversity and inclusion in faculty hiring. **Amber** says the college has hired as many diverse faculty members in her first year as the previous six years combined. She adds it is not about policing search committees. They have worked on instances where searches can lead to the hiring of a second person, who might have diverse background, mortgaging the department's next retirement. This is done regardless of field when a strong candidate is found. In all but one instance, this has happened; she notes that, to the extent we have resources to do this bridging, it has been very effective.

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

As she departs, **Amber** says she is willing to come in to the DFC more often than she has been. And reiterates a commitment to communicating more, while also trying to not merely reiterate and re-send things that have already come up.

After Amber Miller departs, **Dan** asks a follow-up about search committees in relation to diversity and inclusion efforts. How far is Dornsife willing to go to make this a top priority? How do we get all of the pieces working together? **Kimberly** says she appreciates the question, and notes she has had transparent conversations on the topic with the co-chairs of the DFC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Caucus. Every search has diversity liaisons ensuring that people are working to include diversity. A charge from the Provost's office created them, but she and **Renee** say that no rules or guidelines came with that charge, including no guidance on how much authority they have to stop a search. **Brian** notes he is the diversity liaison for a current search, but only because he was able to attend a meeting. While the training at that meeting was useful, he says there has not been a lot of follow-up to it.

**Kimberly** says that policies, communication, and transparency goals mean we should do more to codify this, comparing these liaisons to people who work on equity at UCLA. She also discusses the Provost's \$50 million initiative about diversity which will create a central facility for this work, as opposed to different stakeholders doubling up efforts. She notes that the Dean's planned PhD expansion also relates to diversity issues. For instance, the school must ask why people choose other programs instead of ours. Unpacking that from a culture and organizational standpoint will be important. The school can get people in the door and in the pool, but keeping them here is another issue. We need environment that supports a diverse population and helps them thrive, both for graduate students and faculty members. The Provost's \$50 million are wasted if people don't stay here. This is an issue across the university, not just in Dornsife. She also notes that there are whisper networks, which help reinforce that if people feel that a situation is not inclusive, they will leave.

**Dan** pivots the discussion back to the teaching assessment dialogues that have happened in the DFC and the Academic Senate, noting that this is a moment to reconsider the purpose of merit review. He specifically questions the granularity of the process, both in terms of evaluation and compensation. There are questions around the process from both the angle of required labor to conduct merit review and also from the perspective of desired outcomes. If merit review scores are not about significant raises or salary gradations, are there ways in which the inherent competitiveness can be taken out of the process and instead reorient it to be about identifying faculty members who need guidance in certain aspects of their work? Perhaps a pass/no-pass model that confirms successful work and offers support when there are areas of deficiency would work best.

**Renee** clarifies that the merit review process is dictated by the Provost's office, which limits how much can be changed at the Dornsife level. While it's unclear how much streamlining can be done at the school level, she likes the idea of these

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

changes. **Dan** notes that different schools approach it in different ways. **Renee** says there is leeway in implementation, but that the process has to happen. **Dan** replies that we should work to use the leeway we have to shift it to a supportive model instead of a competitive one. Doing so would help the faculty who do not understand the purpose of it.

**Andy** agrees that there is wiggle room within the hard parameters to allow the shift from finding a salary-related digit to having it be a part of a mentoring process that helps people's pedagogy. De-emphasizing the number as the end-goal of the process would help make it more holistic, continual, and functional. He notes this relates to the work John Holland has been doing in his office to think about the structures and best practices of departmental mentoring (along with promotion issues for teaching track faculty). **John** says the goal is to work together to come up with a substantial model to improve the system. **Renee** notes that the numbers are a sticking point with the Provost's office, which wants them in a table in the final narrative. **John** adds that there used to be limits on what percentage of a department's faculty could be in each category, demanding some degree of stratification. He reiterates that a better way can be found.

Kimberly, Andy, Renee, and John depart the meeting.

After they leave, council members wonder if it would be possible for them to come individually to future meetings so more focused and in-depth conversations can occur. It is agreed that this should be an aim of planning future meetings.

A council member notes there seem to be two conflicting goods in the discussion: the desire to hire more TT faculty to improve PhD programs and wanting to keep the top undergraduate experience, which relies on many RTPC faculty members. There is a brief discussion about the degree to which TT faculty teach undergraduate courses and the various worthy reasons they are pulled away from that kind of teaching. Another council member refers back to the DFC report on RTPC salary benchmarking, noting the Deans need to realize that RTPC are also producers of academic work (both research and teaching). The cost of research relative to the revenue gained from teaching, via tuition money, is brought up. Concerns are raised about efforts to cover teaching responsibilities with less investment, whether that is underpaying teaching faculty or using postdocs to fill teaching gaps. It is noted that this comes back to the core questions of faculty governance – having faculty voices in the room when making calls at the Dean level should help properly address these concerns.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Nov 7, 2018)

P.T. McNiff, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council