

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Dec 12, 2018)

Date: December 12, 2018

Room: Irani Hall, Rm. 321

Present (13): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Jessica Cantiello; Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch; David Crombecque; Bob Girandola; Devin Griffiths (*vice-president*); Assal Habibi; P.T. McNiff (*secretary*); Jessica Parr; Dan Pecchenino (*president*); Michael Petitti; An-Min Wu

Absent (6): Gerald Davison; Shannon Gibson; Yuka Kumagai; Sri Narayan; Joe Palacios; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

P.T. submits the minutes of the November 7 DFC meeting for discussion and approval. **Brian** motions to approve; **Iva** seconds. 11 of the members present vote to approve them, with zero nays and zero abstentions.

Report on Academic Senate Meetings

Dan begins a recap of the three meetings of the Academic Senate that occurred since the last DFC meeting. The election of the nominating committee for next year's Senate Executive Board is discussed, along with the result that **Devin** will be on it. He asks for any suggestions people have for potential nominees for the at-large members as well as the two Vice President positions up for election later this spring. The importance of having Dornsife representation on the executive board is emphasized. The discussion shifts to the newly ratified changes to how faculty can get on the ballot for those positions, as outlined in recent Senate resolutions.

The presentation to the Senate by Lynette Merriman, the Assistant Provost for Student Affairs, Support and Advocacy, is recapped. After discussing what support systems they offer, council members discuss incidents in recent years and ways in which information could be more readily available for faculty.

Dan briefly recaps the Senate committee presentations that occurred in the November and December meetings. He and other senators also review the discussion about university policies concerning romantic relationships between faculty and students. Summaries of these topics can be found in the relevant minutes on the Senate website.

The emergency Senate meeting in the wake of developments concerning Marshall's Dean is discussed next. The situation is reviewed, wherein the Dean was asked to step down at the end of the academic year without clear indication as to why beyond some reference to his responses to OED complaints. In response to the

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position of the Marshall Faculty Council, the Senate meeting focused on the problems of process in the situation. While the details of the case were not known to the Senate or the faculty in general, there was concern about the lack of faculty involvement in general decision-making processes involving high-level administrators like a Dean. A resolution was passed by the Senate calling for more consultation of faculty in all steps of the process around such positions, from appointment and review to potential dismissal.

Report on Other Meetings

Dan speaks about his participation, along with representatives of other faculty councils, on a Faculty Governance panel organized by Executive Vice Provost Elizabeth Graddy. They spoke to Academic Deans about how USC Faculty Councils currently work, as well as the goals for improving that work in the future. He notes the variety of faculty involvement in situations like Dean's cabinet meetings and Dean's reviews, which leads to further evaluation of how Dornsife faculty can be more involved in the decision-making within the college.

Devin and **Dan** then discuss their meeting with College Dean of Undergraduate Education Andy Stott. They discussed the ongoing teaching assessment issue; Stott said he had received viable plans from around half the departments in Dornsife. The lack of clarity about whether these assessment changes will involve merely promotion cases or merit review as well was discussed. They then spoke of the development of the Dornsife Signature Undergraduate Experience, with the aim of forming relevant committees in the upcoming months.

The cuts to the RTPC faculty development funds were examined. Dean Stott agreed that there is a need to clarify the requirements and what should go into proposals, with **Devin** noting a rubric could be developed by faculty and implemented. **Assal** notes that research faculty might need a separate rubric. **P.T.** adds that the use of merit review scores as a way to cut off who can potentially receive funding is something that needs to be brought into the conversation around teaching assessment changes and their effects on merit review. Other council members discuss the problems they have experienced receiving funds in the past, and the power of gatekeepers to block success. **Dan** notes this is why specific guidelines should be written and why the DFC should be involved in writing them.

Dan notes that he reiterated to Dean Stott the problems with RTPC salaries, and how the issue gets worse due to the delay in administrative action combined with the dramatic increase in cost of living. The need for a plan to address these issues is essential for faculty morale.

Computer Support Program Cuts

The conversation moves to the issues around the faculty computer support program, which had been developed by the DFC three years ago to help support the teaching of both TT and RTPC faculty. The policy was that every three years, faculty

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would get money for new technology to help their teaching. As of November 1, this was changed to every five years without the DFC or the wider faculty being notified. After an inquiry about this by **Dan**, Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operation Officer Renee Perez said the change was made because the program quickly exhausted allotted funds and that computers can last longer than three years. Besides questions about that response, the problems with the process of how this decision was made is emphasized; the problem was not presented to the faculty, nor were we asked to be a part of the solution. **Dan** suggests that, in the wake of this and the RTPC faculty development funds issue, he will draft a resolution to say that the DFC should be consulted when any changes are made to faculty support programs.

Discussion of Faculty Authority Matrix

Stemming from the previous discussion, the council reviews the Faculty Authority Matrix model developed by the Marshall Faculty Council. **Dan** mentions having had a meeting with other faculty council chairs and Senate Executive Board members to talk about it as a first draft to outline potential decision-making paths within a school. The model is descriptive of what happens at Marshall, rather than prescriptive. Any similar document for Dornsife would need to reflect the more complex layers of decision-making within the school. Council members state that more straightforward requests (such as having DFC presence in Deans' meetings) might be a better first step. There is a discussion about what the faculty handbook says in terms of governance guidelines, with the conclusion that it has suggestions rather than prescriptions. It is noted that we need to clarify what "faculty consultation" means at the various levels it could be implemented. Questions are raised about what the makeup for committees would be and who would decide them, while noting that it would be important to ensure DFC members are included in committee membership. The need for the Dean to provide a clear organizational chart to understand the chain of command on various issues is reiterated. The lack of clarity about where to go stymies people's attempts to accomplish goals, while also allowing for those who know the right paths to directly benefit.

The conversation focuses on the need to identify the key committees and regular meetings, and insisting on DFC presence on them. The amount of possible extra work this would create, especially for the DFC President, leads to a reiteration of the need for faculty governance service to be properly valued and compensated. The politics of how committees are formed is discussed, especially when top-down methods are used to select membership. The conversation concludes by reiterating the need to have clear requests for more DFC involvement in decision-making and on important committees, with the goal of getting those requests down on paper.

DFC Caucus Reports

Representatives from each of the caucuses submit mid-year reports on the work they have been doing.

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Brian and **Devin** share that the Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty Affairs Caucus has been working on how to better incorporate service into tenure and promotion issues, focusing on merit reviews and the Associate-to-Full promotion. The connection to issues of diversity and retention are noted. In addition, they are looking at issues around the sabbatical clock, noting how problems there relate to gender disparity in its implementation. They also mention early-stage discussions about instituting a separate slate of TT faculty in future DFC elections.

P.T. discuss the work of the Part-Time Faculty Affairs Caucus. In the wake of the survey done by the Academic Senate's Part-Time Committee, the caucus aims to follow-up with a Dornsife-specific survey to gather the attitudes of our part-time faculty. Of particular interest is delineating what percentage of that constituency consists of true adjunct faculty (who are content teaching one or two classes a year as a side gig to another job) as opposed to those who are working part-time as their main job and with an eye towards applying for a full-time position at the university. Specific issues stemming from that related to benefits will also be addressed once the survey is conducted early in the spring semester.

Iva reports that the Curriculum Caucus is continuing the work begun last academic year, focusing on the mentoring of students by faculty. The caucus is working on benchmarking how other universities handle this work, as well as finalizing a survey to send out to students to measure their thoughts and experiences.

Dan shares communication he has had with members of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Caucus about their efforts to set up continuing meetings with Kimberly Freeman, as well as their coordination efforts with the Senate committee developing the potential diversity center.

Assal, speaking on behalf of the RTPC Research Faculty Affairs Caucus, notes the continued work needed to consolidate a faculty track with such divergent membership. They are developing a survey to assess the status of this constituency, and also to investigate the distinction between research faculty and research staff. The caucus has also been working on developing updated promotion guidelines for this track.

Jessica P. speaks for the RTPC Teaching Faculty Affairs Caucus, noting that they have focused on two issues: a course-release/summer-funding policy for teaching track faculty and a faculty mentoring plan. The latter is focused on a more organic, grassroots approach, while working to line it up with the new promotion guidelines being developed in the dean's office by Jane Cody and John Holland.

Finally, **P.T.** notes that the Elections Caucus does most of its work in the spring, though work was done to propose potential bylaw changes to ensure, among other things, more clarity in the election process. He calls for current DFC members to begin thinking about who might be good candidates to recruit to run in the spring, taking into account the need for more diversity and inclusion (along race and

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gender lines, as well as different departments and tracks). **Dan** adds that it is good to think about who might be a good potential representative on the Senate.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

P.T. McNiff, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council