

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Mar 6, 2019)

Date: March 6, 2019

Room: Irani Hall, Rm. 321

Present (15): Brian Bernards; Iva Bozovic; Jessica Cantiello; Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch; David Crombecque; Gerald Davison; Shannon Gibson; Bob Girandola; Assal Habibi; Yuka Kumagai; P.T. McNiff (*secretary*); Sri Narayan; Jessica Parr; Dan Pecchenino (*president*); An-Min Wu

Absent (4): Devin Griffiths (*vice-president*); Joe Palacios; Michael Petitti; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy

Guests: (2): Gioia Polidori (Biological Sciences / RTPC-Teaching Caucus); Alisa Sanchez (The Writing Program / Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Caucus)

Submission of Bylaw Amendments

A draft of proposed amendments to the Council bylaws are introduced by **Dan** and distributed by **P.T.** These aim to bring clarity and precision to various sections of the bylaws. Since they have been submitted in writing, they will come up for a vote in a future Council meeting.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

P.T. submits the minutes of the February 6 DFC meeting for discussion and approval. **Gerald** motions to approve; **Jessica P** seconds. 12 of the members present vote to approve them, zero oppose, and three abstain.

Report from the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Caucus

Dan notes that the meeting will focus on updates from the DFC caucuses. **Alisa** leads a discussion on the draft report from the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Caucus. The draft of the report had been distributed before the meeting to Council members. She reviews that twelve faculty members have worked on the report, and the caucus spoke extensively about what they wanted to focus on and what recommendations they want to make. An emphasis on the caucus' name is noted: diversity alone will not work without also having equity and inclusion. She notes the benefits that stem from having an exchange of diverse perspectives, as well as having faculty that reflect our increasingly diverse student body and metropolitan area. This is hard work to do that requires deliberate and intentional effort; it is also part of USC's mission and stated goals.

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The report focuses on two key areas: faculty-related and student-related. For faculty, the recommendations center on issues around recruitment, retention, and hiring. These recommendations are in line with things USC has done in the past or continues to do now, but which need to be made more robust and impactful. For student-related issues, the endorsements relate to continuing and expanding programs addressing particular student needs as well as ensuring that information related to such programs are readily and centrally accessible.

Alisa concludes by asking for any thoughts on feedback on the preliminary draft. **Dan** thanks her and the rest of the caucus for their efforts. Council members discuss timing issues of hiring processes, which can lead to searches being approved late and offers being delayed to get information about those from competing schools'; the impact these courses of action have on hiring any candidate, especially diverse ones, is noted. A member questions if the language used is too severe and aggressive towards white people, which may alienate that audience; they also note that the report seems to group too many different ethnic groups into the "white" category. They concluded with the statement that emphasizing race to the degree the report does without looking at other factors/groupings is problematic. In response, another member notes that they were not insulted by the language but instead by the disparity recorded between the demographics of the student body and of the faculty. Issues related to being a diversity liaison and the lack of support from administration when departments try to retain diverse faculty are discussed. The distance between the stated goals of current policy and the reality of faculty composition is emphasized by another member. Questions are raised about the extra work asked of under-represented faculty when diversity is desired, and how that creates an inequitable environment.

A member observes that there is a clear gap between what the university says it wants and what it actually rewards, and that this demonstrates a core culture problem. Following on that, another member notes the culture problem of increasingly asking for diversity statements while hiring without a clear understanding of what the search committee is or should be looking for in them. The lack of access to data around these issues, and questions about whether such data is managed at all, is noted as a roadblock to advancing the problem.

Caucus Updates

The other caucuses give updates on their work. **Assal** speaks for the RTPC-Research Faculty Affairs Caucus, saying she has been named to a university-wide task force to approach addressing issues around this faculty group. Meetings of that task force will begin shortly after an opening email discussion within the group about how these positions should be defined.

From the RTPC-Teaching Faculty Affairs Caucus, **Gioia** and **Jessica P** discuss projects they have been working on. First, in relation to issues around faculty development funds, **Gioia** notes that the caucus has been working to create a system

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to clearly rank the applicants for funding. Because there were more requests than funding available, they have considered that having a faculty-driven points system would make it easier, objective, and flexible for both applicants and reviewers.

Council members emphasize that faculty and Deans should be lobbying for enough funds to be released to cover everyone so such a system is not needed. There is some questioning about why we as faculty should let it be assumed that a very large administration would not have the employee resources to review the actual applications for funding. Comparisons to how teaching is better supported in other schools are made, across both TT and RTPC lines, and noting that such funding existed in budgets of the past. Questions are asked about why graduate students are guaranteed more support funding for teaching than faculty. Concerns are raised that introducing a points system sends a message to the administration that the faculty accept the cuts in funding, as well as sends a message to the faculty that the DFC condones it and endorses a focus on competition. General concerns about how funding decisions are made and how that reflects on the value placed on teaching within the school are reiterated.

Following that discussion, **Jessica P** details that the caucus has also been working on developing a proposal for working with undergraduate researchers and ensuring that such work by faculty members is compensated.

P.T. speaks about the Part-Time Faculty Affairs Caucus' continuing effort to revise and distribute a survey to gauge the needs and feelings of the different part-time faculty constituencies.

From the Curriculum Caucus, **Iva** talks about a survey to gather data on student mentoring within Dornsife and how it compares to other schools. They have worked with the Dean's office in conjunction with their survey of students; while their questions about experiential learning were used, they are working to get mentoring ones included as well.

Brian from the Tenure Track Faculty Affairs Caucus discusses the one-sheet proposals they have been working on. The first is about service issues, including methods to measure both quality and quantity of service, how it is involved in TT merit reviews, and how it could be integrated to incentivize hiring from the RTPC ranks into TT lines. The goal here is to ensure that good service is rewarded and that faculty do not have busywork or empty service. Also included in the one-sheet is a recommendation for the Faculty Council president to get a course release for their work, and to have the president and vice-president participate in regular Dean-level meetings. The other one-sheet is related to proposing a bylaws amendment to ensure that neither TT or RTPC representation on the Faculty Council dips below 40%.

Moving from that, **P.T.** reports for the Elections Caucus on how the ballot for the imminent voting has come together. While all divisions have a selection of

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candidates, the nomination turnout was not notably increased from last year. The overall lack of TT faculty standing for election remains notable. Some discussion is had about how that would play into the potential 40% floor rule, or whether separate slates would increase participation. The presence of vocal groups of faculty on campus, led by tenured professors, who want to be involved in decision making but show no desire to engage at the Faculty Council level is noted. The need going forward to address divisions between TT and RTPC faculty on these various issues of engagement and membership is emphasized. Voting in the election is strongly encouraged.

Updates on Academic Senate Meeting

Dan and other Senate members discuss the events of the February Senate meeting. This included the new protocols around research and data, as well as the presentation on university financials. **Dan** and **Devin** say that they plan to follow-up on the latter issue by meeting with Mark Todd, the Vice Provost for Academic Operations, to further discuss what the numbers mean, how the revenue moves within the school (especially in relation to Dornsife), and how to better articulate these issues. Questions are asked around Dornsife's participation tax, the undervaluing of Dornsife faculty within the university, and the apparent disparity between university policy of ensuring all schools have a budget surplus while Dornsife's is in the red.

The upcoming Senate meeting will include discussion of a resolution regarding romances between student and faculty. Comments related to it are encouraged.

Reports on Meetings

Dan pivots to speaking about the Dornsife Faculty Forum. He notes that undergraduate education was hardly discussed, with his question being the only one specifically about it. With the emphasis on research and graduate education, he states a concern that the school is presuming undergraduate education will stay strong even without continual reinvestment in it. Other council members who attended concur and note that it was similar to talks earlier in the academic year, with the emphasis on revenue and funding.

Dan moves to discussing the standing meetings he and Devin have had with Dean Andrew Stott. In a recent meeting, they discussed the role of teaching postdocs in the school. Council members discuss this. The need for USC graduate students to gain more teaching experience, especially as instructor of record, is noted; but the fact that the teaching postdocs are being brought in externally undermines that as a reason for emphasizing them. There is mention of the potential for problems and institutional embarrassment stemming from temporary teaching positions being mis-labeled as postdocs without having the other work components generally associated with such a position. Concern is expressed about the impact that

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expanding the teaching postdoc program may have on RTPC faculty. There is a need to determine how much of the push is from departments versus the administration.

Moving from there, the Council is updated on the Provost/Senate Joint Retreat. The first day was about composition of the faculty, with attention split between the TT/RTPC divide and issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Much of the discussion around the latter spoke to issues that had been discussed earlier with the DEI Caucus report. In terms of the former, a presenter noted the growth of teaching faculty in the last 15 years across higher education; this resulted from the growth of undergraduate populations and a decrease in emphasizing classroom time for tenured faculty. Because an educational body in the 1980s voted against having teaching faculty be rewarded with tenure, it created the divide that exists today. USC, along with many other institutions, did not adapt and create an intentional and healthy ecosystem. Council members say that this issue deserves focus, with questions of how such an ecosystem can be developed with the involvement of all faculty, rather than competition between them. The impact of revenue on this is also noted, with the protections of tenure creating divisions between employees comparable to unionized and non-unionized factions. People note that decisions need to be driven by better reasons than money.

Upcoming Meeting with Dean Miller

Dan reminds everyone that Dean Miller will be visiting next month, and asks them to add to the shared document collecting questions and topics. He will gather them for the agenda next time. He also notes that the DFC officers will meet with her in advance to help set up the conversation.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

P.T. McNiff, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council