

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (Apr 3, 2019)

Date: April 3, 2019

Room: Irani Hall, Rm. 321

Present (16): Brian Bernards; Jessica Cantiello; Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch; David Crombecque; Gerald Davison; Shannon Gibson; Bob Girandola; Devin Griffiths (*vice-president*); Assal Habibi; Yuka Kumagai; P.T. McNiff (*secretary*); Sri Narayan; Joe Palacios; Jessica Parr; Dan Pecchenino (*president*); Michael Petitti;

Absent (3): Iva Bozovic; Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; An-Min Wu

Guests: (6): Stephen Bradforth (Divisional Dean for Natural Sciences and Mathematics); Kimberly Freeman (Associate Dean, Chief Diversity Officer); Amber Miller (Dean of USC Dornsife); Renee Perez (Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operating Officer); Eddie Sartin (Senior Associate Dean for Advancement); Andrew Stott (College Dean of Undergraduate Education)

Update on Election Results

P.T. reports on the results of the recent election of DFC representatives. He lists and congratulates the winners. The new representatives for the Humanities are Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus (English), Antonio Elefano (The Writing Program), Andrea Parra (Latin American and Iberian Cultures), and Alisa Sanchez (The Writing Program); for Natural Sciences, they are David Crombecque (Mathematics), Gerald Davison (Psychology), David Ginsburg (Environmental Studies), Sri Narayan (Chemistry), and Gioia Polidori (Biological Sciences); and for Social Sciences, the new representative is Emily Zeamer (Anthropology). **P.T.** makes special note of Joel Hahn of Biological Sciences, who received the same number of votes as winning candidates, but recused himself from a run-off election. All candidates have been contacted about the results, and the incoming members have been invited to the upcoming May 8th DFC meeting.

There is discussion about the lack of tenure-track faculty on the council. It is noted that all TT faculty who ran in this election won a seat; there is agreement that the problem is a lack of TT candidates, not a lack of support for them among the electorate. The members note that it would be ideal to get more TT members to ensure a more accurate representation of the make-up of the Dornsife faculty. It is hoped that policies in the Academic Senate and the work of the Shared Governance Task Force will help increase the candidate pool in future years.

Review of Bylaw Amendments

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P.T. introduces and distributes an updated draft of proposed amendments to the Council bylaws. The update included adding an additional amendment to codify the process for dealing with tied results in elections for Council representatives. Since they have been submitted in writing, they will come up for a vote at the May Council meeting.

Updates on President Folt and the Academic Senate

Dan notes the changes that have happened to the university since the last meeting, centering around the announcement of incoming University President Carol L. Folt. He notes that she went from her introductory press conference directly to the monthly Academic Senate meeting. The Senators agree that she gave open answers to questions and seems interested in both the benefits and the challenges of the job. The announcement that a search for a new Provost will begin soon is also discussed.

Dialogue with Dornsife Deans

Dean Amber Miller joins the meeting along with Steve Bradforth (Divisional Dean for Natural Sciences and Mathematics), Kimberly Freeman (Associate Dean, Chief Diversity Officer), Renee Perez (Senior Associate Dean and Chief Operating Officer), Eddie Sartin (Senior Associate Dean for Advancement), and Andrew Stott (College Dean of Undergraduate Education). There is a round of introductions around the room.

Dan begins the discussion by asking Dean Miller what ideas she has for engaging with President Folt and the future Provost. **Amber** notes that she has been in communication with Deans from other schools to improve the flow of information about these changes, so they can share that information with the faculty of their schools in a timely manner. Her initial impressions of President Folt are very positive, noting her honest engagement in conversations along with her academic and administrative experience. **Amber's** plan is to stay in touch with the new President and share the Dornsife message with her.

From that, she pivots to talking about the campaign gala launch for Dornsife advancement that took place last night, with guests including a number of university trustees. She said the message involves the need to focus on Dornsife's core mission of research and education. The goal is to raise money for faculty chairs, focus on research and education quality, and build out the outward-facing Academy in the Public Square initiative. She wants the campaign to make a huge impact on the research aspect of the mission without sacrificing the undergraduate education component. The message was received well, especially in the context of the scandals that have engulfed the university; Dornsife's push to advance the core missions of the institution can fill the "good news" void.

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Amber says she has not heard much about the new Provost search beyond what has been publicly announced. She notes that a lot of senior leadership is leaving at the end of the fiscal year, with the Provost and General Counsel stepping down.

Dan notes that faculty morale is low across all ranks of the college, from tenured chairs to part-time faculty. He asks what plan could be devised to address that.

Amber acknowledges the problem, saying she is doing what she can. She shares that the salary pool this year is very low, with the merit pool down to 2.1% after setting aside the money for promotions, retention, and equity. With the size of Dornsife faculty and the number of promotions this year, the college had a much larger percentage of the salary pool budget taken out before the merit amount compared to what other schools are dealing with. She mentions that she is not sure what to do about morale issues stemming from the scandals that seem to continually happen. A Council member points out that the money being spent in response to the scandals has to come from somewhere, and seems to be taken out of the heart of the university's academic mission. While the mistakes were made by people in high-salary positions in central administration and athletic departments, those parts of the school do not seem to have suffered the level of cutbacks that the academic sections have; faculty morale is related to that. **Amber** concurs with that sentiment, and notes that she has brought in a lot of new people in the Dornsife administration, and notes that she has secured a basic, stable budget. But she acknowledges that money for the response to scandals will hit the bottom line at some point.

Dan digs into the salary pool, asking why it is structured the way it is. **Amber** is not sure whether it is a decision made by the Provost's office or at the Trustees level.

Devin says faculty will be outraged when they hear that merit pay has been cut, and asks how this information will be shared. **Amber** says she wants to be honest and share information, but is also not certain how to do that without openly pointing fingers about it. She says she negotiated the pool up to the low level it is now, and that she was told Dornsife cannot go higher than other schools. She also notes the increases are tied to tuition increases. **Dan** notes this could create bad incentives within the faculty, as it may lead to people not wanting colleagues to succeed and receive promotions. **Renee** reiterates that the connection of merit increases and promotion raises within one salary pool is a source of the problem; the salary pool percentage is equal across schools, but the number of promoted faculty in Dornsife creates a disparity. **Amber** also notes that the equity pool being very small impacts a lot of work on increasing equity, as programs are underfunded when people are coming forward with issues.

In response to a question about the participation tax, **Amber** shares slides about Dornsife's operating budget and expenses for FY 2020. She notes that 80% is net tuition revenue; more than any other school, we are dependent on undergraduate tuition revenue. **Andrew** asks about tuition from Masters programs, and is told that it is a very small slice of Dornsife's revenue. It is noted that competitors such as Columbia have a bigger slice in endowment, which gives them more flexibility.

Devin says that the Academic Senate was given a university-wide budget

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presentation that covered all schools; he asks if student tuition support money is set at central administration or by schools? **Amber** and **Andrew** say that the money is set centrally, since student movement across the schools is too porous to manage it on a school-by-school basis. Beyond tuition, income also comes from other sources, including a subvention from central administration of \$23 million. On the expenses side, between allocated central costs (\$107 million), the participation tax (\$18 million), and space expenses (\$41 million), the amount of money going in to central administration far exceeds the subvention. A council member asks why Dornsife pays more into the central system than Keck; the room agrees it would be nice to have an answer for that. The rate of growth for Dornsife and the rate of growth for the taxes charged by central administration had been creating an issue before the restructuring of the G.E. program; after that, when G.E. was taken out of Dornsife, the budget bottomed out. The subvention is a result of that change, but it does not match either the taxes charged or the income lost in the restructure. **Amber** says she is hoping to gather as much information as possible for when she speaks with President Folt about this, noting that she just sent a briefing noting that Dornsife is 14% of the operating budget but teaches 50% of the students.

P.T. questions whether the budget that has been secured is sufficient, given the decreased merit pool and the number of cuts to faculty support programs in the last year. **Amber** responds that the negotiated budget will go into effect next year, and should restore funding to the programs, particularly faculty development funds, that were cut. She then reiterates that the budget is only a baseline to maintain, not one with room to grow.

A council member asks, given the new advancement campaign that Dornsife just launched, whether money raised by the college gets pulled into central administration. **Amber** says that decision is up to the Provost. It also is dependent on what the money is raised for: a faculty chair would go into Dornsife, but others may be divided up. **Eddie** acknowledges that, but notes it is more a paper distribution; Dornsife will still get a lot of the benefits of money raised.

Devin asks how difficult it is to get donors to support infrastructure improvement. **Amber** and **Renee** discuss that departments can get support for that, noting that funding for “refreshing” infrastructure was requested in the subvention but was cut out.

Dan pivots the discussion to asking about merit review, inquiring about the directive to departments for upcoming review and promotion cycles after the assessment changes of the past year. **Andrew** says he is in the process of formulating plans and would appreciate input on the issue. He shared that all but three departments have completed their assessment plans and submitted proposals. The next step is to have a conversation about how this will work in merit reviews, but essentially these department-generated plans will be guidelines. After being asked about the process for adopting these guidelines, **Andrew** reviews examples of the processes different departments have taken.

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Shifting to another issue, **Dan** raises that there are concerns about the recent push for teaching post-docs. **Andrew** replies that this stems from staffing discussions in every department each spring, seeing what student demand is and what the teaching capacity within each department is. Very often, teaching post-docs are offered to departments if someone is going on leave and there is a prescribed amount of time before that person comes back; this is a preferable option in that specific situation, rather than the longer-term commitment of hiring an RTPC faculty member. He notes that this can be seen as a service to the profession on the part of the college, as it gives people teaching experience as well as mentoring to help them develop their profile before moving on. **Amber** notes this is in the same direction as Ph.D. academy in terms of thinking about career development. This gives people some low-impact teaching experience, along with time to do more research and to try to publish; this helps make people coming from Dornsife be as competitive as possible on the job market. **Devin** says it would help to have a clearer idea of what vision we have for a healthy ecosystem on campus, so when pieces are introduced it feels like a piece of a bigger idea rather than a threat to other faculty. **Andrew** agrees, and thinks it would be healthy to have those conversations so everyone can have a clear and collective mission. He reiterates that teaching postdoc positions are fluid and rolling. A council member echoes the sentiment that there needs to be clearer missions and goals, because in some departments post-docs are being specifically brought in for long-term vacancies. It is also questioned when they have time to be mentored and what structures there are for that mentorship. A discussion follows about how mentorship should be developed for different constituencies and the development of wider guidelines across all faculty. There is discussion about whether these post-doc positions are designed for recent USC graduates or people outside the university; **Andrew** says that a national search is always preferable, but the departments handle searches in accordance with university policies and the Faculty Handbook. A council member notes the situation must be monitored closely by the Deans, since some departments could be abusing it. **Andrew** agrees that he does not want teaching post-docs to become adjuncts by another name. Another council member adds that the mentors should be compensated. Further discussion notes the difference between experience in teaching and training in pedagogy.

Dan shifts to talking about departmental leadership. Recognizing that some function well, he says that the DFC hears from faculty who have problems within their departments and do not know how to address that. **Stephen** says that faculty problems could be brought to the Divisional Dean; RTPC faculty issues could also go to the Undergraduate Dean. Deeper cultural problems are harder to address; there have been discussions with Kimberly Freeman about how to do that. There is hope that new offices being implemented post-scandals may help with this. This can come up in 10-year program reviews, but when issues are diffuse and exist within gray areas, they are hard to deal with.

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A final question goes back to the new campaign, asking how much money it is trying to raise. **Renee** says they are hoping to fund 150 new chairs, and they are asking for \$3-4 million per chair.

Updates on Academic Senate Meeting

After the Deans depart, **Dan** returns to discussing the March meeting of the Academic Senate. Besides the visit by President Folt, the main issue discussed was a potential resolution prohibiting romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and students under their supervision. He notes that students agree that there should be rules against such relationships. **Jessica P.** speaks to what rules are currently in the Faculty Handbook. It is noted that some people have concerns that banning this would drive it underground, and also creates questions around enforcement. Various council members say that being worried about how bad actors will act is not the best way to make a decision, and that there is value in the message of saying this should not be done. The impact and importance of zero tolerance policies in issues like this are noted by a council member. Others mention that protecting students is a clear part of our mission, and ignoring the calls from students for a rule like this would be a bad course of action.

Updates on University Forum

Dan speaks on the University Forum, an inaugural event that brought together representatives of the Academic Senate, the Staff Assembly, and both the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Government. The first topic was tuition costs and the university mission, and the second was how to include all members of the community. He notes that **Shannon's** class on social movements came, with her students showing the best of Dornsife by making excellent critical and incisive comments. Some noteworthy points raised during the forum included how substandard facilities show a lack of investment in students. **David** notes that everyone who made a comment spoke about issues that were bigger than themselves, which was noteworthy. **Shannon** shares that, when debriefing with her students afterwards, they asked if this had been done before, and what will happen in response? **Dan** confirms it is new, based on similar events that have happened at other universities; President Folt noted to the Academic Senate that she had listened to the Forum and thought it was very valuable, so the presumption is that it will continue.

Related to the topic of poorly maintained facilities as well as classroom space and scheduling, **Dan** says that one of his suggestions for next year is to push for an audit of Dornsife space to be done by either the Dean's office or central administration.

Looking Forward to Next Year's DFC

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As the meeting approaches its end, **Dan** notes that the next meeting will be the final one of the academic year. **P.T.** reminds everyone that the next meeting will include time for self-nominations for Officer and Senator positions on the council.

The meeting is adjourned at 5:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

P.T. McNiff, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council