

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday, December 1, 2021
Time: 2:30 - 4:30 pm (PST)
Location: Zoom meeting

Present (18) Emily Zeamer (*president*), Jim Clements (*vice-president*), Douglas Becker (*secretary*), Leslie Berntsen, Gorette Prieto Botana, Julia Chamberlin, Monalisa Chatterjee, Leilei Duan, Bob Girandola, Tracie Mayfield, Andrea Parra, Matthew Pratt, Vahe Perroomian, Sri Narayan, Anastasia Tzoytzoyrakos, John Vidale, Marie Enright, Liana Stepanyan

Absent (2) Dana Milstein, Sylvain Barbot

Guests (4): Dean Amber Miller, Lisa Itagaki, Renee Perez, Gayle Fiedler-Vierma

The Meeting began at 2:32 PST with introductions in the meeting, including the guests from the Dean's Office.

Dean Amber Miller then discussed the purposes and background of the merit evaluation process. One of the goals was reducing the number of merit reviews and lengthening the cycle of the process.

Sri Narayan raised concerns about the decentralization in the process and that it is largely driven by the chairs themselves. Lisa Itagaki responded that the departments themselves set the guidelines and it should be a vote of the departments to create their own metrics. Dean Miller then raised whether this is a positive development and requested feedback on the process.

Douglas Becker raised the issue of the purposes of the merit review. Dean Miller suggested it plays an important role in the development and mentorship process for junior faculty under the probationary period. But then she raised the question as to the value of the process from a general practice of faculty updating their CV annually. But she did confirm that the merit review process plays a significant role on salary review.

Jim Clements challenged the review process as a part of salary review, in particular the rather meager resources in salary pool. He suggested that the process should be decoupled from salary increases. Since there is a small pool the entire process is largely a competition for small increases. Dean Miller's response was that the salary pool is a product of tuition, and without tuition increases, there is a very small salary pool. But she defended this process in its determination of salary increases.

Tracie Mayfield then raised the issue of the process as determining the salaries and suggested the merit review process creates a competition and damages the morale of the departments. Dean Miller then stated that 83% of the Dornsife budget was for salaries. The central university controls the largest parts of the budget and the College's budget has been squeezed, leaving the leadership to try to manage salaries (and the College is taxed in its tuition greater than any of the

other Colleges). Tracie Mayfield then raised the issue of referring to faculty as the assets of the university.

Vahe Peroomian raised the issue of the numbers themselves in the process and asked what the average score is. This raises the question about competition within the departments and between departments. Dean Miller stated that the only measurement the Dean's Office considers is the ratings against one another within the department, not across departments. So the evaluation is standardized within each department. Vahe Peroomian then raised the issue of the RTPC serving on merit review committees to evaluate tenure-track teaching. Dean Miller suggested there may be the ability to separate out teaching and research that may allow for RTPC participation in the teaching evaluation.

Matthew Pratt then raised the concern that the responses from the members is caused by a lack of knowledge of how the process works. He requested some clarity from the Dean's Office through the chairs to better communicate the work of the committees and suggested the RTPC have much less knowledge of the process itself. Lisa Itagaki and Dean Miller both reiterated that the departments set the standards themselves

Douglas Becker then raised the issue of standards for service, research, and teaching are largely determined by the departments. But there is a need for greater guidance from the Dean's Office on these issues.

Emily Zeamer suggests a more rigorous review and also the need for more tenure track representation on the Faculty Council.

Motion to approve the November minutes was made by Douglas Becker. Seconded by Emily Zeamer. Motion was approved 18-0-0

Emily Zeamer then indicated that the letter on sexual assault that the DFC leadership sent with the guidance of the Council to the President's Office was received positively and that the President intends to propose action by mid-December.

Emily Zeamer also indicated a desire for more members to attend college-wide meetings to take notes and report back to the DFC as to these meetings.

We then debriefed the previous discussion with Dean Miller. Sri Nayaran considered it a revelation about how little control the Dean's office has over the salary pool as set by the Provost and the decentralization to the departments and the Dean's office stating there was no real issues raised in the process. Emily suggested the need for an increased faculty involvement in the salary process. John Vidale stated he thought they all got the same raises. Jim pointed out that the ratings play a large role in the promotion process. Douglas Becker raised the issue of the inconsistency between departments and the need for greater guidance from the Dean's office to regularize the process from each department. Andrea Parra then stated she thought there were two distinct pools—a merit review pool and a promotion pool. But others indicated that they do not believe this is the case. There is a general consensus to delink these two.

And the Dean's statement about how salaries are linked to tuition was challenged, in particular by Tracie Mayfield and Gorette Prieto Botana. Leslie Berntsen pointed out that the math of how much students pay in tuition per class and the faculty salary simply do not add up. Several members then raised the issue of the standardization of the scores in the merit review but there was a lack of agreement as to how to manage this. More issues were raised about how the departments themselves manage the process of incorporating student feedback into the merit review process, such as including negative student comments on course evaluations into the merit evaluation statement. But there is a growing consensus on the need for a resolution to regularize the merit process.

Emily Zeamer then raised the issue of the spring semester. Douglas Becker raised the student expectation for multiple modalities and the students get to choose how to receive the material. The expectation is that course evaluations will reflect student dissatisfaction with the lack of availability for modalities and also the failure of students who are disengaged. Tracie Mayfield reflected that the excessive accommodations undermine the work of the best and most engaged students. Concerns about flexibility and the challenge of course evaluations also were raised by several members.

Matthew Pratt stated his preference that everyone gets their booster shot, a sentiment shared by most on the Council.

Emily Zeamer adjourned the meeting at 4:22 pm