

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday, January 5, 2022
Time: 2:30 - 4:30 pm (PST)
Location: Zoom meeting

Present (13) Emily Zeamer (*president*), Jim Clements (*vice-president*), Douglas Becker (*secretary*), Leslie Berntsen, Julia Chamberlin, Leilei Duan, Bob Girandola, Tracie Mayfield, Andrea Parra, Vahe Perroomian, Anastassia Tzoytzoyrakos, John Vidale, Sylvain Barbot

Absent (8) Dana Milstein, Marianna Chodorowska-Pilch, Goretti Prieto Botana, Matthew Pratt, Monalisa Chatterjee, Sri Narayan, Liana Stepanyan, Marie Enright

Tracie Mayfield motioned to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2021 Minutes. Vahe Perroomian seconded. Motion passed 13-0-0

Emily Zeamer updated the Council on the development of the merit review process review, with the intention to present a more formal proposal in the February meeting. In particular she stated the intention to wait until faculty have had a chance to respond to the survey and to gather demographic data on the survey.

Emily then opened a conversation about the Spring 2022 semester start and the faculty needs for the semester. Tracie Mayfield raised the issue of enforcement of the new mask mandates, in particular with the new stricter mandates. Douglas Becker raised issues about the recording of classes and the availability of classes asynchronously. He also stated that N95 or KN95 masks, as they are now required for faculty, must be made available through department offices without requiring a request for them. Emily Zeamer stated that Emily Anderson has stated that recordings are not required and that IT has been asked to look into changing the Blackboard default setting so that the classes are not recorded. Tracie Mayfield also relayed information about the course evaluations from the Fall semester and raised concerns about the situation of students attempting to bully individual faculty through the evaluations.

Sylvain Barbot reiterated the need to isolate outliers in the course evaluations and ensure they are not cited as part of merit review. Vahe Perroomian then raised the issue of response rates and how they only represent the strong responses. Julia Chamberlin then stated she holds the review in class and gets higher rates. Andrea Parra reminded the Council that the evaluations are quite unrepresentative of teaching effectiveness and that their use in the merit review of LAIC RTPC faculty her department does not significantly impact overall merit reviews. use the evaluations. John Vidale stated his experience this semester on evaluations was positive and does not see a significant problem with the evaluations. Tracie Mayfield then stated that the singular bullying comment disqualifies the course evaluation for her dossier. Douglas Becker then stated the pedagogy caucus will review the course evaluation questions and present them back to the Council. Leslie Berntsen then posted a list of questions for TA review that she stated were much more helpful.

Jim Clements raised the issue of what the purpose of the course evaluations are for the university. Specifically, are they used to improve the course or to evaluate the instructor of the course? Emily Zeamer then stated there has been discussion on how to use the course evaluations. Vahe Peroomian argued we need clear guidance on how to use the course evaluations. He also stated that Physics sought to alter the evaluations but was told they could not. Emily Zeamer then requested that Jim Clements take charge of the issue of how course evaluations are used in merit evaluation and reappointment. She then suggested we invite Ginger Clark from CET to address the Council on the issue of evaluations.

Tracie Mayfield restated her need that tracking evaluations to follow up bullying behavior is essential to correct some of the worst behavior. Sylvain Barbot asked if we have evidence that negative evaluations or bullying evaluations have been used in merit evaluations. Emily Zeamer proposed using the survey to examine that question. Leslie Berntsen then suggested the University frame the issue as a means to follow up the evaluation in certain circumstances. Emily Zeamer suggested there needs to be a form of redress or response available to the faculty member. Julia Chamberlin raised the issue of whether college-wide committees should be able to review departmental committees and ensure uniformity. Andrea Parra suggested an open and transparent merit review committee in each department. Sylvain Barbot stated his department follows this principle as well. Emily Zeamer then stated there should be public and private feedback from the merit review committees.

Jim Clements then shared the proposal to delink the merit review process from the annual raises. In particular, the DFC should advocate for a cost of living raise annually that is not linked to merit review. The Council then discussed unionization and the relationship with faculty governance. The Council then agreed to go forward with a proposal to delink the merit review with annual raises and to discuss a formal resolution.

Emily Zeamer moved to the issue of student accommodation and classroom standards. Jim Clements raised concerns about the long-term effects of accommodations and the effect on classroom performance. Students are expecting to have their stress levels managed by faculty. Douglas Becker then raised the concern that students are choosing their own learning modalities and they expect this will continue. But this needs to change and we need to return to truly in-person instruction as the default.

Emily Zeamer then informed the Council that Emily Anderson has requested a committee to work with her on managing academic accommodations and asked for guidance. Vahe Peroomian then stated the students expected that a simple statement that the student is not feeling well was all that was required for alternative exams. This is a practice that must change. Sylvain Barbot observed a huge drop in attendance and a tremendous number of make-up exams.

Tracie Mayfield then stated that students who are requesting online classes are finding that faculty are stating their class is not available online. Douglas Becker then offered the teaching caucus can take on the issue and work on these issues. Julia Chamberlin then provided an anecdote that a student had raised an issue of a make-up exam and was denied, and then the instructor was told a makeup exam was required. John Vidale stated that the largest class in

Earth Science is attempting to return to required in-class instruction. But Zoom is likely to be a part of this semester with the increased outbreaks.

Emily Zeamer then moved to action items. First action item was the Provost Office or Dean's/Deans office stating that there is no expectation for recorded class. Second was that N95 and KN95 masks should be available in department offices irrespective of request. Third is a need for a clearinghouse for teaching concerns. Andrea then asked if we have forms to survey students before the class may begin to gather information on the class. Jim Clements returned to the issue of academic standards, including attendance, timely work submission and other accommodations. Douglas Becker also stated the need for better communication with faculty about decisions made on instruction and modalities.

Emily Zeamer then adjourned the meeting at 4:25 pm.