

## Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Time: 2:30 - 4:30 pm (EDT)

Location: Zoom meeting

**Present (15)** Emily Zeamer (*president*), Jim Clements (*vice-president*), Stephanie Renee Payne (*secretary*), Douglas Becker (*alternate to the secretary*), Leslie Berntsen, Goretti Prieto Botana, Julia Chamberlin, Monalisa Chatterjee, Leilei Duan, Bob Girandola, Tracie Mayfield,, Andrea Parra, Vahe Perroomian, Sri Narayan, Anastasia Tzoytzoyrakos, John Vidale.

**Absent (5)** Matthew Pratt, Dana Milstein, Gayle Fiedler-Vierma, Jessica Parr, Sylvain Barbot

**Emily:** Vote to approve the minutes from [September, 2021 Meeting](#).

Vote to approve minutes: 15, Votes to oppose: 0; Votes to abstain: 0

Additional Vote: \$500.00 for Undergraduate Writing Conference

Vote to approve 15, Votes to oppose: 0; Votes to abstain: 0

### Announcements

**Emily:**

Devin Griffiths, holding a workshop for sustainability has asked the DFC to co-host the event. The event will be open to all faculty.

An issue of note for the DFC is communicating more effectively with Dornsife faculty through our website. The DFC website is bare bones, but we can do more to educate our faculty without duplicating information. We can be a more effective channel to make sure faculty is informed about policy and events. If you have thoughts please share with EB Stephanie and Doug who will spearhead the effort to update the website, along with collaboration with Emily Anderson and Rene Perez.

**Sri:** A clarification on the DFC website. At the moment it does not allow for others to add information. It is one way. Could it be two-way to have members add information?

**Emily:** Your caucus has information that should appear on the website. We want to find items with enduring powers for the website. Stephanie and Doug can handle basic updates. If you have something more complex, we can ask for help.

**Andrea:** Are updates coming for new websites?

**Emily:** Yes, but the content will remain the same. See for example the [BU Faculty Council website](#), more information and basic easy design.

## **Caucus Reports**

### **Pedagogy & Curriculum Caucus (Doug & Julia)**

**Doug:** We have arranged to have OSAS come to the caucus meeting to have an accommodation conversation, and a remote learning conversation. It is acknowledged that 1.5 accommodations impact places a burden on faculty. We are rescheduling the meeting for November to have a conversation with more participation.

### **DEI Caucus (Stephanie & Tracie)**

**Stephanie:**

We have some movement with the CCLC, with Emily Anderson and Lisa Itagaki supporting a pilot for Dornsife. We have a positive response from Christopher Manning, and hope to begin with a Dornsife pilot to begin a learning community, facilitated by an inaugural cohort of facilitators trained by peer institutions to build a program to be instituted institution wide. We will also continue to build the library resource, as John offered in the chat. We hope to

**Tracie:** We will also be offering a survey to establish the need to gather data to bring to the Provost office.

### **Faculty Affairs Caucus (Sri & Gayle)**

**Sri:** Gayle and I had a conversation for about two weeks to understand the scope of what we want to do. It is clear that there are two focus points. First, The merit process; and secondly, salary reviews. Gayle has previous non-profit experience with knowledge of how the quantitative metrics are derived and used are highly variable. It is likely that the outcome will look differently from department to department. This means that we have to understand the scope. The downside allows each department to create its own process so long as it does not violate the general principles. That variability needs to work for everyone, which is a simple objective of the caucus. The numbers that are used for awarded merit raises, such as the difference between 4.25 and a 4.5 needs examining. Gayle confirmed that there are smaller variations that people are concerned about, such as a 4.25 and a 4.3. The other part is salary review. We are concerned about long-term compression, rank versus RPTC and tenure. We want to make sure we have as many voices in the caucus as possible. If you know of others who want to be on the caucus it would be desirable to get a full spectrum of ideas. We also discussed a survey. Our first meeting of the potential caucus is October 16. We will have a meeting in about two weeks to go over an understanding of issues. We will send an invitation. Emily has posted several documents on benchmarking done on salary and wage. I will digest these documents. Some of the reports have been reviewed.

**Emily:** We discussed how the Academic Senate is proposing a joint appointed task force on merit review to draw as much material as they can across the university and propose reforms. Whatever input we have should be shared with that taskforce. We can focus our attention in an area that will have the biggest impact.

Jessica and Gayle will review policy for Dean Anderson's office that impacts Part Time faculty. Reach out to them if you have interest in that project. The new policies will be implemented by next semester.

**Andrea:** Will Merit Review be more specific to Dornsife?

**Emily:** We will discuss a Merit Review survey and proposal task force led by faculty to address compression. Dean Miller has responded. We have a meeting with Dean Miller and the Division Deans on October 16. I want to bring specific proposals that will be seen as reasonable and actionable. That is what we are going to talk about today. Any feelings, thoughts, concerns, crisis about teaching with masks and the campus transition?

**Jim:** Have things calmed down or are things outstanding? Do any see the email from Emily Anderson re-affirming efforts for faculty support.

**Tracie:** A conversation with a student that said everyone was so easy on us that students are angry now. We got into USC, we should not work so hard. I think a lot of students are angry because they have to turn things in on time.

**Jim:** I have heard that test scores are down, papers are lacking and the short attention about the work they have to do is an issue. The grades will be lower. Are deans and the administration will expect grades to be low.

**Vahe:** Two experiences: The grades are an issue. I gave a midterm in my physics class. The average before Covid was 70, this time 49 percent. This was probably one of the easiest exams I have given. The other thing is the email for the vice provost yesterday about not even asking for doctor's notes for absences, which minimized the number of students who will fake an illness. A student said they will be ill on the date of the exam. We are looking at 34% of students sick due to Covid. It may be a bigger problem.

**Leslie:** I am getting the impression that students are struggling in a way they had not struggled before. It seems to be across universities regarding doctors notes. Keep in mind what they could possibly be lying about other issues, such as domestic abuse and other issues.

**Doug:** I am teaching primarily lower-division. Three students admitted to me that they had not had to memorize for an exam in a year and a half. I let them know we are transitioning and there will be certain expectations to help them get back into that practice. I second what Leslie said. Students are dealing with things that they had not to deal with before Covid. Students feel they have multiple modalities. They want online and powerpoints available. Concerned that this will become the norm instead of a transition. I am worried about the evals of faculty who are not offering multiple modalities will suffer. That should be a part of the merit review conversation

**Vahe:** I chose to live broadcast all of my classes. Students can stay at home. The disconnect is that students were told they could do one or the other or can choose.

**Jim:** This has already been raised with the admin. I raised it with Emily Anderson. Hopefully they will do something about it.

**Julia:** In language, I have had to do make-up five exams. We teach a lot of classes in other languages. With a lost faculty member we have no one to proctor exams. It has gotten to be overwhelming for assessments. The email from Andy Stott is that we cannot ask for letters. Can USC create a proctoring office? Maybe USC could use graduate students.

**Emily:** That is a great idea. This should be accommodated.

**John:** I was mainly going to agree with Doug, that students can simply zoom into classrooms. My students have worked hard, but now they are lagging.

**Stephanie:** Students are struggling with mental health issues, as well, such as anxiety stress and depression.

**Emily:** Action items proctoring for exams; intervention to help students with mental and emotional issues.

**Leslie:** Have they hired more mental health workers? Struggling students still cannot get an appointment for a month. We Need to use our powers as faculty to advocate for students for mental health.

**Anastassia:** To add to Stephanie's comments, and Jim's suggestion about evaluations to bring a level of understanding from the faculty's point of view.

**Emily:** The other action item is to facilitate better communication.

**Jim:** Also, the other communication action item is to have an understanding that faculty are not obligated to broadcast class.

**Doug:** There is also an overwhelming problem of socializing on campus. Students are having a hard time taking exams, unaware of a blue book. Students are suffering with the basics and are not communicating with each other. Simple questions like where to buy a blue book and the cost, and how to manage mental health and stress students share information with one another. I have had to meet with many students just to walk them through how to take exams.

**Monalisa:** Doug is making an important point about exams and how poorly students are doing. I have seen a lot of group work among students before midterms, and this time I am not seeing

that activity. I am worried I will see poor results as students are not building skills to work together. We have to create opportunities for students.

**Emily:** An action item would be advocating for study groups

**Leslie:** In terms of a guest to come to a meeting, and to send students, [Kortschak](#) would be a place. I have sent students there to learn how to study and manage their time. This would be a good group to come to speak to us.

**Emily:** If any caucus would like to put together a meeting that would be of value, we can elevate your proposal to the appropriate groups.

**Doug:** For the Caucus meeting next week we will address this meeting.

**Sri:** There are two parts; 1) the format of class and 2) the social impact. We intersect with both these operations. The university should step in and change the social impact. I do not see how we can do anything in our classes to change that situation. Broadly, it looks like there is an impact on the modality of classes that is affecting students, but there is also the social aspect. The underperforming is for reasons outside of teaching skills or instruction ability; how do we reconcile?

**Emily:** Having some leadership might be useful.

**Julia:** For socialization, students have their phones. I had all of the students speak French before calling for points and it works well.

**Emily:** We need to ask our students to re-socialize. We can do more to make this happen.

**Vahe:** Students are having trouble managing time. They have not accounted for the amount of time they spend when coming to class in person. That, in addition to not having a social life in 18 months and losing themselves to going out is impacting their grades. If students have better tools to manage their time that center could help them transition back. These resources must be more widely advertised to help students.

**Emily:** If we were to organize an event, what would be helpful?

**Stephanie:** Students need to know that it is okay to manage anxiety being together.

**Leslie:** Possible action item: Could we have a panel from faculty members to have secret tips that we wish we knew in school. It can be done in January. We can give students free tips that benefit both students and faculty.

**Emily:** We have some action items. Please send an email if you have other items. Let's transition to a merit/compensation survey. We have been talking to the EB of the Academic Senate. They would like to see a survey taken at Dornsife, as we represent a lot of faculty. The salary compression and compensation is more serious than in other schools that have bigger budgets. Jim drafted questions.

**Jim:** We had a meeting with the FEC committee. There is movement and pressure on the deans. We need to create pressure for the bottom. We need to prove that there is a need to look at salaries from the faculty. We were thinking of five questions: Three qualitative and two quantitatively. I am putting this out as a starting point as a conversation.

**Leslie:** I do survey design. Demographic questions would be beneficial. Tenor tract, gender, ethnicity, Breaking down demographic will be good information for a university that values equity. In general, there are questions that benefit from open-ended questions. It is important to have a quantitative to disagree to strongly disagree and an open-ended question. It is important to have as much information as possible. Quantitative with a scale, along with open-ended.

**Jim:** Perhaps questions whether salary increases should be tied to merit. Should we should have just a cost of living? To tie any raise we get to merit is problematic.

**Emily:** We need leverage. We need to gather enough information to give leverage to Dean Miller.

**Andrea:** It is more perspective. They have this information.

**Jim:** They have the information but they do not understand how unhappy faculty feels.

**Emily:** The provost knows that there is a growing need to address this situation. How do we do it that is feasible and underscore the morale issue? Movement in the right direction would go a long way.

**Leslie:** This is a big picture. Are you measuring perception or reality? These are genuinely present as perception. This will force their hand because they will have to show us the information.

**Emily:** We can use Qualtrics.

**Jim:** Do we have the support of the DFC? That it is a problem, getting information, setting up benchmarks, and addressing benchmarks by changing salary. This is a slow process. The idea is that we have this information but the information will come back that this is a problem. Emily has put forth a task force.

**Emily:** We have been talking about a salary review report for years. Several reports have been produced. It never seems to go forward usefully. Whatever benchmarking we have has been

scant and difficult to interpret, as they do not want to reveal salaries. In a conversation with administrative leaders they recognize that faculty want more transparency. However, they also seem to assume there will never be enough funding to address the issue in an equitable way. The provost's office does want to see these issues of equity and salary compression addressed. Clearly budget will have to be allocated to address this issue. But the other issue is that faculty have no way of knowing whether the process is equipped to address equity issues, since they are not involved? We would like to advocate for faculty involvement in reviewing faculty compensation to address equity and other issues.

USC is concerned about peer institutions. In the document there are links to other schools that have a salary task force that is linked to salary. They may be appointed or elected. They are headed by faculty and they review salary and compensation policy and set benchmarks. Most of these university committees seem to focus on tenure track faculty, which makes sense. Let's dream up a faculty-led task force that would have access to current data to gather information from division and departments to create an annual salary report to establish benchmarks, floors for faculty in different ranks, to set faculty salaries, and to recognize severe compression that impacts departments or divisions. The data can be kept in a bubble but they would be given access. They would also publish an annual letter that summarized their findings. There would be two products: a letter to faculty and one to chairs. The letter would outline issues to be presented to the administration. The idea is that a task force would be elected by the DFC.

**Tracie:** There is nothing in this report as to why the central administration would want to do this. What are the implications of not doing this?

**Emily:** It is in their interest to do this. There is an impression that they are doing a lot and that we just do not know about it. We need to persuade them that it is in their interest.

**Jim:** Part of the issue is convincing that there is a problem.

**John:** I agree with Tracie.

**Stephanie:** The quality of peer institutions are important. In addition to benchmarking information, it may be important to demonstrate that the university is out of step with peer institutions. This could be persuasive.

**Leslie:** Quantitative data on faculty is needed.

**Emily:** Compression impacts tenure track. It would be a good idea to focus on this.

**Andrea:** The issue of getting a salary from a peer institution is complicated. UCLA is available but it is base salary.

**Emily:** It would be on the committee to figure it out. There is information beyond UCLA like AAUP and the chronicle publishes their salaries. Yes it is imperfect but if benchmarks come from faculty, faculty would have more faith in the process. Divisions have a better sense of what their salary should be and they can feed that information separately.

**Stephanie:** This work has already begun in the Writing program. Faculty are volunteering salary information to begin an informal benchmarking process.

**Emily:** This task force could reach out to other task forces. We are proposing delegating this to other faculty.

**Sri:** The central administration is aware of this problem. If we have these inequities, it means the problem should be solved quickly. The scope of the correction needs to be known to include the number that will be needed in their budget. Also, there needs to be a process so this does not have to be done continuously. The central administration is looking for a number. Two goals for DFC on the salary review issue: 1) what is the extent of the pay disparities, 2) how can we develop a process that will address problems, or simply not let them happen.

**Emily:** The first year will be critical. There needs to be a task force rather than an advocacy group.

**Sri:** Is a formal recognition needed from other schools? Can the DFC work alone? We do need buy-in. Other schools should support the task force, they may not like it but they should welcome this to help solve the problem.

**Andrea:** Question about salary appeals: Has anyone had experience with this. It might be useful until this task force gets off the ground. Perhaps they are required to give comparative data. If they deny it comparative data should be given.

**Emily:** Can we send a letter that there is comparable data from other institutions?

**Julia:** I did an appeal for my salary and I was simply told: "You are good, you are fine."

**Emily:** It goes through Lisa Itagaki. It is done in the spring semester, starting February and ending in June. They do not make it very public how the process works. Should we have a resolution? Should we do our survey first? Do we want to have an open conversation?

**Stephanie:** Perhaps a town hall, or ground up process to have faculty on board.

**Andrea:** We need more buy-in from TT faculty.

**Anastassia:** Would it help if it was not just faculty but general satisfaction. Perhaps a general survey.



**Emily:** It makes sense to orient toward merit. Faculty are weary of surveys. We do want to be cautious instead of stirring the pot unnecessarily.

**Jim:** The last agenda item is the Undergraduate Writers Conference is asking for \$500 for a guest speaker. We need to take a vote as a committee if that is something I want to do. I have participated and students engage with each other. Students get into small groups. It is an overall wonderful experience. It is a good use of \$500.

DFC Votes in favor of using funds.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephanie Renee Payne  
Secretary, Dornsife Faculty Council