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USC Academic Senate
Campus Climate Committee Report
AY 2019-2020

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Purpose

The USC Academic Senate Campus Climate Committee ("CCC") was convened by the Academic Senate for AY 2019-2020 to research and recommend strategies to better support and retain diverse faculty at USC. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of our work during the spring semester of 2020.[1]

Process

To recommend ways to better support and retain diverse faculty at USC, we began by taking stock of faculty diversity at USC and current retention efforts, and concomitantly reviewed the literature on faculty retention strategies across disciplines. Our process included the compilation and review of the following:

1. Academic research and studies relating to retention strategies (a list of reviewed research is attached as Appendix A)
2. Faculty retention data from the USC Office of Institutional Research ("OIR") for university-wide data
3. Information provided by the USC Provost regarding the Provost's Diversity Fund
4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plans ("DEI Plans") from various USC Schools for school-specific information about retention data and strategies (a list of reviewed DEI Plans is attached as Appendix B)
5. Individual interviews with a convenience sample of five USC underrepresented faculty who have left or have considered leaving USC for diversity-related reasons

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[1] The Academic Senate convened the CCC for AY 2019-2020 in January 2020.

Although the 2018-19 CCC had gathered data by examining peer institutions' work, this year's CCC members decided not to take this approach for three reasons: 1) When examining peer institution strategies last year, there was very little mentioned about retention. More universities discussed recruitment and hiring of diverse faculty, 2) the notion of peer institutions was problematized by 2019-20 CCC members, because other institutions (i.e., HBCUs and HSIs) may have more effective retention strategies that would have been missed, and 3) there had been a concern in 2018-19 that the publicly available data on peer institution websites were mere representations of aspirational efforts rather than verifiable approaches and results.

We met in-person and remotely on January 21, 2020, February 11, 2020, February 25, 2020, March 24, 2020, and May 13, 2020. During the weeks of April 6, April 13, April 20, and April 27, 2020, the committee co-chairs provided weekly status reports and members worked independently to gather and analyze information.

Executive Summary

As USC deals with the coronavirus crisis, we caution against de-prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion ("DEI") work during this time. Consistent and documented progress towards greater inclusion and diversity among faculty is critical to the health and well-being of existing faculty members and our increasingly diverse student body, many of whom are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.[2] In addition, as DEI work is in strict alignment with the highest moral priorities of the university[3] and diversity is one of most "desired" values for USC students, faculty and staff, it should not be marginalized during this time of fiscal insecurity.[4]

The CCC began its work in 2020 with a recognition of similar efforts regarding faculty retention in the recent past. In 2012, Jane Junn, USC Associates Chair in Social Sciences and Professor of Political Science, outlined the results of a study of tenure rates for USC professors in which the tenure decisions for white male faculty were compared to those for female faculty and faculty of color.[5] At that time, senior leadership "dismissed Junn's findings in a quotation to the *Daily Trojan*" by asserting that "there are no statistically significant differences…between the tenure successes at USC of female and male faculty, or minority and non-minority faculty".[6] However, we know from the review of the literature that tenure successes are an effective means of retaining faculty from underrepresented groups, so it is critical that we focus on equity in tenure

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[2] See Vega, P. (2020, April 16). Blacks make up 6% of California's population but 12% of coronavirus deaths, data show, *Los Angeles Times*; Jordan, M., & Oppel, R. A. (2020, May 7). For Latinos and Covid-19, Doctors Are Seeing an 'Alarming' Disparity, *The New York Times*; Mineo, L. (2020, May 11). For Native Americans, COVID-19 is the Worst of Both Worlds, *The Harvard Gazette*; USC Dornsife. (n.d.). Survey reveals extent of coronavirus-related job loss, outsized impact on blacks and Latinos > News > USC Dornsife.

[3] As noted by President Folt, in her April 29, 2020 State of the University address, the first of the three priorities for USC's post-pandemic recovery is "[m]aintaining safety, well-being and support of our people." She further called for the USC community to stand against the increase in anti-Asian violence during the pandemic, and noted that such conduct is contrary to USC values. See also Campa, A. J., Do, Anh, & Shalby, C. (2020, March 3). Officials decry anti-Asian bigotry, misinformation amid coronavirus outbreak. *Los Angeles Times*.

[4] Key findings from the USC Values Poll 2019. (2019, December).

[5] Junn, J. (2012, October 19). Memorandum to Philip Ethington, President of the USC Dornsife Faculty Council regarding analysis of data on tenure at USC Dornsife.

[6] Serhan, Y. (2013, May 2). SPECIAL FEATURE: Prof loses tenure bid after appeal. Retrieved from Prof loses tenure bid after appeal. *Daily Trojan*; Matthew, P. A. (Ed.) (2016). *Written/Unwritten Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure.* The University of North Carolina Press, p. 270.

and promotion, not simply equality. We can do this through the examination of disaggregated data to determine opportunities for our institution to better address ongoing systemic inequities experienced by historically marginalized faculty. Then, through implementing structural interventions, the university can actualize its espoused commitment to ensuring a positive climate for marginalized faculty that reduces – if not also eliminates – structural barriers to their retention.

The CCC convened, then, to address the same problem Junn revealed in her analysis of tenure trends at USC Dornsife. It should be noted that committees like ours exist because a particular set of problems exists, not only at USC, but within all institutions permissive of inequality; that is to say, neither the CCC's existence, nor any policies enacted as a result of the CCC's recommendations, are themselves victories over inequality. As Sara Ahmed (2012) notes: instead, "it can be assumed that equality is achieved *in the act*" and any shortcoming of equality itself remains "unfinished."[7] As we face our yet unfinished work, then, this report intends to galvanize those whose authority can be put to good use, so that one day the marginalized will not, as a comfort to the privileged, need to sustain the dissonances of so-called American meritocracy. We commit to working with the Academic Senate as we now co-labor to bring about a just and sustainable culture at USC, within which faculty from historically marginalized groups are not merely "retained" but in which all, finally, might flourish.

With this understanding, the CCC worked this semester to first assess USC's existing faculty retention landscape and the various retention efforts of individual schools in order to suggest appropriate research-based strategies for retaining and supporting diverse faculty at USC. However, despite persistent and varied efforts to obtain retention-related information, we were unable to access a significant portion of the data and information required to assess the state of faculty retention efforts at USC. While the literature review provides some key strategies worthy of being considered, the context specificity of USC should also be examined to gauge the relevance of these strategies to our institution.

Thus, in order to better support future efforts to understand this critical faculty issue, we recommend the following:

1. **Take a multi-pronged, multi-level approach to retention efforts**
2. **Establish more data and information transparency of retention-related information from the USC Office of the Provost**
3. **Provide more access to DEI Plans and encourage more development of retention information in DEI Plans**
4. **Increase membership and re-name the CCC**

Recommendation 1: Take a multi-pronged, multi-level approach to retention efforts
This section summarizes the recommendations drawn from a literature review of published work on retention strategies. Retention of diverse faculty requires a multi-pronged, multi-level effort that extends beyond separate interventions that are aimed at retaining both individual or groups of marginalized faculty. Such efforts cannot require marginalized faculty, through professional

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[7] Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life.* Duke University Press, p. 11.

socialization or other means, to be solely responsible for their own retention. To be sure, a successful effort would place the onus on the university and its respective academic units to systemically address the retention of marginalized faculty. First, it's important to note that retention cannot be considered without recruitment and hiring. Please refer to the AY2018-19 report from the same committee for our recommendations on the latter. Given that the current charge was to examine retention strategies, this report will focus on retention, even while recognizing that retention is futile if we can't also successfully recruit and hire diverse faculty. They are, in other words, inextricably linked. It is also important to note that retention efforts must be employed at all levels of the university. Some of the recommendations below fall within the school/departmental spheres of influence, while others must be addressed at the larger university level.

1.1. Improve the campus climate for underrepresented faculty by addressing institutional obstacles by supporting the work of underrepresented faculty.

The literature on the challenges faced by underrepresented faculty is replete with examples of "extra labor" done by these faculty, and the lack of value placed on this labor, ultimately taking time and effort away from work that would support faculty retention. For example, faculty of color and female faculty have been shown to participate in more service/committee work as well as informal mentorship of students. This labor takes time away from scholarship, which for those on the tenure track, is much more important for retention. Administrators should support the work of underrepresented faculty by protecting them from the extra burden of this labor that is widely described in the literature as "cultural taxation." Additionally, the scholarship efforts undertaken by underrepresented faculty should be valued through parity in pay and benefits as well as equal distribution of resources, such as ancillary personnel, intramural funding, research centers, etc.

1.2 Diversify criteria for the evaluation of faculty and then socialize faculty of color and other underrepresented faculty to those criteria to ensure their success.

The literature pointed to the need to value the work that underrepresented faculty are drawn to, ensure that tenure and promotion criteria are broad enough to include tasks such as community based work, mentorship of other faculty, and service tasks that underrepresented faculty tend to be called on to serve. Our interview participants echoed the sentiments in the literature pointing to the devaluing of their scholarship on issues of culture, race and equity as well as not being recognized for their service efforts. Promotion and tenure criteria should be broadened to include work generally done by underrepresented faculty. Equally important is the socialization of faculty to these revised criteria, so that faculty are aware early on of the criteria against which their dossier will be vetted. Our review of the literature highlighted the importance of establishing clear guidelines that can be shared with faculty, especially those faculty who have been historically underrepresented in higher education.

1.3 Develop strong mentorship programs that are both traditional (assigned and senior rank), but also allow for alternative mentorship pairings (peer mentors chosen by the faculty themselves).

Mentorship is universally mentioned throughout the retention literature as a key strategy for retaining faculty from underrepresented groups. However, it's important to take a mindful approach to assigning mentors, because poor, disengaged, and untrained mentors can have the opposite effect. It's important to train mentors and reward demonstrably good mentors (possibly

through the diversified evaluation criteria mentioned above) to establish a seasoned and effective pool from which to draw in the future. While the traditional model of mentorship (assigned and higher rank faculty mentors) is critical for faculty socialization, the literature also noted the benefits of horizontal, peer mentorship models. Also, mentorship programs should include within race/gender and across race/gender pairings because varied perspectives can better support new faculty and enrich the experience of the mentors. Although targeted, departmental efforts are critical to ensure a robust mentoring culture, reviving the university-wide Mentorship Committee and expanding the Provost's mentoring awards program would provide added traction to support this endeavor.[8]

1.4 Encourage and develop training and social networking opportunities for underrepresented faculty.
The literature emphasized the importance of providing faculty development opportunities that could span topics related to research productivity, effective teaching strategies, and time management. USC currently holds a university-wide license for the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, but it's unclear how many faculty make use of the resource. Other efforts, perhaps through the provision of more resources to the Center for Excellence in Teaching and the Center for Excellence in Research, can enable our university to focus on effective strategies to support underrepresented faculty. Additionally, providing opportunities and support (including fiscal considerations) for networking with other underrepresented faculty and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration are also effective means of promoting underrepresented faculty retention.

Recommendation 2: Establish more data and information transparency of retention-related information from the USC Office of the Provost.
On March 13, 2020, the USC Provost noted the university's commitment to "recognizing deeply embedded biases" and that a "close examination of the current climate…is crucial now more than ever…"[9] Recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 below align with these sentiments, as they aim to collect data and information necessary to closely examine retention rates among diverse faculty. They are also in alignment with the results of the USC Values Poll from 2019, as transparency, accountability, and diversity were among the five "desired" values noted by faculty, staff, and students.[10]

2.1 Provide greater access to the Office of Institutional Research's faculty-related diversity data.
[11]
In order to assess retention rates, the CCC requested the following information from the OIR in February:
1. Race/ethnicity by profile (Tenure, TT, RTPC, PT, Adjunct)
2. Race/ethnicity by profile - disaggregated by gender (latest available numbers)

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[8] USC Mentoring Awards
[9] Zukoski, C.F. (2020, March 13). A Clear Affirmation.
[10] Key findings from the USC Values Poll 2019. (2019, December).
[11] A related recommendation was presented by the CCC in its report for AY 2018-2019; the CCC suggested that the OIR "develop a DEI data and evaluation office or team to examine data related to diversity, equity, and inclusion…." Chung, R. & Smith-Maddox, R. (2019). *Campus Climate Committee AY 2018-19 Final Report*. p. 9.

3. Race/ethnicity by profile - disaggregated by school (latest available numbers)
4. Departures by profile - disaggregated by race and gender and by profile and rank
5. Length of stay among those who depart

This information was requested because the OIR website provided very limited information regarding faculty diversity; it offers only ethnicity and gender distributions for full-time faculty. We were subsequently referred by OIR to an Associate Vice Provost, and in mid-April, we were provided with a link back to OIR with the explanation that this is "what is available."

As we cannot assess the state of faculty retention without the requested data that disaggregates faculty data over time, we recommend that such data be made available for assessment of retention trends.[12] As noted above, this type of transparency is not only part of the "desired" values of USC students, staff, and faculty,[13] but this practice also applies what Bensimon, Dowd and Witham (2016) name as one of the principles for enacting equity by design, which is that "[e]nacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness."[14]

2.2 Improve transparency in the administration and distribution of disbursements from the Provost's Diversity Fund
The CCC attempted to gain more information on USC retention efforts by examining how the $50 million Provost's Diversity Fund established in 2018 has been administered.[15] We asked an Assistant Vice Provost for information regarding the type of retention efforts funded and which schools received funding for specific retention efforts.

We were notified that retention funding "can be requested by the schools to retain extraordinary faculty who contribute to/promote diversity in their field." It was further noted that the office was "unable to share information about specific schools' requests or commitments."

More specific, transparent, and clearly communicated guidance for proposals on the retention of diverse faculty, along with anonymized information regarding funded retention proposals, would be helpful for the CCC to understand and assess current university-backed retention efforts and outcomes. It would also serve as models for others to propose retention efforts that have been shown to be effective.

2.3 Pursue further research-based strategies for retention once USC's retention data is examined.
Successful implementation at USC of the strategies described in our Recommendations 1.1-1.4 will depend on a data-rich and fact-based determination of the retention landscape. With greater transparency from the university, the CCC can make more customized strategy recommendations crafted to optimize efficiencies at USC.

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[12] An example of the type of disaggregated data that may elucidate retention rates can be viewed in The New York Times' *2019 Diversity and Inclusion Report* which is publicly available here:
https://www.nytco.com/company/diversity-and-inclusion/2019-diversity-and-inclusion-report/
[13] Key findings from the USC Values Poll 2019. (2019, December).
[14] Bensimon, E. M., Dowd, A. C., Witham, K. (2016). Five principles for enacting equity by design. *Diversity and Democracy, The Equity Imperative*. Winter 2016, Volume 19, No 1.
[15] Quick, M.W. (2018, November 1). Fostering Our Diverse Community.

Recommendation 3: Provide greater access to DEI Plans and encourage development of retention information in DEI Plans

In order to obtain school-specific information regarding retention strategies, we reviewed schools' DEI Plans. The process of collecting and reviewing these plans this semester indicated that there is a wide variance in the availability of the plans themselves, as well as with the quality and specificity of these reports in terms of faculty retention. As a result, we were not able to glean consistent and wide-ranging retention data and strategies for the majority of USC schools.

While a few schools posted their DEI Plans online, others reported that their plans were "not public," or "under revision" or otherwise unavailable for review. Some schools did not respond to multiple requests for their reports. We were ultimately able to locate and review 15 out of 23 DEI Plans for USC's schools over the course of the Spring 2020 semester. A list of these plans is attached as Appendix B.

Our review of these 15 DEI Plans reveals some significant differences among schools in terms of the reporting of diversity data and strategies, and retention information in particular. While three of the DEI plans provided some disaggregated data over time to provide context for their retention goals, the remainder did not present any retention data or specific retention goals. In terms of retention strategies, a few schools articulated aims such as conducting climate surveys, hosting diversity panels, and offering implicit bias training sessions. Most of the reviewed DEI Plans' discussions of retention consisted largely of general aspirations for "celebrating diversity" or building a "more inclusive climate."

While articulation of diversity language in DEI Plans and hosting diversity-related events are positive indicators, our research indicates that more targeted interventions for faculty retention may be needed, such as those noted in Recommendations 1.1-1.4 above. The need for more impactful retention strategies was echoed by interviewed faculty. Of the five faculty we interviewed, all but one noted that DEI efforts at USC feel more like compliance exercises than a genuine commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Exemplary DEI Plans with specific retention objectives, research-based retention strategies, and indicators for measuring retention efforts include the "Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Revised 5-year Strategic Plan 2016-2021," and "Celebrating Difference, Supporting Inclusion and Ensuring Equity at USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism: A 5-year Strategic Plan 2017 (with 2019 revisions)." Both schools also make their DEI Plans public on their websites and have updated and revised their plans after two years to integrate the latest in research findings and community input.

In light of our findings regarding DEI Plans, we recommend that schools regularly review their plans to include more specific retention goals based on disaggregated data and integrate more research-based strategies related to faculty retention. Such revisions may be helpful in producing more pragmatic plans for the promotion of real-life changes underpinning diversity aspirations.

Recommendation 4: Increase Membership and Re-Name the CCC

In light of research that suggests networking opportunities with other underrepresented faculty and cross-disciplinary collaboration can support retention, the CCC re-iterates two recommendations from AY 2018-2019 regarding membership and re-naming the CCC.[16]

1. Membership should be expanded to include representation of faculty of a variety of ranks across the university and those with professional expertise and administrative authority in diversity matters.[17]
2. The CCC should be renamed to be the Faculty Equity, Engagement, and Development Committee (FEED).[18] This name describes the committee's focus on faculty-related (rather than campus-wide) DEI issues and reflects the role of this committee in providing informal mentorship, networking, and collaborative professional opportunities across schools and ranks.

Conclusion

Our review of the literature suggests that retention efforts must be multi-pronged and multi-level. Underrepresented faculty stand to benefit from a concerted effort at both the departmental/school and university-wide levels that focuses on the value they bring to USC's commitment to excellence, clear and more diversified promotion and tenure guidelines and a socialization to those evaluation criteria, and robust professional learning, mentorship and networking opportunities.

Our findings related to current efforts under way at USC indicate that specific retention-related data and information are sometimes difficult to obtain from the university. Retention data from specific schools is also difficult to acquire, and, of the DEI Plans available for review, only a few provided disaggregated data regarding retention trends. Without a clear understanding of retention data, our efforts in making specific and effective strategy recommendations for USC are greatly hindered.

In light of these findings, we believe that further work on this issue is urgently needed and respectfully advise the Academic Senate to consider the CCC's Recommendations 1-4. We look forward to partnering with you and all stakeholders who hold a vested interest in this important work.

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[16] See Recommendation 1.4.

[17] In its report for AY 2018-2019, the CCC recommended "an expanded roster both for a larger working group as well as to ensure representation of faculty across the diverse landscape of USC. Those with specific expertise in DEI work should be sought as well as representatives from HSC, Counseling & Mental Health Services, Diversity Liaisons, and Faculty Diversity Recruitment Advisors."
Chung, R. & Smith-Maddox, R. (2019). *Campus Climate Committee AY 2018-19 Final Report*. p.10.

[18] Chung, R. & Smith-Maddox, R. (2019). *Campus Climate Committee AY 2018-19 Final Report*. pp.9-10

Appendix A
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Summaries of sources are available upon request.

Appendix B
List of Reviewed DEI Plans

1. Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism
2. Bovard College
3. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
4. Davis School of Gerontology
5. Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy
6. Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
7. Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
8. Kaufman School of Dance
9. Keck School of Medicine
10. Ostrow School of Dentistry
11. Price School of Public Policy
12. Rossier School of Education
13. School of Cinematic Arts
14. Thornton School of Music
15. Viterbi School of Engineering

Summaries of plans are available upon request.