

## **TSOM Faculty Council Report, AY 2022-2023**

The Thornton School of Music's (TSOM) Faculty Council (FC) is the official elected body that represents the TSOM faculty, advocates for the TSOM faculty, and provides advice to the TSOM Dean in matters that directly affects the faculty and programs of the TSOM. The agenda of the TSOM Faculty Council is set by TSOM FC members. Agenda items may be submitted to the TSOM Faculty Council by any member of TSOM faculty and/or administration. (TSOM FC Bylaws)

The Bylaws of the Thornton School of Music Faculty Council require an annual written report of its activities be presented to the faculty each spring, at the close of the academic year. This is that report, chronicling FC activities for the past academic year and making recommendations for the coming year.

### **TSOM Faculty Council Activities for 2022-2023**

AY 2022-2023 was an exciting year that continued with "in person" learning and activities in the TSOM. The FC demonstrated their continued commitment to communication, transparency, and the support of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at Thornton.

Faculty Council alongside all faculty, administration, staff, and students made efforts to conduct a successful Dean search and was ultimately successful to that end.

The TSOM Faculty Council for AY 2022-2023 (Chair Tim Kobza, Co-Chair Sean Nye, Tram Sparks, Jae Deal, David Moore, Karen Parks and Will Coppola) focused especially on those goals of communication and transparency as set forth in the previous year's FC report. Toward those ends, we focused our energies in the following directions:

**Faculty Climate Report and Findings.** Faculty Council shared the main finding of our climate report conducted in fall 2022. Some items were focused on the leadership transition during the 2022-23 year, so the items listed below are the main items concerning multiyear issues:

- the main priority remains the urgent need for new and updated buildings and practice facilities. This issue has reached the critical level of losing students on account of poor facilities.
- an aim for TSOM to have a new, strong, and coherent identity going forward
- greater scholarship and funding support and increased funding for diverse faculty and guest speakers.
- more collaboration and community of TSOM. There is a lack of communal meeting spaces. Also need for greater communication with alumni and the school (avoid general letters soliciting money and focus on developing direct relationships)

- major need for more marketing staff and a new human resources and faculty affairs manager, as well as career opportunities for students

### **Moving Forward, more social gatherings and community building for faculty and staff**

We will strive to create more community among our faculty through social gatherings and in person meetings. The end of year Faculty Celebration, co-hosted by the FC, was a great event. The hope is that this becomes a yearly tradition.

### **Meetings with TSOM Leadership**

To support clearer lines of communication in the school, Chair Tim Kobza attended weekly Deans' Advisory Committee meetings and monthly Executive Committee meetings, representing Faculty Council concerns and questions in that setting. The goal ultimately was to unify the voice of the faculty in advance of Dean King's arrival, and report important takeaways back to the FC.

TSOM FC also met with TSOM leaders throughout the year to discuss challenges facing the faculty and to discuss possible solutions or strategies for addressing those challenges, specifically, we met with:

- Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, Joanna Demers – FC met several times with Associate Dean Demers to discuss general concerns about communication, promotion, faculty classifications, and policies surrounding faculty leave. We discussed FC's involvement moving forward with Merit Review process for part-time faculty. We also collectively decided to change the RTPC Merit Review process from an annual to a triennial exercise.
- The FC met with Susan Lopez to discuss questions related to the state of the budget of the TSOM. We also addressed concerns that we have heard from the faculty related to compensation, as well as the loss of key staff members.
- The FC met with Interim Dean Kun to discuss the Faculty Climate Report, with focus on preparing for the arrival of Dean King in summer 2023.
- We were happy to report that faculty received raises across the board to begin the 2022-2023 year.
- FC members co-hosted a meeting with Vice Dean Rotem Gilbert and Associate Dean Brian Head for G.E. instructors, discussing grader support and logistics for large classes.
- The FC hosted an all-faculty meeting in Spring 2023 to address faculty questions and concerns. We expect to host all-faculty meetings in the future, in order to field questions or concerns from faculty during each university year.

**The TSOM FC worked to building relationships with other Faculty Councils across USC this past year.** Faculty in the smaller schools, and especially the art schools, face different challenges than those in the larger USC schools. Tim Kobza and Sean Nye met with Dan Pecchenino, President of the Academic Senate, to discuss Thornton FC's

initiatives. In pursuit of greater transparency and communication, it is important to build stronger horizontal relationships across the university.

Meetings with USC Academic Senate: Sean Nye represented the TSOM Faculty Council at the monthly meetings of the Academic Senate. He attended in person, so as to make direct connections with the Academic Senate after multiple years being online or hybrid.

The representatives for all Faculty Councils presented on their respective current initiatives so as to provide insight and trade ideas regarding FC activities across the university.

The Senate regularly hosted meetings with President Folt, Provost Zukoski during fall 2022, and Interim Provost Gaddy during spring 2023, while discussing priorities during the Provost search. The final meeting announced the appointment of Provost Guzman. Regular topics were also the state of university finances, including clarifying the financial links to Keck. A major milestone was that USC's credit rating has improved from negative to neutral, and general finances are improving.

Discussion was ongoing about faculty compensation and benefits, with the announcement of the five-year USC Competes program. President Folt made announcements confirming that annual raises will continue for the next four years. The Academic Senate also passed a "Resolution on Compensation Reporting," urging that the Provost work with the Deans in all schools in fulfilling SB 1162 requirements. The aim is for transparency to be consistent across the university.

Revisions for the Faculty Handbook were approved, which addressed especially changes to Chapter 6 on non-protected-class misconduct investigations and sanctioning. The general sentiment from the Academic Senate was that these changes were a great improvement over previous years, as it aims to systematize the process across the university and increase transparency.

Presentations from additional committees were also made throughout the year. This included a report on ChatGBT and AI usages, prepared by the Committee on Information Services, and announcements on the changes in the Office of Academic Integrity.

### **Meetings with TSOM Staff and Student Councils**

FC representatives met with both the TSOM Staff and Student Councils this year, building relationships with both groups. Additionally, the Chair and Co-Chair of the TSOM Student Council met with the Faculty Council and made a formal report about their activities during the year.

### **TSOM FC Actions and Recommendations**

Building on the afore mentioned activities, the TSOM FC would like to make the following recommendations:

### **Updating TSOM FC Bylaws**

- Based on needed changes and examples of best practices from other FCs across campus, **revisions to the language of the TSOM FC bylaws were made.** Current language (specifically, the language requiring 2 T/TT faculty participants and restrictions on multiple representatives from departments) may not reflect the structure of the school. Also, more inclusive language was used in the updated document.
- FC bylaws stipulate that the FC Chair will attend weekly Deans' Cabinet meetings, and there is also an allowance for designating the FC Co-chair as the TSOM representative for the Academic Senate. This is a useful division of duties.

### **Communication, Community, and Coalition Opportunities**

- We would also like to renew our request, from the AY 2020-2021 report, that the Dean make brief, regular reports to all faculty about the activities, priorities, and plans of the administration for TSOM.
- And, that the Dean meet with the FC once a semester.
- That TSOM Faculty Council receive updates on completing SB 1162 initiatives, with general disclosure of faculty compensation ranges.
- Alongside the TSOM Student Council, we recognize that spaces and opportunities for building community are vital for the wellbeing of Thornton moving into the future. The updated break room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of MUS 101 is much appreciated.

### **Conclusions**

The TSOM FC wishes to acknowledge and thank everyone who shared their time and energy with us during AY 2022-2023, and we hope that we will have the opportunity to continue developing those relationships in the future. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Josh Kun's steady leadership as Interim Dean this year.

The coming year will be an exciting one as we welcome new leadership with Dean King. The members of next year's FC understand that their role will be crucial in facilitating open and productive communication with all of the above-mentioned constituents. Thornton faculty commitment to shared governance supports the wellbeing of the school, and TSOM Faculty Council looks forward to fostering that commitment moving forward.