

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Urbana-Champaign • Chicago • Springfield

University Senates Conference
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February 28, 2019

Professor Bettina Francis, Chair
UIUC Senate Executive Committee
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Professor Catherine Vincent, Chair
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Professor Ranjan Karri, Chair
UIS Campus Senate
Dept. of Management
MS UHB 4060

Re: Discovery Partners Institute (USC OT-356)

Dear colleagues,

On February 26, 2019, the University Senates Conference considered the attached proposal to establish the Discovery Partners Institute (DPI) as a Temporary Institute of the University of Illinois System. We now transmit the proposal to you for consideration by your senate, in accordance with Article VIII, Section 3 of the University *Statutes*.¹ We urge you to bring the proposal before your respective senates as expeditiously as possible.

In what follows, we summarize our comments and advice regarding the proposal.

1. General considerations:

As a System-wide research and education entity focused on collaboration among the three universities as well as with external academic and industrial partners, DPI is unprecedented. In

¹ *d. Units Organized at the University Level.* [“University” here refers to what we now call “System.”]

Units organized at the university level, such as institutes, councils, and divisions, may be formed for the development and operation of teaching, research, extension, and service programs which are statewide or intercampus in their scope and which cannot be developed under a campus administration. Such an organization may be proposed by a senate, a chancellor/vice president, the University Senates Conference, or the president. *The president shall submit the proposal for the new organization together with the advice of the appropriate senates, taken and recorded by a vote of each such senate, of the appropriate chancellors/vice presidents, and of the University Senates Conference to the Board of Trustees for action.*”

keeping with its unique status, the current proposal requests establishment of the Institute *on a temporary basis*, to be considered for permanent establishment at the end of an initial five-year period. Because requests for temporary status are made in order to give centers or institutes the opportunity to first experiment with and then eventually establish longer-term practices and policies, they typically provide considerably less detail than do proposals to permanently establish such entities.

Over approximately the past year, as faculty interest in the DPI initiative has burgeoned, USC has thoroughly considered and discussed central questions of policy and procedure raised by system-wide initiatives like this one, including appropriate governance structures, control of academic programs, and faculty hiring and appointments. On January 24, 2019, USC approved a statement outlining our view of the general principles that should underlie the planning of initiatives like this one (transmitted to the Senates on January 29, 2019, and attached here). USC is pleased to note that the proposal has hewn closely to these principles. In particular, we note that the proposal properly specifies that “all curricular matters related to student degree programs will continue to be governed by existing faculty governance structures at the various universities in the system” (p.5). Equally importantly, we note with approval the specification that “there will be no tenure-track or specialized faculty appointments at DPI” (p. 5). (We understand “tenure-track” to refer to tenure-system faculty members, and “specialized faculty” to refer to non-tenure-system faculty members.)

As the proposal notes, as part of DPI’s initial planning process, members of an *ad hoc* Academic Governance Advisory Group were appointed to recommend specific structures and governance practices (pp. 3-4). The recommendations of that group were shared with USC in draft form. Most notably, the Academic Governance Advisory Group recommends that the proposed Institute follow the Statutory norm of elected faculty executive committees as the locus of unit shared governance. The AGAG report also correctly indicates the need for DPI-affiliated faculty members to determine a set of bylaws as their primary governing document once the Institute is formally established. USC is pleased to note that these key recommendations regarding the DPI’s governing structure are reflected in the proposal.

In addition to the Academic Governance Advisory Group, an *ad hoc* “Academic Executive Committee” was appointed, also for initial planning purposes. That group consists primarily of deans and other faculty members holding administrative appointments (pp. 3-4). USC recognizes that, if the Institute is granted temporary status, there must be regular and active guidance from our three universities’ deans and other academic officers, and a structure for that guidance must be provided, in addition to the planned faculty executive committee. However, it is our understanding and expectation that, in accordance with their *ad hoc*, appointed status, both the Academic Executive Committee and the Academic Governance Advisory Group, as currently constituted, will be discharged.

2. Areas for further consideration:

USC notes that, because it is a request for *temporary* status, this document cannot address every issue in detail. However, USC recommends that the following aspects be addressed before permanent status is requested:

1. An estimate of annual System investment in DPI should be provided;
2. Some examples should be given of the sources of “program revenue” (p. 7);
3. The proposal should provide a description of a general funding strategy allowing DPI to replace internal funding (whether from the System or our universities) with external funding;
4. The list of criteria for assessment of the Institute’s success should include a reference to the demonstrated added value to our three universities (UIC, UIS, and UIUC), fiscal or otherwise (p. 7);
5. A list of long-term milestones to gauge success should be provided.

Finally, the University Senates Conference recommends:

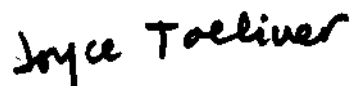
1. that the proposed structure of DPI’s faculty executive committee be slightly revised to specify that it consist of 12 members, two of whom will be University Senates Conference designees, and 10 of whom will be elected by and from among the DPI faculty electorate, with representation of all three universities (p.4);
2. that an annual self-assessment process be implemented once the Institute is formally established on a temporary basis, rather than waiting until the proposal for permanent status is prepared.

Summary:

The members of the University Senates Conference recommend that the proposal to establish the Discovery Partner Institute on a temporary basis be forwarded to the Board of Trustees, along with the above recommendations.

We request that your university senate endorse these recommendations as you consider your own advice on the proposal.

Sincerely,



Joyce Tolliver, Chair
University Senates Conference

Enclosures

cc: President Timothy Killeen
Executive Vice President Barbara Wilson
Vice President Edward Seidel
Dr. William Sanders
Dr. Phyllis Baker
Elizabeth Dooley, UIC Senate
Brian Moore, UIS Senate
Jenny Roether, UIUC Senate
Members, University Senates Conference