

May 7, 2010

Lori Kletzer, Chair
Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

Dear Lori,

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) has discussed the initial report of the Commission on the Future; our overall impression of its recommendations is favorable. The following comments are focused on the recommendations of the Working Group on Education and the Curriculum.

We strongly support the working group's recommendation to pay increased attention to academic planning, the efficient use of resources and the critical evaluation of academic programs (recommendation 1). Although we share the working group's desire to increase the proportion of undergraduates who complete their degrees within four years, we have reservations about the development of accelerated undergraduate programs that allow students to graduate within three years. The University should resist the temptation to solve its budget programs by encouraging the widespread development of such pathways. This could inadvertently result in a significant reduction in the quality, breadth and rigor of our academic programs. Furthermore, it is doubtful that accelerated degree programs would meet the needs of students from economically or academically disadvantaged backgrounds, including those who must work during the academic year or summer to finance their studies. We would also oppose any move to force students who enter the University with significant AP or IB credits to finish in less than four years; these students should not be penalized for doing extra work in high school. In spite of the above reservations, we would support the development of a relatively small number of optional, accelerated degree programs for highly qualified students who are up to the challenge.

We suspect that the recommendation to consider the expanded use of on-line instruction (recommendation 2) will be somewhat controversial. We encourage the University to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by on-line and distance courses and programs, however, provided that they are evaluated by the Senate using the same rigorous standards applied to "traditional" courses. An increased emphasis on self-supporting and part-time programs (recommendation 3) also merits serious consideration in the current fiscal climate.

Our committee has already provided feedback on some of the issues raised by the other working groups, including increasing the number and percentage of non-resident undergraduates (recommendations 1 and 6 of the Size and Shape and Funding Strategies Working Groups, respectively) and the potential adoption of differential fees by campus or discipline (recommendation 9 of the Funding Strategies Working Group). Those letters are attached.

Finally, our committee would like to take this opportunity to endorse the Access and Affordability Working Group's recommendation to re-establish UC financial aid eligibility for undocumented California high school graduates (recommendation 4). Please let us know if you would like additional feedback on any of the working groups' other recommendations

Sincerely,

/s/

John Tamkun, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

Attachments:
CEP December 2009 letter on Differential Fees
CEP June 2009 letter on Proportion of non-resident students