

May 7, 2010

Lori Kletzer
Chair, Academic Senate

Re: Commission on the Future Recommendations

Dear Lori:

The Committee on Faculty Welfare (CFW) has reviewed the Futures commission report and has the following comments on matters related—some of them rather tenuously—to faculty welfare.

Size and Shape

Recommendation 2: improve transfer student pathways in high-demand majors

The main recommendation is to better articulate community college courses with upper division major courses—effectively to move toward “greater consistency” of requirements in “key majors” at UC.

Welfare repercussions:

- Under “Fiscal Implications,” the report already identifies welfare-related issues: faculty time involved in curricular redesign, the likely need to develop new courses to address knowledge gaps for transfer students. In addition, there will likely be need for additional learning support services—tutoring, etc.—to address such gaps. If it is not provided, student need for such support would likely affect faculty workload.

Education and Curriculum

Recommendation 1: Manage educational resources more effectively and efficiently to decrease time to degree by making more efficient use of faculty resources.

A key recommendation is to “extend the use of research grant funding” to free up ladder faculty time and “backfill” with lecturers.

Welfare repercussions:

- “Implementation methods (long term)” mentions possible changes to the “mix/type of faculty deployed to various courses,” which (long term) may mean a deliberate reshaping of the size of the ladder faculty cohort.
- Reference to better use of summer session: Who would be expected to teach during summer session? Would faculty volunteer or be expected to teach summer session?
- “Alternatives to entry level courses” such as math and writing might raise the same welfare concerns as noted in the Size and Shape comments above.

Recommendation 2: Explore online instruction

The rationale suggests that such courses will “generate revenues and create workload efficiencies that support the University’s educational mission.” One promise is that online courses will make up for a smaller number of faculty hires. This recommendation suggests, under “fiscal implications,” that online courses may be particularly useful in large-enrollment foundation or gateway courses, “some developmental courses,” and some with limited faculty.

Welfare repercussions are largely addressed under “challenges”: workload, institutional support, intellectual property rights (presumably including this: if the university owns online course materials, might it preserve the course and not the teacher?). For non Senate faculty, there are also concerns about the terms and conditions of employment.

Recommendation 4: Coordinate campus academic goals with systemwide goals

This recommendation suggests better planning and coordination systemwide by keeping campus strengths and deficits in mind: planning for the good of the whole. That makes sense, but if the logic of this recommendation means, for instance, concentrating certain majors or programs of study on certain campuses, the implications for faculty are startling: perhaps moving to another campus, perhaps being left in an orphaned department, etc.

Funding Strategies*Recommendation 8: Examine alternate faculty compensation plans.*

Replacing hard money from core funds with soft money from grants increases the funding risk for faculty. Therefore, any change in funding model that can be remotely acceptable to faculty has to involve some sort of trade-off, in which a fall in the amount of “hard- money” support is compensated with the possibility of faculty receiving more than 12 months of salary.

As mentioned in the report, this type of compensation plan is already common in some disciplines. However, it must be noted that these compensation plans are usually accompanied by reduced teaching and administrative loads, as grant funds are meant to provide PROTECTED time for research. Therefore, two scenarios are possible:

(1) If such reductions are not implemented along with the compensation plan, then they could mean a dramatic increase in workload. Beyond the obvious faculty welfare implications of this type of measure, it could be argued that funding agencies would be reluctant to fund faculty subject to such plans, which would likely put the UC on a competitive disadvantage with peer institutions, not only for faculty, but also for research grants.

(2) If the reductions are implemented, we fail to see how the change in compensation plan would bring any savings to the campus. In particular, if the goal is filling the teaching spots with “cheaper” lecturers, it would seem like encouraging buyouts would be a more straightforward and less controversial mechanism to generate savings that would not put faculty salaries at risk.

Similar considerations arise with the Furlough Exchange Program (FEP) but have been largely ignored, probably because it was meant to be a one-time temporary measure.

Recommendation 9: Allow for the possibility of charging differential tuition by campus, as a means of mitigating potential future enrollment impacts on some campuses.

CFW supports what is contained in the UCPB Choices report <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/ucpb.choices.pdf>. This report frames the discussion of differential fees in the larger context of funding sources. In summary:

- (1) There is little coherency in the current policies used to decide how funds are allocated across campuses.
- (2) Most changes in funding policy, when they have occurred, have tended to benefit bigger, older campuses to the detriment of newer, smaller campuses.
- (3) Charging differential fees will exacerbate this trend.

Recommendation 4: Improve indirect cost recovery rates with federal agencies.

Of course we support efforts to provide high quality administrative support for faculty involved in extra-mural research.

Sincerely,

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Elizabeth Abrams, Chair
Committee on Faculty Welfare

cc: Senate Committees