

May 11, 2010

Lori Kletzer, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Commission on the Future Workgroup Recommendations

Dear Lori:

COR reviewed the recommendations from the Working Groups of the UC Commission on the Future, with a focus on the recommendations of the Research Strategies Working Group. The first thing that COR noted was the absence of a strong statement articulating the importance of research to the University, as well as the importance of supporting “curiosity-driven” research. Instead, much of the emphasis is on the utility of research and on short-term impact and deliverables. As a constituency, we need to be constantly advocating for research, and that point should be highlighted by the Research Strategies Working Group.

We also had the following comments:

- COR endorses Recommendation 1 (increasing transparency) and Recommendation 4 (streamlining risk management practices), though we feel that Recommendation 4 is somewhat unrealistic in the current budget climate, as staff are being cut back virtually everywhere to deal with the budget crisis.
- COR is concerned about increasing the ICR rate across the board, which in effect makes it more expensive to do research. Increasing ICR will likely hurt smaller campuses, such as UCSC, because they lack robust research infrastructure; furthermore, it may end up penalizing divisions (e.g., the Humanities) where the “cost” of doing research is considerably lower. Perhaps ICR rates should be differentiated across campuses, with larger campuses receiving a higher ICR rate, and smaller campuses retaining rates that are consistent with the infrastructure available.

It should also be noted that the case for increasing the ICR rate lacks thorough documentation and justification. Specifically, there is a general statement to the effect that other leading universities have increased ICRs, but no examples are given. A comparison to public universities of similar rank would be good to have, especially because COR members reported that they have reviewed proposals from places of similar rank to UCSC that have lower ICR. Also, it is stated that UC’s ICR should be “equal to or greater than” similar universities. Why greater than?

Finally, we wish to question the sentiment that "Nevertheless, it is important that the actual costs of conducting research be explicitly stated and recovered," which is repeated throughout the document. This is simply not true, unless we are a business. The State should not abrogate its commitment to fund research in the UC campuses, and UC should not give up on expecting the State to honor this commitment.

- COR feels there should be more emphasis on graduate education. Research relies on strong graduate programs, so anything that erodes the quality of graduate students we are able to attract is troubling. We would like to see concrete recommendations aimed at strengthening graduate education and recruitment (such as eliminating nonresident tuition for graduate students), and are very concerned about the proposal to increase graduate fees. We note that, at present, it costs about the same to hire a postdoctoral scholar as it does to hire a GSR, which is not a best practice for sustaining excellence in graduate education.

Outside of our specific purview, COR also had some concerns about the proposal to increase out-of-state undergraduate enrollments to generate more revenue for the campuses. What we find particularly troubling about this proposal to increase enrollment is the lack of discussion about capacity issues, space issues, reduced FTE, and ballooning student-to-teacher ratios. We should not be increasing enrollment if cannot ensure our students access to a *quality* education.

COR also feels that it is important to maintain UC as a 4-year institution. Proposals that advocate a 3-year pathway and/or online instruction run the risk of weakening the research experience of undergraduates, which is one of the major differences between the UC and the CSU.

Finally, COR strongly opposes differential fees by campus, which will inevitably result in the creation of tiers in the UC system and the erosion of research in the campuses that will be delegated to the lower tiers.

Sincerely,

/s/

Phokion G. Kolaitis, Chair
Committee on Research