

May 6, 2010

TO: Lori Kletzer
Chair, Academic Senate

FROM: Committee on Teaching

Re: Recommendations of the Commission on the Future of the University

Dear Lori,

The Committee on Teaching at UCSC discussed the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of the University. Before we give our specific comments on recommendations related to teaching, we have some general comments. These general comments are as important as (if not more important than) the specific comments.

General comments:

1) We think that the Commission should focus on one or a few things, instead of trying to examine detailed operations of the University. We suggest that the Commission focus primarily on funding issues. We also suggest that the proposed changes/reforms on teaching and research be examined carefully, independently, and most important, in the absence of budget pressure.

2) We think the Commission should honestly acknowledge that it is not possible to achieve the three things listed below in the face of declines in state funding:

- i) maintain the UC's affordability,
- ii) maintain the UC's high levels of quality in instruction and research, and
- iii) increase enrollments to serve California's needs for higher education.

To pretend that in the face of an unparalleled state funding crisis we can still have these three things by eliminating "wastes" and by increasing "efficiency" is deluding ourselves and is a prescription for disaster.

3) It is important to maintain the UC's affordability. Currently, all in-state enrollments are subsidized by state funding. We should maintain and improve the affordability of the subsidized enrollments by i) raising tuition only moderately and ii) offering more financial aid. The working groups should honestly acknowledge that in the face of declining state funding, to maintain and improve the affordability of subsidized enrollments will require a reduction in numbers of such.

4) To best serve California's needs for higher education, the UC should consider increasing enrollments that are not (substantially) subsidized by state funding. This new category of enrollments is open to all students (in-state students, out-of-state students, foreign students). In particular, in-state students, who are not admitted to the subsidized enrollments, have the chance of being admitted to the non-subsidized enrollments and paying the tuition of the non-subsidized enrollment.

5) We are fully aware that this new category of non-subsidized enrollments will create the situation where two in-state students with similar grades and backgrounds may be admitted to different enrollment categories: one admitted to the subsidized enrollment and the other admitted to the non-subsidized enrollment. They will study side by side in the UC but pay very different fees. No doubt, there is a fairness issue here. But this fairness issue is really not new. A similar fairness issue already exists. For two in-state students with similar grades and backgrounds in the current system, one may be admitted and the other simply denied. When one is denied, they will not study side by side in the UC, and thus, the fairness issue is hidden.

The UC should honestly answer the public's question "Why can't I get into the subsidized enrollments?" The answer is very simple: "state funding has declined significantly for years." The UC should direct the public to think about the key question: **"Would you rather be simply denied admission to the UC or would you like to have a chance of attending the UC paying non-subsidized fees?"** Many potential students would opt to attend even though they are required to pay more.

Specific comments:

Three-year program for undergraduates:

We have concerns on pushing students through UC in three years, instead of four years. Granted, some students may be able to manage to graduate in three years, so we should keep that option open, and encourage students to do so. But the primary barrier to the three-year pathway is that many incoming students lack basic preparatory education, and need General Education coursework and training to get them up to speed. The possibility of institutionalizing the three-year undergraduate program, to a large extent, depends on reforms and improvement in California's K-12 education. Also, for many departments, a three-year pathway would require a complete restructuring of the major, eliminating some GE course requirements, which may compromise the UC undergraduate education. In our opinion, the goal of UC education is to prepare students for serving/leading the society for next 20-30 years, not just to prepare them for their immediate jobs after graduation. Additionally, UC prides itself on being a liberal arts institution, enabling students to take a broad range of courses before deciding on a focus. The three-year path will force students to decide upon their arrival (and before they may know) which major

to pursue. Finally, if the three-year program is achieved primarily by pushing students to take more courses each year, it will not reduce the operational costs of the delivery of instruction.

Streamlining/encouraging the community college transfers:

We certainly should keep that option open. But if we try to save money by shifting a large part of the first two years of the undergraduate education from the UC to community colleges, the UC's high quality may suffer. The quality of community colleges varies dramatically. There is no guarantee that just because a student satisfies all the transfer requirements at a particular community college, the student is adequately prepared for UC- level course work. Again, just because some students can manage to take this pathway and succeed in UC, does not mean we should push a larger portion of students through.

Moving towards distance learning and online instruction:

It is not clear that replacing the traditional classroom instruction with distance learning and online instruction will save money or maintain UC's quality of instruction and student engagement. Before pursuing either option, we recommend studying the benefits and differences between the two options. The study should be done independently, and in particular, separate from the budget process. UC may be underestimating the costs associated with producing and delivering online instruction. A successful program will require substantial investments to ensure system-wide authentication, shared access to digital repositories, and common tools available to all UC students. One of the potential benefits of an online program is to share resources across the UCs for courses and programs that have fewer enrolled students. However, it would take some planning that should involve instructional technology folks from across the UCs.

We hope these comments can be of help to your discussion.

Regards,

/s/

Hongyun Wang
Chair, Committee on Teaching