

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE COLLEGES**  
**Final Report**

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Special Committee on the Colleges was established to review the academic role of the colleges at UCSC and raise issues for consideration by the Academic Senate. The committee addressed the current and possible future academic roles of the colleges. This report summarizes our discussions and offers our recommendations. We discuss three broad topics: the role of the colleges in the academic life of UCSC students, the role of faculty in the colleges and the role of the Academic Senate in the colleges.

The academic role of the colleges in undergraduate education

In our view, the colleges play their most important role in the initial academic experience of undergraduate students. The colleges serve an important function in the transition of first-year students from high school to university academic life. On the academic side, the most important roles of the colleges in the first-year experience are advising and the core course.

The college advisors provide guidance for meeting general education requirements, choosing lower division courses in prospective majors and finding resources for academic help to students. They also track the academic standing of undergraduate students, oversee their academic progress and certify graduation requirements. We believe that pre-major advising is essential and that the colleges handle this very well at present. In this regard, UCSC has been ahead of the curve, as several other universities have recently decentralized undergraduate advising. Having advisors in the colleges also allows oversight and supervision by members of the Academic Senate, the provosts. Although advising may be improved, this should continue to be one of the responsibilities of the provosts.

The core course is currently under reconsideration, and we are aware of several proposals to change the first-year academic experience at UCSC. As we noted in our interim report, the core course has been the subject of several reviews over the years and should not be the subject of perpetual review. The core course provides an important writing experience for students in their first-year that needs to be retained in the graduation requirements. It is taught by instructors who specialize in the teaching of writing, so that it is effectively one of two writing courses required of first-year students. The core course allows UCSC to match the two-course requirement of the other seven undergraduate campuses of the University of California. The core course is also considered to be a community-building experience in the colleges that is attractive to students.

We recommend that any proposed changes to the administration or structure of the core course adopt these two characteristics as objectives. The core course, or its replacement, should have a significant writing component. Current proposals that we have seen all seek to satisfy this goal. Not all recognize the benefit of having an academic experience for first-term students in the colleges. We recommend that any changes or replacements for the core course meet both objectives. It should not be difficult to provide a community-building experience within the colleges. For example, any new course could be offered with sections based in the colleges.

We also wish to emphasize that the colleges can and do enhance the educational experience for students outside traditional academic courses and majors. The colleges sponsor events that enhance the intellectual life of undergraduate students and the rest of the UCSC community. These intellectual activities may be underappreciated and underplayed in the campus' depiction of the role of the colleges. It could be emphasized more, both in description and in effort.

#### The involvement of the faculty in the colleges

Two primary issues of concern of the Administrative Taskforce on the Academic Role of the Colleges were the involvement of the faculty in the colleges and the governance of the colleges. First, we do not think that involvement of the faculty in the colleges should be sought as a goal in itself. Faculty involvement in the colleges comes at the cost of faculty time spent in other activities and may displace other contributions by the faculty to undergraduate education. Formal classroom and laboratory teaching are essential to undergraduate education, and ladder-rank faculty members make their greatest contribution to the academic life of students teaching disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses. It could be counterproductive for the campus to displace effort in teaching assignments through the departments or research by requiring a more active faculty role in the colleges.

That said, the faculty of a college has the responsibility of academic oversight for the college. The Faculty of the College consists of those Fellows of the College who are members of the Academic Senate (inclusive of Lecturers SOE). Typical bylaws of the colleges allow delegation of the authority of the Faculty of the College to an Executive Committee of the Faculty. In our interim report, we noted that this responsibility had fallen by the wayside. We recommended that each provost ensure that the college faculty either assume responsibility to oversee curriculum as prescribed by the bylaws of the college or delegate that authority to the provost. We are pleased that the Council of Provosts has taken up and addressed this issue.

The provosts delegate many of the academic activities of the colleges to staff that are not members of the Academic Senate. We agree that provosts should be granted this

responsibility and authority by the college faculty. It is essential that provosts be appointed from the membership of the Academic Senate.

We also reviewed the bylaws of each college and found that some revision might be desirable. The provosts also responded to our recommendation that the colleges review their bylaws and implement or update these as necessary. We do not feel that any further action is needed.

Last year, three vacant provost positions could not be filled. Although, we feel it is premature to make decisions based on this experience, we recommended an early start to provost searches and that the compensation to departments be reviewed. If the difficulty filling provost positions persists, it would be appropriate for the campus to review ways to attract faculty to the position.

The committee discussed the procedures for affiliating faculty with colleges. We concluded that faculty affiliation with a college should be voluntary and not linked to office location. We also encouraged the provosts to think about, and formalize, the procedures by which someone is named a fellow. We also agree that faculty members might want, and should be able, to become a fellow of more than one college.

#### The role of the Academic Senate

Many of the responsibilities of the colleges overlap with those of the Academic Senate. These include the quality of the curriculum, academic advising and certification of degree requirements administered by the colleges. To a great extent, these responsibilities are delegated to the college provosts as members of the Senate. We think that this works well for administering the academic roles delegated to the colleges at UCSC. We also believe that any substantial changes to the curriculum offered through the colleges or to the relationship and obligations of the members of the Academic Senate to the colleges should be subject to scrutiny, discussion and approval by the Academic Senate.

#### Additional issues

One issue that was asked of our committee is whether colleges should be administered by the academic divisions. We recommend that additional colleges should not be placed under divisional administration while the experiment of Colleges Nine and Ten is in progress. However, we do not see any significant differences or benefits to date. One possible purpose of placing colleges under divisional administration could be budgetary consolidation. This could place the colleges in competition for resources with the academic and research programs of the division and its departments in times of budgetary stress. The current financial situation of the campus should reveal whether this is a concern.

The Administrative Taskforce on the Academic Role of the Colleges asked our committee to consider the creation of a graduate college. Some potential courses or seminars have been suggested for a graduate college; these focus on teaching assistant skills, preparation for entering the post-degree job market and similar tasks common to graduate students across disciplines. We are not convinced that the institutional structure of a college is needed to provide this type of non-disciplinary instruction. Courses or seminars could be sponsored by the Graduate Division to meet these needs, and they could be offered in short order without waiting to create a college. The primary purpose of building a graduate college would be to create a community and provide housing for graduate students. Graduate student housing is important for the growth and health of graduate programs at UCSC, but the additional administrative structure of a graduate college should not be necessary for the campus to make this a priority.

### Conclusion

The principal role of the colleges at UCSC is and should be in the first-year experience of undergraduates. They provide pre-major advising, track student academic progress, administer academic standing regulations and offer a part of the first-year curriculum through the core course. The role of the Academic Senate in college governance should be greater to the extent that oversight of the academic role of the colleges needs to be exercised as specified in the more recent bylaws of the colleges. We emphasize, however, that involvement of the faculty in the colleges should not be coerced in any way. Further, any involvement of ladder-rank faculty in college courses should be seen as displacing faculty effort elsewhere in the undergraduate or graduate programs.

Respectfully submitted,

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE COLLEGES

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