



1156 HIGH STREET  
SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

Office of the Academic Senate  
SANTA CRUZ DIVISION  
125 CLARK KERR HALL  
(831) 459 - 2086

May 13, 2024

JAMES STEINTRAGER  
Chair, Academic Council

**Re: Final Report of the University of California Systemwide Advisory Workgroup on Students with Disabilities**

Dear James,

The Santa Cruz Academic Senate has reviewed your request for review of the final report of the University of California Systemwide Advisory Workgroup on Students with Disabilities. The Committees on Educational Policy (CEP), Information and Technology (CIT), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CODEI), Library and Scholarly Communication (COLASC), Planning and Budget (CPB), Teaching (COT), and Graduate Council (GC) have responded. We would like to thank the Systemwide Advisory Workgroup for their time in creating this landmark report and bringing this important issue to the forefront of UC's. The Santa Cruz division raises the following concerns.

Workload, Resource and Pedagogical Issues for Faculty

As our campus broadens and deepens the support for students with disabilities, the increased workload issue cannot be diminished. New workload expectations and time commitments encompassing receiving accommodation requests, communication with the DRC and students, and making course material accessible is not insignificant. CODEI states, "Faculty welcome the opportunity to improve the disability accommodations in our courses, but we are concerned about the large increase in workload associated with these changes." While there is a collective movement toward improving the culture and climate around accessibility and inclusivity, in order to be effective, the necessary resources need to be an integral component to help mitigate the workload impacts. COLASC advises, "If UCOP were to provide material support, in the form of course releases or other resources, for course redesign, we would expect much better outcomes. More broadly, we recommend that rather than placing the onus to ensure access entirely on instructors, the UCs prioritize the development of cultures of collective access." CEP notes, "The vision laid out in the report is resource-intensive and faculty should not be the only ones asked to do more without more resources; faculty will best be able to improve accessibility when appropriate resources are provided." CIT further concurs, "Given that there are dramatic differences in case ratios across the campuses and that "a shortage of disability specialists can lead to delays in the provision of necessary services for students with disabilities" (p.

11), some system-level centralized resources could be cost-effective” Formative and institutional change cannot occur without a substantial commitment to resources both systemwide and divisionally.

We appreciated that the “Transforming Culture and Practice: servicing students with disabilities at the University of California” report was holistic in its presentation of recommendations for the Regents, University leaders and Faculty, but from a faculty point of view, CEP noted that “only 2 were representative of faculty (without additional administrative roles).” This lack of faculty presence in this workgroup has impacts for how this report engages more deeply and broadly with pedagogical practices. CIT points out, “Clearer communication about distinctions between “benefits everyone” instructional techniques that should be included in all course design, vs. approaches involving tradeoffs (and hence should be implemented on an as needed basis) would be helpful.”

While our teaching center is a key resource for instructors in supporting inclusive pedagogy and universal design, there needs to be a more developed shift in culture to support pedagogical practices more broadly on all campuses. COLASC astutely notes, “While we applaud the support for the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) as a hub for information and training, this is an insufficient solution and, when prescribed as the only avenue for more inclusive instruction, amounts to an unfunded mandate.” CODEI further remarks, “We understand the TLC provides some resources, but we are hearing from colleagues that these are limited. While the goals of universal design are lofty and shared by most instructors, there remains skepticism about the proscriptions and formulaic tendencies of universal design.” CODEI highlights an important paradox regarding universal design when they state, “for those of us who are trying to use universal design principles, the legalistic application of disability accommodations often undercuts our attempts to introduce universal design in our courses.” They further recommend, “Perhaps it would be helpful to engage in more meaningful discussions about the logics of adopting universal design in our courses, alongside providing training and support for instructors that would make using universal design more successful.” CIT echoes, “In-person support is probably preferred or mandated for students, but faculty and staff wishing to better support students, could benefit from efficient access to curated in-depth resources and timely access to specialists in relevant sub-domains.” There is a clear desire for additional support for instructors to not think solely about how to implement accommodations, but to strengthen pedagogical and structural approaches.

#### Senate Regulation 778 feedback

This year, CEP has been reviewing our incomplete grade policy at the request of Mia Catherine Terry, UCSA Disability Justice Officer. Through this review, our campus removed the fees that were previously charged to have a student’s final grade replaced on their transcript. Additionally, in 2018, UC Santa Cruz’s grade option deadline was extended to week nine to allow a student to change their grading option and to clarify that such a change can be in either direction (SCR 9.1.2). This provided more time for students to see how they are doing in the course, while their grade is still not known.

#### Including graduate students, faculty and staff with disabilities:

There were significant absences from the report regarding faculty, staff, and graduate students. If UC strives to transform our university culture, it requires us to not only think about undergraduate students but to include graduate students and faculty as well. CODEI notes, “As the percentage of university students with disabilities rises, the diversity of faculty and staff should increasingly

represent that shift. Therefore, deficits in support for UC faculty and staff will need the same attention as the report identifies for our student population.” Similarly recognizing the significant absence of graduate students, GC pointed out, “Despite having a lot of good information and specific recommendations for changes that are needed to support undergraduates, there was surprisingly little attention paid to graduate students. In addition, there was essentially no discussion of specific needs of graduate students, which tend to go well beyond traditional classroom courses. This was an opportunity missed.” Their response is enclosed because of the critical issues they raise.

In closing, all of our committees were particularly attuned to the data that was provided regarding individual campuses. Many of the responses had distinct questions in reference to UC Santa Cruz and we will follow up with our administration and our DRC. We appreciate the workgroup’s final report as it has helped our campus to think both broadly and specifically about how we can transform UC Santa Cruz to be more equitable for faculty, staff and our undergraduate and graduate students.

Sincerely,



Patty Gallagher, Chair  
Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

Encl. Graduate Council Response

cc: David Lee Cuthbert, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy  
Zac Zimmer, Chair, Committee on Information Technology  
Gabriela Arredondo, Chair, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Jeffery Erbig, Chair, Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication  
Raphe Kudela, Chair, Committee on Planning and Budget  
Elisabeth Cameron, Chair, Committee on Teaching  
Andrew Fisher, Chair, Graduate Council  
Matthew Mednick, Executive Director, Academic Senate

April 8, 2024

PATTY GALLAGHER, Chair  
Academic Senate

**Re: Systemwide Review of the Report of the University of California Systemwide Advisory Workgroup on Students with Disabilities**

Dear Patty,

At its regular meeting of March 7, 2024, Graduate Council (GC) discussed the “Transforming Culture and Practice: Serving Students with Disabilities at the University of California” final report by The University of California Systemwide Advisory Workgroup on Students with Disabilities (January 2024). This report describes many challenges faced by students across the UC system, policies and obligations for serving these students, and structures that campuses have set up to address important needs. The report also provides an overview of numbers of students impacted across UC campuses, and lists some of the associated staffing and financial implications for campus Disability Resource Centers (DRCs). GC was especially struck by student:coordinator caseload ratios in the DRCs; at many DRCs, this ratio is higher than recommended for effective coordination, and the ratio at UCSC is the highest in the system.

Despite having a lot of good information and specific recommendations for changes that are needed to support undergraduates, there was surprisingly little attention paid to graduate students, departments, and programs. In addition, there was essentially no discussion of specific needs of graduate students, which tend to go well beyond traditional classroom courses. This was an opportunity missed, and GC hopes that future reports of this kind will address graduate programs and students. It would be wise to consult with the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs, and with GCs on individual campuses, to solicit suggestions for topics and questions to be addressed.

For example, GC urges that these questions/topics be addressed explicitly:

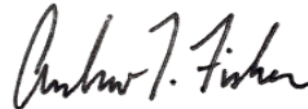
- What are the numbers of graduate students on each campus that have availed themselves of DRC services, and how many of these students are currently receiving accommodations?
- How many full-time equivalent DRC coordinators are dedicated to servicing graduate students on each campus, and what is the ratio?
- What are the most common categories of accommodations that graduate students receive? These might include: additional time to complete coursework, qualify, or complete their full program. Perhaps there are other common accommodations.
- We recently learned that the percentage of graduate students seeking accommodations at UC Santa Cruz’s DRC is less than half of that for our undergraduates (7 percent vs 15 percent), and we wonder how much of this results from graduate students now knowing about their options for accommodations, or perhaps from fear that requesting accommodations could negatively impact relations with graduate mentors and/or programs.

- Graduate students enrolled in academic/research degree programs are often supported through fellowships and/or graduate student researcher funding. How are the financial aspects of accommodations managed if there is an extension in time for one or more milestones? Who is responsible for securing necessary student salary (for GSR) or stipend (for fellowship) to allow students to have more time to work towards degrees? How is this to be handled for awards with a fixed term and/or a fixed amount of funding, as with many grants and other contracts that support GSRs, and with block funding and fellowships?

Responses to many of these questions/topics should be broken down by campus, division, and graduate student type (MA/MS, MFA, PhD, professional program, etc.), to help GCs across the system understand the scope of need, how different campuses and programs are dealing with these issues, and where there remain significant gaps in support.

Thank you for allowing GC the opportunity to comment on the “Transforming Culture and Practice” report. This report represents an important step towards understanding and addressing student needs, but the next effort of this kind must take seriously the needs of graduate students and programs. Graduate students, programs, and degrees are essential elements of the UC community, and they help to distinguish UC from other educational systems in California and across the US. It does not make sense to lump graduate and undergraduate student needs together, or ignore graduate students entirely, when discussing system needs. Graduate students with disabilities often face daunting challenges, and their needs must be recognized and addressed in future studies.

Sincerely,



Andrew T. Fisher, Chair  
Graduate Council

cc: Gabriela Arredondo, Chair, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Elisabeth Cameron, Chair, Committee on Teaching  
David Lee Cuthbert, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy  
Laura Giuliano, Chair, Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid  
Raphe Kudela, Chair, Committee on Budget and Planning  
Amanda Rysling, Chair, Committee on Courses of Instruction  
Zac Zimmer, Chair, Committee on Information Technology  
Senate Executive Committee