

August 21, 2018

Ólöf Einarsdóttir
Chair, Academic Senate

Re: Review Full Draft of Strategic Academic Plan and Implementation Playbook

Dear Ólöf,

During its meeting of August 14, 2018, the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) reviewed the full draft of the Strategic Academic Plan (SAP) and Implementation Playbook. CAP acknowledges the labor-intensive process of the SAP and its findings and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the SAP Playbook. While in the main the committee can speak to what is specifically requested of the Senate Committees by way of feedback, this is nevertheless the first opportunity the committee has had to see the overall vision and the academic priority areas laid out and therefore wishes to comment on other matters contained in the playbook as well.

There appears to be a content gap between the deck page on the forums (p.13) and the very next page (p.14) that announces the chosen academic priority areas. The report provides little explanation as to the choice of those areas. None of them primarily engages the Humanities centrally, and they are very underdeveloped (e.g., little is said about their content and what they are meant to include). Earth Futures seems primarily PBSci in its orientation, Justice primarily Social Sciences, and Digital involves the Arts, Engineering and PBSci, at least insofar as each area is described and funding agencies targeted (pp. 31-45).

- Query: What led to the decision to choose those three designated Academic Priority Areas; which TAWGs are included there and why?
- Why are nearly identical “National Post-Secondary Enrollment” metrics provided for each area and why are the comparator institutions the same for each area? (We note, as well, a mismatch between the description of the areas and some of the designated funding sources)

Further, although none of the laudable design principles mention publicity, fundraising, resource generation, etc. as their primary drivers, the goals and key outcomes often seem driven by these concerns. For example, the way to “drive research and creative work that transforms the world” (Design Principle #1) is understood to be achieved by increasing recognition and external support for *applied* research and creative work, although we know that much of the research that has, thus far, transformed the world, has been neither recognized nor necessarily applied. The outcomes attached to this are an increase in the number of citations, an increase in the number of

patents, IP licenses, and an increase in public faculty appearances, *not* an increase in research publications in high-profile venues, national and international exhibitions or performances. Thus the impression conveyed is of focusing on *appearance* and external recognition rather than substance.

The Implementation Plan Menu of Initiatives seem, at times, similarly driven, and some of them also seem to focus on appearance over substance. Regarding “drive research and creative activity”: Do we necessarily want to launch an annual breakthrough award for high-impact ideas/research (whose impact, presumably, is measured only by the present), or do we want more support and time for research, with the understanding that excellence and distinction are the properties of the whole community? It is difficult to see how a prize that singles out an individual benefits the whole (rather, it institutes a competitive atmosphere that pits individuals and areas of study against one another). The problem may partly be in that word “drive.” We are *already* engaged in transformative research and creative activity, and it would seem that the job of the university is to facilitate, nourish and foster, and not to drive. From CAP’s perspective, what faculty need from the university is support in all its dimensions.

Another concern to be raised regarding some of the Initiatives (particularly in the area of collaborative research) is that they seem to be construed as driven by a top-down process. The SAP process, especially the TAWGs, demonstrated that faculty find their own affiliations across borders when invited to do so, and suggests that far more border crossing would occur should institutional structures provide space, time and resources for such collaboration (as the document recognizes when addressing the question of team-teaching). Thus, for example, Dean-driven collaborative research initiatives generally fail, because collaborations are mainly the result of faculty interest and affinity in a more bottom-up fashion. This speaks to the menu item “systematically connect researchers across the divisions...”. A fund for collaborative interdisciplinary research initiatives would produce collaborative interdisciplinary research initiatives. Why “create a formal administrative process to assess proposed collaborations” before creating the conditions of possibility for those collaborations to occur organically?

In that Design Principle category, “support generative interdisciplinary connections,” the word “drive” appears once again, suggesting that cross-unit initiatives do not currently exist, and that Academic Priority Areas and Institutes need to be created, rather than encouraging and supporting the *already existing* cross-disciplinary initiatives and priority areas on the campus. As the TAWGs process amply indicated, there exist a number of small, intellectually creative and vibrant but underfunded, cross-unit entities that would require modest but potentially very impactful levels of support. It is hoped these would be considered under the rubric of “supporting

generative interdisciplinary connections” as well. CAP recommends that the TAWGs be meaningfully integrated into the Implementation Plan, and that the University thereby take advantage of and build on the efforts inspired by last year's process.

As to the specific request, we are asked to *provide feedback and advice on “key outcomes and initiatives listed under each design principle and the tentative implementation timeline.” The plan puts forth a “menu of options and tentative implementation timeline,” and the Chancellor and CP/EVC are requesting that the Senate prioritize those outcomes and initiatives in terms of urgency and achievability, as well as provide recommendations “for staging their implementation over the five years of the plan.” Senate leadership has also been asked to produce one prioritized list of outcomes and initiatives considered most pressing by the Senate.*

Below you will find CAP’s commentary addressing the specific Senate feedback requests as they relate to CAP’s general purview. We found ourselves unable to make recommendations about the timelines for implementation, given that most recommendations assign implementation to administrative units (and thus we would need to be in a position to assess the implementation capacities of administrative units), and that many of the Initiatives are repeated each year over the 5 years. The Initiatives also seem disparate to us: some are easy to implement; some incomprehensible (we do not understand what is being referred to); and many seem to us to be both good ideas and not particularly urgent. We therefore comment on each Design Principle and its associated Goal, Key Outcomes, and Menu of Potential Initiatives.

Design Principles

#1-Drive Research

The design principle is good and should apply to any research university.

Goal: It is most certainly a good idea to increase recognition and external support for research, but why specifically “applied” research? CAP recommends eliminating the word “applied” from the slide on p. 22.

Key Outcomes: *In its assessment of research and creative activity, CAP values quality, first and foremost.* The outcomes listed here do not seem to emphasize quality; they are quantitative only. Thus none of the listed outcomes seem to us to further the design principle or its stated goal. However, if quantitative metrics are desired, then we suggest, among other key outcomes: increase number of high-quality publications; increase number of national and international exhibitions and performances; increase number of influential studies that have national and international impact. Other possible quantitative outcomes: improve field/study area National Research Council rankings; and improve PhD placements. One of the signal ways for a research

university to drive research and creative activity that transforms the world is through its placement of doctoral students. CAP factors such placement in its reviews of faculty mentoring.

Menu of Potential Initiatives (in order of greatest value):

Add “to build on the TAWG process” to the first outcome: “Systematically connect researchers across the divisions...” We wish to emphasize that this initiative needs to be bottom-up rather than top-down. In order to maintain the momentum that has been generated around the TAWG process, the initiatives that serve this aim should be prioritized.

“Provide support for faculty to discover and secure new sources of support for their work” (#11).

We recommend a simplification: “provide support for faculty research” [e.g., from any source].

#4: Address identified campus barrier (lack of support and incentive for faculty to generate resources). By “incentive” we do not mean announced competitions, but rather compensation for the time and energy faculty need to devote to this and simplified, streamlined support for the process itself.

We note that the second initiative, regarding creating formal administrative processes, seems premature relative to other outcomes that would serve the goal. We also note that the Menu of Initiatives focuses narrowly on supporting projects where there are known funding opportunities. Great and transformative work does not necessarily follow from available funding streams.

Some of these initiatives can be achieved relatively quickly; some require much more time. This should be taken into account in setting goals. Finally, we do not think that growing the number of doctoral degrees granted per se (and in the absence of critical and sustained financial support) is a valuable initiative. Areas of research, quality of the research, support for research, and improvements in the quality of life for doctoral research are all key factors to be striven for over simple growth.

#2-Create Enriching Experiential Learning and Research for Students

We regard this design principle to be, in effect, two principles: 1) create enriching experiential learning; and 2) create enriching research opportunities. We do not view these as the same thing, nor do we think that the focus should be solely on “experiential” learning and research. We also note that little if any attention is paid to addressing graduate student experiential learning and research experience in this and other design principles.

Goal: The increase in the above “design principle” (which strikes us as a goal rather than a design principle) seems rather narrow and merely quantitative. Further, if the base is unknown, how do we know it is necessary to create more such opportunities?

Key Outcomes: We do not see the first two outcomes as key. The time frames (and designation of junior year) in the outcomes also seems rather arbitrary to us. The last two outcomes are

higher priority (% of graduates pursuing graduate degree; increase in the number of students in summer experiential programs) than the first two.

Menu of Potential Initiatives:

Those initiatives most relevant to CAP are numbers 6 and 7: “Build incentives into the merit and promotion process to include students in primary research and creative work”; and “Include independent study and student research in teaching load calculation.” CAP already takes the first of these into account: it is one of many key factors evaluated when CAP assesses teaching excellence, and is thus already incentivized. As to the second one mentioned, accounting for independent studies in teaching load, CAP regards this as desirable, provided that it include *graduate* independent study as well. Whereas the current teaching load provides a course equivalency for undergraduate advising activity (the “course equivalency” calculator), there is currently no UCSC-wide accounting for supervision of graduate independent study. CAP also finds laudable the first initiative: create research experiences for undergraduates; here we would add that faculty (and graduate students, since graduate student supervision of these might also be an excellent initiative) would require incentives in the form of support to be able to supervise these independent research activities. CAP thus also supports the fifth initiative, “provide faculty [and graduate students] with research funds (or course release, for faculty) to incentivize development or revision of courses that include research or experiential opportunities for undergraduates.” Finally, we also agree with the last initiative, “Create/grow undergraduate research fellowships” and encourage such initiatives to include the Colleges as sponsoring units. Many Colleges currently have research apprenticeship programs, and one initiative might be to strengthen/build on them and create new ones in other colleges.

#3- Engage and support diversity

Goal: The goal seems fine, if modest. It is already something toward which UCSC continues to strive. A more ambitious goal might be to aim toward hiring and retaining a greater number of faculty and staff from underrepresented groups and to improve retention rates for URM by addressing quality of life issues.

Key Outcomes: Two and three seem best and very important.

Menu of Potential Initiatives:

The initiative most relevant to CAP would be to continue to educate faculty and departments on the importance of addressing contributions to diversity in their personnel reviews. Of the initiatives listed here, the most important seem to be the following: #2) assess (we would add: and *address*) root of challenges to undergrad success; #4) optimize first year experience (in *all ways*, not only to deploy best diversity practices, but also to retain the highest performing students--the retention of the highest performing frosh has been a problem for UCSC and cuts across all categories of identity); #8) refine hiring procedures; #9) map the onboarding

experience for employees. We note that the third initiative is already well underway and would require only perhaps more consistent awareness.

#4-Support Generative Interdisciplinary Connections

Goal: The goal here is listed as reducing barriers. This is a negative goal. A positive goal would be to provide support and structures for generating interdisciplinary connections.

Key Outcomes: This is the only Design Principle with a listed percentage of increase. Why 30%? Why not simply “increase interdisciplinary work”? Of the outcomes listed, 2, 4 and 6 seem highest priority and best to us.

Menu of Potential Initiatives:

The initiatives most relevant to CAP here are: #1) create academic priority areas and centers of excellence, to which we would add “foster and nourish already existing priority areas and centers of excellence that generate interdisciplinary connections,” as illustrated by many of the TAWGS; #4) facilitate more joint appointments and course offerings (with the caveat that UCSC does not support assistant professor joint appointments); #6) incentivize team-teaching (across departments and divisions). This last is easily accomplished at a central or supra-divisional level, and relevant, given that many faculty could more fully develop their teaching potential if they were able to explore team-teaching opportunities outside their departments in ways that would not be seen to inhibit their ability to meet departmental teaching expectations.

#5-Expand excellence and innovation in areas distinctive to UCSC [We note that the three areas are not comprehensive]

Goal: The goal seems weak here and aimed primarily at establishing a comparison metric.

Key Outcomes: Most important and critical would be: 1) to increase cross-disciplinary collaborative research (we would phrase it this way rather than focusing on numbers and initiatives); 4 and 5 are fine, but not substantive. They are, rather, focused on appearance and reputation. For number 5 (increase number of “public” [we do not understand what the alternative would be here, and view “public” as a redundant term] faculty appearances), added to this should be “and increase support for conference and event travel.” Currently faculty are entitled to apply for quite meager amounts of conference travel. We note here that the Key Outcomes do not seem to be matched to the Design Principle, and instead largely duplicate the same outcomes from the first Design Principle.

Menu of Potential Initiatives:

Rather than a campaign and a prize (e.g., #1), we suggest creating faculty and graduate student research grants and/or course releases tied to areas of distinctive strength, perhaps on a rotating basis. This is significant to CAP insofar as it would broaden on-campus research opportunities and foster innovation in research and creative activities. Of the initiatives listed, most relevant

and important seems to be the second one, described in this manner: “create a flexible implementation structure for new initiatives and existing strength areas.”

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carla Freccero', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carla Freccero, Chair

On behalf of the Committee on Academic Personnel:

Kent Eaton

Robert Boltje

Lisa Rofel

Larry Polansky

cc: Incoming Senate Chair Kim Lau