

Senate Executive Committee Proposal
Align Admissions and Retention Functions with Academic Administration

Over the past ten years, a set of specific campus issues have emerged within undergraduate areas that are currently managed by administrative units but fall squarely within the plenary authority of the Academic Senate. The most important are admissions, curricular management and retention. The overarching problem is that the academic functions housed in these units have become increasingly isolated, divorced from Senate decision-making. Given that in their academic activities, the function of these units is to enact Senate policy, their accountability needs to be brought in line with Senate oversight. A related problem is budgetary: these functions are in a unit whose budget is not overseen by the Senate in the same detail with which we review the budgets of the academic divisions, for example. The result is that the Senate has lost a critical ability to enforce academic policy in regard to undergraduate education.

This proposal starts from the first principle that the Senate, in its areas of plenary authority, and faculty, in their implementation of instructional delivery, must concentrate on optimizing campus-wide educational objectives such as diversity of the student body, as well as the academic experience of all of our students, from classroom instruction to advising and learning support. Students' ability to get into classes and majors, to get timely advice and support for learning will positively affect retention. Improving graduation rates must be achieved within our resources and through improved coordination between the Senate and the critical role of the administration in supporting this effort. To that end, our fundamental goal is to create a stronger alignment with the campus academic administration of those units most closely involved with admissions, enrollment, and curricular management and retention.

What is the context that has produced this disjunction of the academic mission from Senate oversight? Our current structure, in which these units are affiliated with student affairs and student services, has reached a turning point; having evolved to serve UCSC as a much smaller but growing campus, our academic and administrative structures must now make the transition to the greater academic oversight and accountability needed to ensure continuing, timely improvements in key undergraduate areas. The need for administrative change reflects the maturation of the campus as we approach our fifth decade and the limits of what is likely to be our final phase of enrollment growth. Simultaneously, the continuing UC financial crisis has increased the urgency of addressing the ongoing structural imbalance. Without fundamental reforms, it is difficult to know how to respond to the new UC funding model, one based neither on growth nor on a steady state predicated on growth; UCSC must now plan for how to operate with declining state funds. Thus, while the current budgetary climate has not created the increasing gap between academic functions and administrative structures, that climate (and the virtual certainty that it defines the "new normal") makes it critical to bring into closer alignment with the Senate those administrative units most directly relevant to implementing Senate decisions for undergraduate education.

We have tentatively identified several possibilities for academic and institutional transformation. These reflect positions that the Senate has historically taken, often to no avail or with little or no

practical effect. Over the past decade, Senate reporting has addressed specific issues regarding undergraduate education, including strategies, implementation and accountability for curriculum delivery as well as enrollment and retention (see Appendix A). Some recommendations have been implemented (selective admissions, data gathering); some aspects of the reports are outdated (managing significant enrollment spikes); and some aspects only very recently considered (major migration studies). This proposal arises from this historical context of Senate work and is heightened in its urgency by the current budgetary climate. The importance of maintaining the centrality of the academic mission during budgetary downturns has prompted the timing of this proposal, but the underlying rationale has been shaped over a much longer period.

Previous campus planning efforts, focused on articulating aspirations for excellence and innovation (unimpeachable goals for any academic institution), have fallen short in practice. We still lack specific, measurable targets, both for how to enhance the student educational experience and to leverage our ability to generate non-state funds for the educational mission. Examples of successful changes, such as the move to a selective admissions process and General Education reform, have put our campus in a better position to further modify our policies and practices so that the student experience does not erode further. We must continue to ensure that allocations of resources, both funds and planning efforts, are aligned with campus goals. Put another way, the dialogue on budget cuts must be a dialogue on restructuring around agreed-upon goals.

Admissions/Enrollment Management

Several long-standing enrollment initiatives, such as increasing the non-resident population and achieving HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) status, have the potential to generate additional funding for our educational mission. Neither has yet been fully realized. Most urgent, the campus has not met its target for non-resident enrollment and continues to pay a fine to UCOP of over \$1 million per year. The Senate views this failure as understandable, given the current structure in which the unit responsible for admissions and enrollment management is subsumed within Student Affairs, a Division whose primary responsibility is student services. In a related functional area, the role of the financial aid office is crucial in yielding admissions to meet targets and retention of students in the context where those goals are closely tied to affordability.

Non-resident enrollments and HSI are campus objectives in which the VPDUE should play a key leadership role, along with the Senate's Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA). Currently the VPDUE lacks the authority either to direct the Admissions office to pursue specific goals or to coordinate the activities of the Senate (CAFA) and the Admissions office in achieving those goals. These functions, now isolated in their own sub-units, should be integrated with the Admissions/Enrollment Management unit.

Registrar

The Registrar plays a pivotal role in coordinating curriculum and degree requirements with both students and faculty. The Registrar is responsible for the Catalog, the official document governing all requirements. The faculty control the content of the Catalog, both through departmental actions and through the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), which approves its content. The Registrar executes those decisions, and the Academic Information System (AIS)

is an essential instrument in enforcing the policies and curricular decisions of the faculty. CEP interacts regularly with the Registrar, who sits with the committee. Key to the decision-making process is the VPDUE, who plays an essential role in campus-wide undergraduate academic planning and relies on the AIS data provided by the Registrar for this planning. Yet the Registrar unit reports to a Vice Chancellor outside of this academic loop. The result is a lack of direct oversight and appropriate accountability.

In addition, as a structural problem that manifests itself in a variety of ways, the isolation of the Registrar from units responsible for related academic functions makes it difficult for the Senate to move forward with large campus-wide initiatives. General Education reform, for example, was jeopardized by the lack of functions for implementation that should have been provided by the Registrar's office. In this case, although the academic administration recognized the importance of GE reforms, there was no single designated authority to direct or provide resources to the Registrar to fulfill the essential final step in the reform. As a result, when CEP took the next step in implementation, a campus-wide review of all GE courses, the massive undertaking, conducted on a very short timeline, had to be accomplished by creating a shadow system. Likewise, the comprehensive mapping tool recently developed by CEP will provide concise views of major requirements and pathways, to be used both by faculty in reviewing and redesigning program curricula, and to students in making their choice of majors. In institutionalizing this tool, the VPDUE and the Registrar will work together to make it available. No other representatives from or units within Student Affairs will participate because there is no role or need for them. By the same token, the Registrar's unit is not a student service but an academic support service, specifically tied to delivery of courses, degree programs and academic planning.

As such, we recommend that the Registrar should be overseen by and accountable to an academic administrator.

Retention Services

Retention Services, as it is now structured, is the umbrella for six units. From the Senate perspective the units fall into three categories, distinguished by their relation to the academic mission. The first are units that are clearly defined by the academic functions they support (Educational Opportunity Programs [EOP]; Learning Support Services [LSS]); others are unambiguously student services with no evident academic component (Career Services); others are more dual-function units (Disability Resource Center, Services for Transfer and ReEntry Students, and the Resource Centers), whose functions combine student services and academic components, mixing counseling and academic services. These combination units should be reviewed to assess the effectiveness of their delivery of the academic aspects of their missions. The immediate goal is to locate under academic oversight those units with the most direct impact on the academic success of the students. The larger aim is to ensure on behalf of the student the best division of labor and coordination between the Senate and Student Affairs.

The Senate is especially concerned about the role of Student Affairs in the overall education of students of color: is it as effective as it could and should be? What are the effects of the budget cuts on our ability to retain our students of color? The reduction in TAs, elimination of

courses and class sections may have a disproportionate negative impact on this population. But no data regarding the effectiveness of these units is made available to relevant Senate committees about this impact, so that specific mitigation measures can be made. Similarly, support services for these students need to be in closer communication and alignment with other academic services, such as academic and college advising. We note the isolation of the Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP) from other academic structures. We are concerned at the pattern of misinformation presented on the EOP website along with many “dead” links as well as our experience of faulty academic advising that students receive from EOP. Over the years the Disability Resource Center (DRC) has off-loaded significant costs to the academic divisions; oversight of this unit, we believe, should likewise move to an academic administrator. Moving these two units under the VPDUE may create the closer alignments necessary to leverage the activities among these groups and with other academic structures, such as the Senate, departments and colleges. Learning Support Services plays a critical role in student retention. The unit provides assistance to students in the form of tutoring for many courses that are major pre-requisites. Faculty have a vested interest in having students adequately prepared. The degree to which students can quickly move through curriculum, without needing to repeat courses, has a direct effect on curricular capacity and undergraduate academic planning.

The VPDUE oversees many aspects of the undergraduate experience, including academic advising, another unit directly supporting student academic success. Academic oversight of Learning Support Services, which provides academic instructional support, and whose work in fostering academic success has real resource implications to state funded areas, would more closely align this unit with the academic mission.

Summary

UCSC’s administrative structure is a product of serendipitous growth over many decades. The Division of Student Affairs has historically encompassed a range of activities that exceed the province of student affairs and student services. Some of these functions and their relations to the unit date from the inception of the campus, when the operational business of registering students and record keeping was relatively isolated from academic planning. This was also a historical period when admissions were open and not selective, and when there was simply insufficient academic administration to address learning support. Given that confluence of needs and resources, the portfolio of the Division of Student Affairs seemed a reasonable location for these units. But now, given current budgetary challenges and the need for precise management of enrollments in the context of the curriculum, this institutional structure is both inefficient and ineffective.

A related problem is one of governance. The Senate’s existing committee structure creates close affiliation with the heads of individual units, specifically Admissions, Enrollment Management, Financial Aid and the Registrar, but not with the Principal Officer who oversees these units. Further, some of these areas had, at an earlier time, a predominantly operational focus, but now they are more intimately tied to forwarding our educational mission and therefore require academic oversight. The current structure is not conducive to aligning the priorities of those units with the implementation of decisions over which the faculty have authority.

We recommend the transfer of all the units under the AVC Enrollment Management, to be placed under the direction of the office of the VPDUE, the administrative office charged with coordination and oversight of all academic functions for undergraduate education. Further, we recommend that the transfer of these units be accompanied by the requisite administrative support, the financial, planning and budgetary analysis provided by the Division of Student Affairs. To ensure continuing support, we recommend that some of these central services be extracted from the units within Student Affairs and moved, in parallel with the academic functions, to the office of the VPDUE.

Rather than create new structures, we recommend that all of the admissions and enrollment management units, as well as the specific retention services that we outline above (EOP, DRC and LSS), be placed under the oversight of the VPDUE. The VPDUE provides campus leadership for undergraduate academic affairs and is closely connected to the Senate through several committees. The VPDUE is responsible for undergraduate educational initiatives, advising, and administration of educational policy. The position was relatively recently added to our campus administration, and its portfolio has continued to expand as issues that have never been addressed came to light. It is time for a comprehensive realignment of all our academic functions, and the resources that support them, with those already under the oversight of the VPDUE.

The Senate urges that these changes be implemented as soon as possible, preferably by July 1, 2011. This is particularly important given the timing of deadlines and the way many of these units interface with Senate committees -most notably for admissions and enrollments. Changing at the start of a fiscal year also has the benefits of a clear budgetary trail.

We understand this will be a big practical change for our campus, but it is neither a theoretically fundamental nor a politically radical change. The current decision-making structures would remain essentially unchanged; the difference is that the Principal Officer responsible would be more closely connected with other academic structures, including colleges, academic divisions and the Senate. Because the VPDUE is accountable for many of the educational outcomes of the campus, we believe that the office must have commensurable authority over the key units responsible for implementation of educational policy. The current structure, which we demonstrate has not served the campus well for some time, cannot meet our needs in the future, both short and long term. The time for change is now.

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Susan Gillman, Chair
Joseph Konopelski
Judith Habicht-Mauche
Marilyn Walker
Suresh Lodha
Carla Freccero
David Brundage
Dana Takagi
Sue Carter

Bruce Cooperstein
Brent Haddad
Quentin Williams
Loisa Nygaard
John Tamkun

Appendix A:

Sampling of Senate reports on enrollment management, retention, graduation rates:

2002 CPB Report on Enrollment Management at UCSC: Planning and Information Needs

http://senate.ucsc.edu/cpb/1348_1A.htm

2004 CPB report on Strategic Futures Committee/LRDP Process and the Future of Enrollment Growth at UCSC:

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cpb/CPBGroRptS041430.pdf>

2003 CPB Report on Enrollment Growth and Infrastructure

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cpb/cpb1373.htm>

2006 CEP Report on Undergraduate Graduation Rates:

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cep/CEPretention1495.pdf>

2007 CPB report on Conditions & Strategies for Growth:

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cpb/CPBConditionsforGrowthReport.pdf>

2007-08 CEP Annual Report (retention)

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cep/CEPar0708SCP1588.pdf>

CAFA Annual Reports

<http://senate.ucsc.edu/cafa/>