

March 27, 2008

CP/EVC Kliger  
Chancellor Office  
Kerr Hall

**RE: Part A of the Strategic Academic Plan: A Vision for the Future**

Dear Dave,

The Senate Executive Committee asked all committees of the Santa Cruz Division to review only Part A of the Strategic Academic Plan. The Committees that responded were: Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA), Educational Policy (CEP), Faculty Welfare (CFW), Graduate Council (GC), Planning and Budget (CPB), Privilege and Tenure (P&T), Research (COR), and Teaching (COT). It is a measure of the considerable institutional interest of this document that eight committees each responded at length to a request for comments. From an overarching perspective, the majority of the committees felt that in isolation from a finalized part B (the detailed Academic Plan), it is extraordinarily difficult to address or assess part A. Additionally, the intended audience (and thus purpose) of the document was quite unclear, and we would expect that the nature of the audience would surely shift both the content and the focus of the document. That our committees were collectively unable to discern the prospective audience either speaks to the document's generic character, or to a lack of message targeting. Moreover, the manner, timeframe, assessment and accountability mechanisms by, and through, which the "Vision" and "Guiding Principles" will be implemented are entirely enigmatic—this lack of substance contributes to a sense that this document might be, to put it harshly, a bit of a fluff piece (perhaps with the sole exception of the "Guiding Principles"—but see below). Perhaps this is the intent—but, if it is, we would have hoped for a more charismatic and compelling presentation on behalf of our institution. A significant amount of attention has been brought (and continues to be brought) to bear at UCSC related to planning and mission articulation, including the LRDP and Strategic Futures Committee, the Millennium committee, the ongoing Image Initiative, in addition to sporadic consultants' reports—and yet it still seems difficult for the campus to articulate a concise and focused vision for the future.

In terms of specific revisions, most committees concurred that the language should be made more precise within the document, and specific examples are included where revisions of language or prioritization should take place.

**Overarching Concerns**

*Structure of the "Vision" and "Guiding Principles":* Loosely, the four items included in the "Vision" statement are a general description of campus accomplishments (mostly in terms of

faculty awards, research, and number of programs), a brief, selective and almost apologetically-phrased campus history dealing primarily with Colleges and Departments and an increased role of graduate education, a ten-year old set of bulleted mission statements, and a rather more diffuse current mission statement. If the goal of the “Vision” portion of the document is to provide a mission statement for the campus, then the document should be structured with the mission statements first, and the rest of the document should flow from these. And, if it is defining an institutional mission, then the campus as a whole should be not simply aware of, but actually invested in, the mission.

*The “Guiding UCSC Academic Planning” section:* The initial two paragraphs require the accompanying academic plan for context; if this document is envisioned as free-standing, then these two paragraphs should be redone.

The subsequent “Guiding Principles” could loosely be summarized as: UCSC should be viewed as a single enterprise, with (presumably) an overarching strategic vision (#1), and its available resources will be deployed strategically with realistic goals in mind (#2-5). From a broad perspective, these are simple and sound principles for any enterprise—and, for an external audience, their presentation might appear quite peculiar, given the level of primacy with which they are set forward. However, they implicitly assume that we have clearly defined, well-understood mechanisms for assessing new opportunities and methodologies for strategically deploying resources across the campus (since the principle is that we are, after all, academically one unit). Is this, therefore, an implicit statement that resources will be distributed from, and returned to, the center? It often appears that UCSC’s academic planning occurs (for the most part) in terms of 6 units (five variably communicating divisions and the center)—and this interpretation is fully consonant with the development process of the Draft Academic Plan. Therefore, there seems to be significant operational ramifications of the first principle. Again, without information on timelines and on implementation processes, it is difficult to assess what the effects (if any) of these Guiding Principles actually are. Indeed, many of the Senate committees’ concerns about these principles stemmed from both uncertainty about the mechanisms through which the principles will be implemented, and the potential implications of the principles themselves. The document, if it continues in its current form, should include a section with implementation strategies for the Guiding Principles (timelines and metrics would also serve a valuable role, as well).

*The “Goals and Strategies” section* lists 20 worthwhile strategies (although some are not strategies, but goals—and unquantified goals, as in the Research Infrastructure and Graduate Education Sections) in four different categories, but there are no prioritizations given. This lack of prioritization becomes particularly acute in the context of the last three sentences, which can basically be summarized as – “We won’t be able to do some of these because of budgetary constraints. So, we’ll delay some, and emphasize those that are ‘more central to the highest priorities [whatever those are].’” This lack of prioritization (and an explicit statement that some categories will not be pursued) profoundly weakens this section—and makes it simply appear to be a generic list. In addition to prioritization, we recommend that for those “strategies” that are actually goals, there needs to be some level of quantification—for example, bullet 3 under “Expansion of Research Infrastructure...” might read “Increase the external support for research

from alumni, donors, and foundations by X within Y” where X is a percentage and Y is a timeframe. Additionally, the undergraduate education components did not appear to address key effects on the actual quality of undergraduate education on the campus, such as overcrowded classrooms and needed growth in faculty FTE—a sense was expressed that, taken as a whole, the bullet points associated with undergraduate education sum up to notably little in terms of improving the educational product of the campus.

**There were specific concerns raised as well.**

*Paragraph 2, “A Vision for the Future”*-- The second paragraph, with all the rankings, could be omitted. It reads like a laundry list, vulnerable both to questions of what has been omitted and the source and validity of the data. It will also be quickly outdated. Moreover, in an academic world in which many institutions discuss their Nobel Prize winners and dozens of NAS members, this paragraph may well weaken the argument for excellence rather than strengthening it. Perhaps the document should be written with the presumption of excellence rather than the need to demonstrate excellence.

Alternatively, a more detailed explanation of what the quoted rankings mean might be appropriate: for example, utilizing terms such as “the quality of its research productivity” without explanation is, absent clarification, entirely enigmatic, since productivity implies a quantitative metric. As one committee put it, this description reads like “smoke... throw[n] in the eyes of the reader.”

*Paragraph 3, on the history of the colleges* - the focus here is on how UCSC has developed a number of visible, and now well-recognized interdisciplinary enterprises from the configurations originating in the colleges. The sentence on budgetary commitment should be omitted (this is an operational detail). Condense the last two sentences, which are repetitive, into one:

“As colleges assembled disciplines around broad themes, with faculty and students working at the intersections of traditional disciplines, the campus commitment to innovative interdisciplinary study extended to creating entirely new cross-disciplinary departments (across the Humanities, Arts and Engineering, and the Social, Physical and Biological Sciences) and to shifting established disciplines into new areas and unfamiliar approaches.”

*The UCSC Mission section:* The reproduction of the Millennium Report Committee’s Mission statements reproduces statements that have lost favor on the campus, such as “uncommon commitment”, and makes it look like the bulk of our Mission was arrived at a decade ago. As a forward-looking document, this is probably not appropriate. The paragraph on our current mission should probably be reconstructed into a cohesive and compelling (possibly bulleted) set of mission statements.

*“Guiding Principles:”* Collapse second and third bullet points into one. The first is a principle, the second an operational means by which the principle is be enacted

“UCSC must invest differentially” by “targeting development in areas where we will have the greatest impact.”

The Guiding Principles should be placed in order of priority or importance. The first guiding principle should relate to our academic mission rather than Balkanization issues. Therefore, the revised 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> bullet points should probably be moved first and could include a focus on our service toward state, national and international needs—perhaps something along the lines of:

“First, develop programs in areas that will have the greatest impact, extend our vibrant learning community, and serve the needs of state, national, and world constituencies.”

In the third of the five guiding principles, “unique” should be changed to “specific.” Several committees expressed concern here that without any clarification or qualification, the criterion of “impact” was highly indefinite. In this context, does it imply economic, technological or societal impact? What are the specific division of responsibilities between faculty and the administration in defining and measuring impact?

Fourth bullet point: Put the last line (the principle of disciplines as evolving rather than simply growing) first, with the rest (operational strategies) following.

“Fourth, we should think of disciplines and fields of study as evolving rather than simply growing. To build the campus in this way means incorporating not only new positions funded through increased enrollment but also reconsidering and realigning positions opened by retirement or departure.”

Fifth bullet point: revise as follows.

“Finally, it is critical that we align academic and budgetary processes and priorities, so that planning to meet our goals takes place within the frame of current and anticipated resources.”

*Goals and Strategies:* The vision of graduate education is quite blurry about what the vision of graduate education is with respect to graduate degrees. Initially it is stated that 10-12% of enrollments will be doctoral students, with the remainder being terminal pre-doctoral degrees. However, it is not at all clear how much of the doctoral 10-12% is conceived as being reached through growth in the existing academic divisions; and of this academic Ph.D. growth, how much of this is thought to be achievable through expansion of existing Ph.D. programs vs. establishment of new Ph.D. programs. To what extent are the “one or more” professional schools thought to contribute to the Ph.D. numbers? And therefore, to what extent are the “terminal pre-doctoral degrees” thought to be professional degrees, and to what extent MA/MS elements of existing or newly established academic graduate programs?

Also, enrolling high quality graduate students needs to be emphasized within the Graduate Education Section.

I hope these comments are useful, and would like to emphasize the importance of conveying an effective message both on behalf of our campus, and to our campus constituencies. We would hope that our Public Information Office will also vet the document, and that ultimately a different (and perhaps far briefer) document might be designed for off-campus constituencies. Our viewpoint is that this document could far more effectively reflect and convey the broad goals and aspirations of the campus, and we look forward to an extensively revised version, which we hope will interface well with overall campus messaging efforts and provide a clear and distinctive vision that can be recognized and conveyed both to our campus and those who are interested in learning more about UCSC's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Quentin Williams".

Quentin Williams, Chair  
Academic Senate  
Santa Cruz Division

cc: Chancellor Blumenthal  
VPAA Alison Galloway