

May 7, 2010

Lori Kletzer
Chair, Academic Senate
UC Santa Cruz

RE: Commission on the Future Recommendations

Dear Lori:

The UCSC Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) has read with great interest the First Round of Recommendations from the Commission on the Future. It is our estimation that at least 15 of the recommendations directly concern issues for which BOARS (and thus any campus CAFA) has authority. We comment on these item by item below.

We note the Commission's dedication. What a great deal of work has been performed in a very short time to produce such a long and detailed set of proposals. Even as we find significant flaws in the work, we appreciate the efforts undertaken by so many of our colleagues across the university. We are grateful for the opportunity to response to a first round of recommendations, knowing the great value of a deliberative and iterative process.

We agree with the Size and Shape Working Group when it says: "UC has a solemn responsibility, first, to offer the best possible educational experience, and second, to make this opportunity available to all residents who can best benefit from it. We must be constantly on guard against a gradual erosion of the quality of a UC education. "Talent and academic merit, not economic status, should determine a student's eligibility to come to the University" (p. 13). In examining the recommendations of all the Working Groups, we repeatedly ask the question set out by the Size and Shape Working Group: Will the recommended changes help assure that qualified students in our state have access to a high-quality educational experience?

Given the University of California's (UC) roles and responsibilities in the state, it is essential to protect the multi-campus scope, talent, diversity, and influence of the full system. Although Berkeley and UCLA campuses enjoy positions of privilege and greater per-student financial support by virtue of their long years of existence (relative to the other campuses), the UC will suffer as a system, in both reputation and in achievement, should policies be adopted that explicitly or implicitly separate one or two campuses for favored treatment. The quality of research, teaching, and service on all ten campuses would be jeopardized on each and every campus if stratification were encouraged. Not every academic department on every campus can boast of extraordinary accomplishments, but each campus contains academic jewels, and new outstanding programs are continuing to develop. Any changes that undermine the positions of, say, Irvine or Santa Barbara or Merced would, in the long-term, harm Berkeley and UCLA as members of the UC system. It is to assure the vitality of the full system that the Office of President exists, even in its purportedly slimmed down configuration.

The Dog that Did Not Bark

Before responding to the individual recommendations of the individual Working Groups, we must note one strange anomaly: the absence of transparent data on costs. As the appendices to the report make clear, the impetus of all the work has been the fiscal crisis (p. 132). The entire point of the expansive exercise is to find solutions that are economically sustainable in order to maintain the long-term quality of UC, yet the report is notable for a lack of information (both data and methodology) concerning the economics of UC operation.

Given the emphasis on budgets, we are troubled by the lack of data concerning the cost of educating students, and related data concerning the costs of other university operations (research, administration, service, etc.). The UC Office of President (OP) must have detailed information as to how much it costs generally – or on any of the nine undergraduate campuses – to educate an undergraduate student (in aggregate or by broad sub-discipline). UC is able to make calculations about the costs of doing research, and this is the basis for periodic negotiations in indirect cost recovery. Surely, UC can make and present similar calculations regarding the cost of providing education to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

Some comments in the report (pp. 55-56) notwithstanding, it appears that the cost of educating a student exceeds the funding provided by the state for such a purpose. If the state's per student allocations were sufficient, we would not be in the present crisis. The Access and Affordability Workgroup makes assumptions about the true cost of educating students (e.g., p. 41, p. 42, p. 57). So does the Funding Workgroup (pp. 92-3). But nowhere do actual figures appear in the report.

Several specific recommendations appear to be based on the assumption that the cost of educating an undergraduate student is less than the amount that is charged (tuition plus fees) to non-resident students. On p. 15 of the report, for example, the Size and Shape Working Group makes some assertions about the fiscal implications of admitting non-residents. Without data about the costs of education, assertions such as these are little more than statements of belief, and can not be the basis for major policy decisions. Similarly, the Education and Curriculum Workgroup asserts, without any supporting data, that “offering UC courses to non-UC students ... would bring new dollars to the University” (p.41) but without data on costs, we cannot assume a net-gain in dollars. The assertions made on p. 42 need complete data to gain credibility, including a clear explanation of the methodology as to how cost calculations are made, assumptions, and categorization of funding sources and outflows.

The lack of necessary information makes the processes involved in preparation of the first Commission on the Future report non-transparent. Ironically, several of the suggestions by the different Working Groups called for greater transparency. The Research Strategy Workgroup is most adamant about the need for transparency, but in fact this is a theme that thread through much of the discussion.

The lack of credible data about the costs of education should arouse suspicion. What is signified by the silence of the dog? What, if anything, is being hidden? If we, as loyal members of the UC, have questions about data, assumptions, and methodology, those outside the system will likely have even greater suspicions.

The lack of data on costs makes the Futures Report seem oddly a-historical. A couple of years ago, a system-wide effort by the Academic Senate produced a report on the Rank and Step system. How does the present set of recommendations relate to that effort or to similar efforts at strengthening the 10-campus system? In what ways, if any, do the many recommendations interface with the new Entitlement to Review system that will soon go into effect? Nor is there any reference to the UC Workgroup on Affordability, chaired by Chancellor Birgeneau. And how do the proposed changes relate to historical trends in the college-age population of California. A decade ago OP worried loudly about what it called “Tidal Wave II.” The number of students at the University has expanded greatly, but Tidal Wave II was hardly the tsunami that had been predicted. As Appendix B on page 34 shows, the 1996 entering class numbered 23,822 system-wide, and the 2005 entering class numbered 31,403. Similarly, the increase in transfer students from the CCC was less dramatic than had been anticipated: 7,634 in 1997 to 11,585 in 2006.

Size and Shape

CAFA very much appreciates the thrust of some of the recommendations brought forward by the Size and Shape Workgroup. Specifically, we think it is important to ease the transition from community colleges to the UC.

We agree with the first recommendation of the Size and Shape Workgroup, but have some concerns about it. We agree that UC might welcome more non-resident undergraduate students, and we agree that they add diversity and thus help in the education of our own resident students. We are also glad to see stated the principle: “The increase in non-resident students should not displace funded resident students” (p. 14).

At the same time, we are concerned about two issues. First, we don’t know the mechanism by which one can monitor to make sure that non-resident students do not displace resident students. Second, we are worried about tracking costs. On page 15 of the report, an assumption is made about how much each non-resident student contributes in resources above educational costs. But in the absence of any information about true educational costs, such an assumption seems peculiar.

We view with favor Recommendation 2 and see the move to regularization of lower-division curriculum as consistent with WASC.

We very strongly endorse Recommendation 3. Students transferring from a California community college to the University of California are of utmost importance in meeting the Master Plan for Higher Education. UC Santa Cruz’s future enrollment plans rely on a steady increase of junior-level transfer students who are prepared to begin the upper-division course work for their selected major. The role of articulation and the access to that information is at the core of the transfer function and support in this area is vital to a sustainable pipeline.

The function of articulation relies heavily on both faculty and staff to ensure that appropriate decisions are reached. Once faculty decides upon courses suitable for UCSC course-to-course articulation, professional staff is charged with publishing the information in the ASSIST web site. Decisions of transfer courses applicability to UCSC’s general education requirements are delegated to professional staff as well. UC campuses must have the proper resources for these articulation decisions to be made and disseminated in a timely fashion.

The recommendation from the committee focuses on improvement of the ASSIST web site, and CAFA wholeheartedly agrees that improvements in this area would greatly serve the transfer function. Improvements in ASSIST should include:

1. Ease with inputting new course-to-course articulation decisions.
2. Ease with inputting new general education articulation decisions.
3. Ease with campus articulation changes. Students should know about pre-major requirements and see how well they are meeting the pre-major requirements on each campus.
4. Overall improvement in the end-user experience.
5. Improved reporting capabilities.

CAFA would endorse a more explicit recommendation about the need for resources that feed the ASSIST web site. What people power is required to make articulation decisions that are then captured in the ASSIST web site? We are unclear about the assertion on p. 23 that The Next Generation will require an investment of 2 or 3 million dollars: Is that investment to be borne entirely by the UC or to be shared with the CCC and Cal State partners?

We think Recommendation 5 is fine. We are in favor of centralization of the review of applications and hope that the centralization will be done in a reasonable fashion. There are 14 factors considered for admissions at the undergraduate level, weighed differently by the different campuses. We hope that the central processors will give to each campus for each student not just a global score but also the scores on the fourteen different factors.

Education and Curriculum

The Education and Curriculum Workgroup outlines several very good “Next Steps for Implementation.” Only one of these gives us pause: “Concurrent enrollment across campuses and across segments.” Such a step must be undertaken with an eye to hidden administrative costs.

Concerning the third recommendation, CAFA would endorse a more robust and inclusive part-time degree program that recognizes the need for students, particularly transfer students, to work while attending any University of California campus. While we would prefer that no student had to balance his or her UC education with employment needs, there really is no other option given today’s economic realities.

While the cost of a UC education has continued to climb over the last decade, there have been no significant changes to the University’s part-time degree program requirements in decades. Increasingly, students are working more to offset the increased cost of a UC education, but they do not necessarily qualify for any reduction in their fees. We may be losing excellent students to other colleges and universities – including for-profit providers – that appear to be more inviting to working students.

Counselors in the California community colleges have commented that UC’s part-time degree program seems out-dated and may actually serve as a deterrent to potential transfer students. As the recommendation states, if UC wishes to “expand opportunities for a UC education” to “working professionals,” CAFA sees a revamped part-time degree program as an excellent first step.

On p. 42, we see that the Education and Curriculum Workgroup has identified a next step for implementation of its third recommendation: convene a task force on self-supporting programs. Such a task-force must, we feel, make use of all data (costs as well as revenues) and might shine some light on areas that are currently obscure.

We note that there is a preliminary recommendation on quality. As we note in our general remarks, quality is the critical issue. All changes must be undertaken with a view to sustaining the high quality of the institution with its three related purposes.

Access and Affordability

We are in total agreement with the sentiments put forward in the first two recommendations. Specifically, we agree 100% that “The University should prioritize access for students for whom enrollment at UC represents the most significant benefit” (p. 55). UC’s commitment to providing a visible path to a better life remains a fundamental component of the University’s identity and purpose, and we are glad to see the commitment reaffirmed.

We also support Recommendation 3, which emphasizes the need for commitment to graduate education, particularly in the context of UC’s research mission. However, this recommendation fails to emphasize strongly enough how UC research fuels California’s economy, which is based largely on innovation and creativity. We also note that there are strong links between graduate and undergraduate education, particularly through the involvement of undergraduates in research.

CAFA strongly supports Recommendation 4, the reinstatement of institutional aid for undocumented students. With the rising cost of the UC, the University has become less and less accessible or affordable for undocumented students. The reinstatement of aid would reaffirm the University’s commitment to maintaining access and affordability for all admitted students and help to retain students through graduation. Moreover, implementation of the recommendation would act to correct the situation where undocumented students have essentially been subsidizing other students’ education via the return-to-aid dollars they have been paying but are not able to receive.

For Recommendation 6, the issue at hand seems to be more related with the Master Plan that calls upon the University to be “tuition free” for Californians. If historic precedent is not a concern to the UC, for legal or other reasons, then changing the nomenclature would likely reduce confusion.

Should the name be changed, it is important to keep in mind the adjustments that would be needed for non-residents. Currently, non-residents pay the education fee, registration fee, non-resident tuition and the education fee differential. Should education fees be renamed to in-state tuition, the equivalent to the education fee would need to be built into the non-resident tuition rate.

From a financial aid perspective, there are no issues as long as state statute is modified as needed to ensure that “tuition” is paid by the Cal Grant program for eligible students.

Funding

We endorse the first recommendation and note that it will only be effective if the University seems credible. Transparency is paramount to credibility, and so here too the data on costs of education, research, and service are of paramount importance.

We also endorse the second recommendation. We do not know what the Kual system is or the PPS review (p. 82), but we are glad to know that some areas have been identified as the first ones for improvement (p. 82).

Concerning the Fifth Recommendation, we favor the principle but are cautious about possible practices. CAFA agrees that the predictability that comes with multi-year fees may prove critical for the continued health of the University. Certainly, such predictability will help families plan appropriately for college expenses.

Even as we like the idea of a multi year fee schedule, we are concerned about some possible problems. First, we do not know if we are allowed to replace the Education Fee and the Registration Fee with one fee called Tuition. (We do assume, however, that the University's counsel will know what is legal as well as what is fair and that OP has no interest in tying up University resources in unnecessary legal battles.) We also can imagine some unintended negative consequences:

- Such a fee schedule would make both assessing student fees and refunds as well as awarding student aid far more complex and error prone
- There would be a high risk that each new entering class would be subject to bearing the additional cost of continuing students
- Animosity is likely to build over time as different cohorts of students are required to pay different fee amounts and inequities become apparent
- It would be important to ensure the Cal Grant program is modified to accommodate differential fees since this award pays education and registration fees for eligible students

Should the University move to a multi-year fee strategy, we trust that OP will pay close attention to implementation of the policy to prevent the problems from materializing.

Recommendation 6 of the Funding Workgroup echoes the first recommendation of the Size and Shape Workgroup, and our reaction to this recommendation is the same as our reaction to the first recommendation of the Size and Shape Workgroup.

CAFA appreciates the thrust of Recommendation 7 concerning the drive for Pell Plus. The decision to link the initiative to student graduation rates, rather than to research reputation, is brilliant. Such a coupling will help preserve the quality and accessibility of UC.

Recommendation 9 touches on the most controversial issue in the whole report. Not only do we agree “that differential tuition is premature” (p. 104); we also think that differential tuition may be disastrous. We see differential tuition as one sure way to descend into short-term stratification.

While some may argue in favor of differential fees, we think that stratification would operate to the long-term detriment of the entire system and of each campus in the system. Allowing

differential tuition by campus undermines the greatest strength of the UC system, particularly in the eyes of California residents and the legislature: that UC represents and serves the *entire* state, across a rich diversity of backgrounds, economic conditions, technical needs, and opportunities. All UC campuses share a commitment to academic excellence, but this commitment is undermined (both in practice and appearance) by economic stratification of the system. More specifically, individual UC campuses provide global leadership in particular areas. Perhaps in an idealized world, one would pluck the top departments and program from each UC campus and place them on a single, übercampus that serves as a flagship for the system and state. Of course this approach is not possible, and the fact is that individual UC campuses, *other than the largest and richest*, continue to develop world-class research and teaching programs in existing and newly-developing disciplines. Smaller UC campuses out-compete and outperform larger and wealthier campuses in specific programs, year after year.

Why would the UC want to set up a structure that punishes excellence and innovation when it occurs outside one or two campuses? Why would the UC reduce the potential that the university has for achieving excellence in research, teaching and service? That is exactly what a system of stratification through differential tuition would do, particularly if it feeds a funding spiral that leads to ever greater, campus-by-campus disparities in per-student funding. Such a system would stifle competition within the UC system for development of world-class programs, and would make the UC a greater target for cost-cutting on a statewide basis. All UC campuses are made stronger, including Berkeley and UCLA, because of the strength and financial support of the complete UC system. The UC should be looking for ways to make the full system better, not toss smaller or poorer campuses under the bus. The whole is much, much greater than the sum of the parts.

We are dismayed to see the conclusion about pre-maturity embedded in the text (p. 104) and then to see the sound-bite “allow for the possibility of charging differential tuition by campus” (p. 103). We urge the Commission to minimize the chances of misunderstanding by re-casting the sound-bite as: “delay consideration of differential tuition by campus” or “for a period of N years, do remove the idea of differential tuition by campus from consideration.” We think that five years is the right amount of time for a moratorium. Five years ought to be enough time to see if the other changes have resolved the crisis.

Research Strategies

Several aspects of the recommendations of the Research Strategies Workgroup strike us as important from the point of view of admissions. We appreciate the emphasis on transparency and accountability. We appreciate the assumption that research and teaching are synergistically related. The holistic approach that is so vital for the health of the University shines through the recommendations of the Research Strategies Workgroup. Nevertheless, the Commission on the Future needs to break out costs for instruction and research, and show how ICR is actually used to support the research mission, so that there is a clear justification for modifying ICR rates and policies.

In Sum

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Futures Report. We are impressed with how much has been accomplished in a brief period of time, and we are hopeful that Senate feedback will be taken seriously by the Commission on the Future and by the OP.

Some of the report recommendations are thoughtful, and some are innovative and truly outstanding. Coordination and regularization of administrative functions across campuses is a great idea. Multi-year fee schedules are also extremely important.

Of all recommendations, there are two that have the greatest potential for damaging UC in coming years. First, the financial, academic, social, and political implications of increasing enrollment of non-resident students is not well elucidated, and it would be premature to move in this direction without a better quantitative understanding of the potential impacts. Second, if OP were to decide (contrary to what the Funding Workgroup admonishes in the text) to push for differential campus tuition, much harm may be done to the UC system overall. Zeal for short-term financial gain could result in long-term harm, including a loss of credibility throughout the state and, particularly, within the California legislature.

Sincerely,

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Faye Crosby, Chair Pro Tem
Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid

cc: Senate Committees