

May 6, 2010

To: Lori Kletzer, Chair
Academic Senate

From: Committee on International Education (CIE)

Re: Commission on the Future Working Group Recommendations

Dear Lori,

UC's Education Abroad Program (EAP) provides students with international learning opportunities to enhance their academic experience and prepare them to be effective and responsible citizens of a global society. In this period of metamorphosis, it is essential to preserve the academic quality and accessibility of this exceptional program, which allows UC students to participate in high caliber international programs while earning credit towards graduation.

The Size and Shape Working Group recommends that UC campuses improve the educational quality of the campuses by broadening the geographical diversity of the student body; the Working Group astutely observes that "California's dependence on an increasingly global society and economy requires geographic diversity among the student body" and that non-resident students "enhance [the] pedagogical and educational experience for resident students." EAP's reciprocity agreements with partner institutions bring outstanding foreign students to our campuses and increase awareness of the UC system at many of the top universities worldwide. Reciprocity agreements are essential for our extended-stay immersion programs, which are the most important aspect of EAP; the 3:1 exchange ratio allows EAP to serve as a flexible "eleventh campus," relieving overcrowding and course impaction.

The Size and Shape Working Group notes that "The current fiscal crisis makes it imperative that the University of California reduce redundancies and improve efficiencies across the system and within the campuses... Centralization of certain systems can be to the benefit of individual campuses." UOEAP is an excellent example of efficient centralization: students at all ten campuses can take advantage of programs that could not be cost-effectively run by any single UC campus. Economies of scale allow the careful planning and rigorous oversight needed to maintain the high academic caliber of EAP's programs. While there is room for further improvements in efficiency, it is important to recognize that further cuts to UOEAP's budget will either shift tasks and costs to individual campuses, disproportionately burdening smaller campuses with high levels of EAP participation, or reduce the quality and scope of EAP's offerings.

The Education and Curriculum Working Group observes that “Improved time to degree will result in more available spaces at the University for additional students.” EAP very efficiently leverages resources by enabling students to continue rapid progress towards degree completion while studying away from their home UC campus. Effective advising before and during study abroad is essential if students are to select programs and courses that will satisfy major requirements. Without sufficient staff at UOEAP and campus International Education Offices to provide the required guidance, many students might find it difficult to graduate in four years, reducing the value of EAP in relieving impaction and deterring students for whom a fifth year would be a significant financial burden.

The Access and Affordability Working Group recommends that “The University should prioritize access for students for whom enrollment at UC represents the most significant benefit — including those from low-income families” and cites the “University of California Financial Aid Policy, [which] states that the University’s commitment to enroll a diverse student body requires that financial considerations must not be an insurmountable obstacle to students’ decisions to seek and complete a University degree.” Neither should they be an insurmountable obstacle to students’ decisions to study abroad. The near elimination of general funds for EAP and the shift to an “EAP fee” based funding model jeopardizes EAP’s long-standing accessibility to low-income students. A firm commitment to adequate return-to-aid from EAP fees and preservation of EAP’s reciprocity agreements, which keep down program costs, is called for.

Sincerely,

/s/

Debra Lewis, Chair
Committee on International Education