

May 24, 2024

GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTORS
GRADUATE ADVISORS

Re: April 19, 2024 Memo From the Chairs of the APC Workgroup on the Future of UC Doctoral Education

Dear Colleagues,

At its May 2, 2024 meeting, Graduate Council (GC) discussed the [memo released by the chairs of the APC Workgroup on the Future of UC Doctoral Education](#), titled, "Expectations for non-graded academic effort in Ph.D. and MFA programs." This memo was prepared in an effort to clarify the authority and responsibility of UC faculty in assessing graduate student progress. We agree with much of what was presented in this APC Workgroup memo, but found that some of the language was open to misinterpretation, particularly if interpreted narrowly or taken out of context. This is concerning to GC because there remains a lot of confusion around graduate student assessment, academic progress, and related topics, particularly because graduate students may take on a variety of academic and/or paid roles during their time at UCSC.

While it might seem as if past and future contract negotiations have the potential to change relationships between faculty mentors/advisors and their students, GC wishes to assure UCSC faculty that these critical relations *have not and will not* be changed:

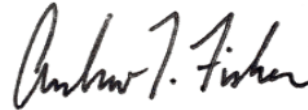
- UC faculty authority for oversight and assessment of academic progress is infrangible and applies whether or not a graduate student is supported with a fellowship; whether or not a graduate student is employed as a researcher, teaching assistant, or in any other capacity; and/or whether or not a graduate student is enrolled in a traditional or independent study course.
- UC faculty oversee and have plenary authority over all graduate programs, degrees, and courses, and are responsible for setting disciplinary and interdisciplinary standards and assessing the academic progress of students they advise.

Academic activities, mentoring, and assessments are developed and implemented for the benefit of graduate students, in their pursuit of advanced degrees, by helping to assure that students remain on track and on schedule, have clear goals and expectations, and establish themselves as experts and professional leaders in their chosen fields. Mentoring, collaboration, and creative discovery may occur through a wide variety of activities and methods, on the basis of both formal and informal interactions. We must avoid being distracted by ways in which graduate student financial support and employment may vary over time.

Graduate students, education, and research/creative activity are critical to our academic and professional missions. This is one of reasons why many faculty work so hard on behalf of our graduate student colleagues, including efforts to support them financially. It would be ideal if there were sufficient funding so that all UC graduate students could be financially supported throughout their academic careers, but we should be clear that financial support and work status

make no difference for assessing academic progress. We know that having more financial support would help to improve graduate student outcomes (data and analyses shown in the [ITF report](#) demonstrate this), and we will continue to work strenuously to improve financial conditions for all of our students. Academic goals and schedules were developed and are applied independent of student funding and/or paid work, and we should not conflate or entangle one with the other.

Sincerely,



Andrew T. Fisher, Chair
Graduate Council

cc: Cynthia Larive, Chancellor
Lori Kletzer, Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
Jasmine Alinder, Dean, Humanities
Bryan Gaensler, Dean, Physical & Biological Sciences
Katharyne Mitchell, Dean, Social Sciences
Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Dean, Arts
Alexander Wolf, Dean, Baskin School of Engineering
Assistant Deans
Peter Biehl, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
Stephanie Casher, Assistant Dean, Graduate Division
Herbie Lee, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs
Patty Gallagher, Chair, Academic Senate
Matthew Mednick, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Susannah Scott, Co-Chair, APC Workgroup on Future of Doctoral Programs at UC
Gillian Hayes, Co-Chair, APC Workgroup on Future of Doctoral Programs at UC
Dean Tantillo, Chair, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs