Report on Aspirational Graduate Growth at UCSC

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

Despite its history of receiving one of the lowest shares of per-student funding of any of the University's ten campuses, UCSC has managed to evolve into a dynamic and well-respected institution that provides significant service to the region, state, and nation. The recent initiative to redress the State’s historical practice of providing less funding per student relative to our sister campuses (‘rebenching’) places this campus in a strengthened position to further its stature in the area of research and research-driven education. The increased funding has been tied formally, via conditions imposed by UCOP, to the goal of increasing the ratio of academic doctoral students to undergraduates to 12%, a significant increase relative to our current ratio of approximately 7%. The rebenching resources represent, in some sense, partial forward-funding, towards the “aspirational” goal of 12%, of resources associated with the higher cost of educating more Ph.D. students, leading to the use of the term “aspirational graduate growth” to refer to the increased focus on academic doctoral education in response to the rebenching incentive.

Our campus has as of yet received only a fraction of this anticipated relative funding increase. With the recent passage of Proposition 30 and the associated stabilization of UC funding, our campus might expect the remaining implementation to materialize roughly as proposed. It is of interest to the Senate to understand how rebenching resources that have already arrived on campus have been allocated, and to engage the discussion of how further rebenching resources will be allocated.

An analysis performed by the Division of Graduate Studies has explored the implications of reaching towards the 12% goal under a straw scenario that would grow Ph.D. enrollments in a way that would largely preserve the existing disciplinary and programmatic shape of the campus. While no constituency has espoused this as an optimal approach in the deployment of rebenching resources toward the goal of increasing Ph.D. enrollments and overall campus stature, the exercise provides an important benchmark in our development of an understanding of what will be required of the campus and its faculty, staff, and administrators in order to reach toward the 12% goal. Other possible principles for guiding the allocation of rebenching resources, demonstrably associated with but not explicitly indexed to achieving the 12% goal, have been mentioned. For example, the campus could use the resources to strive towards Association of American Universities (AAU) status; it might also focus a significant fraction of them in a coordinated effort to develop a new component of the campus’ instructional and research activity that would offer the prospect of significantly transforming the campus’ profile. Although such an initiative might be launched in any academic disciplinary area, an example of such an initiative is provided by the development of the Baskin School of Engineering over the past decade.

The Graduate Council report will begin with a presentation by VPDGS Miller on how existing rebenching resources have been deployed to date, and on specifics of the DGS analysis and planning mentioned above. The presentation will be followed by a discussion moderated by Graduate Council Chair Schumm.
Respectfully submitted;
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