

**Graduate Council Statement of Support for Recommendations from the Implementation
Task Force for Inclusive Excellence in Graduate Education (ITF) Report
May 5, 2023**

UCSC is at a critical point in considering how graduate education, training, mentoring, and professional preparation is to be accomplished, supported, and integrated with other campus activities. New labor agreements and contracts for graduate students serving as teaching assistants and graduate student researchers are important for stabilizing and advancing this essential work, but there are choices to be made. Our campus needs an integrated effort to secure and sustain funding, mentoring, training, and professional development for graduate students. Each graduate program is different, of course, but they all share these basic needs. [The ITF report](#) is a detailed and nuanced, data-driven analysis of student success and degree outcomes, and it describes multiple challenges UCSC faces in developing and maintaining a world-class graduate enterprise. The report offers a roadmap to reimagine how graduate students and programs can thrive at UCSC, an R1 institution with a proud history of innovation, creativity, and impact. The need is urgent, and requires significant and coordinated action.

Graduate Council notes that the opportunity before us is unique and will not last for long. In addition to having newly negotiated labor contracts and the ITF report, the campus is preparing for WASC review and developing a Strategic Academic Plan ("*Leading the Change*"). Verily there has never been a better chance to re-envision what we want to be as a center of excellence in graduate education.

The ITF worked for over a year, poring through data, memos, policies, spreadsheets, plots and other information. Now that this task force, comprising dozens of faculty, staff, administrators, and graduate students, has completed its work - the most comprehensive analysis of its kind for the UCSC campus - it is time to implement a targeted and coordinated plan, as the task force recommends. Graduate Council supports without reservation the recommendations of the ITF report, and urges that plans be put in place to actively and aggressively move towards implementation.

Graduate Council has some concerns. Most importantly, the ITF report presents a package of unified and linked recommendations. These must not be picked apart, delayed, and downsized so that we end up with partial, piecemeal, and incomplete implementation. We have already tried that mode of operation, and it did not work. The graduate enterprise is part of a complex and interdependent *ecosystem* – it does not function by itself, or as parts in isolation. Graduate programs are fundamental to broader successes in teaching, research, and service.

GC is also concerned that patience is wearing thin. Many of us have served on committee after committee, developing plan after plan, only to see earlier initiatives and commitments abandoned. Success requires collaboration, persistence, trust, and a willingness to focus on long-term goals and broad achievements, across divisions and programs. We need to implement changes that will result in some immediate improvements, while building a strong

foundation for longer term stability. If we have any hesitation in making necessary commitments, we must ask: *If not now, when?*

GC realizes that the ITF recommendations come with costs, but we should be clear about the alternative costs that the campus has chosen to accept in recent decades (often implicitly) in the absence of a comprehensive plan. There have been tremendous costs in training graduate students who separate from UCSC without degrees, and additional costs in having Ph.D. students take additional years to finish their degrees. There are profound costs resulting from not supporting adequate representation in our graduate student programs, which has additional negative impacts on faculty, staff, and undergraduate students, and throttles other opportunities. Even before the new graduate student labor contracts, we were at a tipping point at which potential mentors have been financially disincentivized from securing GSR funding. Recommendations in the ITF report address these issues and will encourage faculty to raise more external funding, improve mentoring and professionalization, engage and empower partnerships with graduate programs and UCSC Development, enhance representation, and add value for the whole campus community.

We also need to consider the numbers and balance of PhD, MFA, and MA/MS programs and degrees across campus. We need clear, actionable, and accountable targets and metrics (program by program) through which we can state goals, assess existing conditions, and track progress over time. The campus must also decide how UCSC will engage with faculty, staff and graduate students in delivering on our undergraduate teaching mission. Providing more funding to graduate students so that they can focus on their studies could result in fewer quarters during which they are available to work as teaching assistants. Let's be clear in noting that the old system, by which many students worked as TAs far more frequently than was consistent with their graduate training and professional needs, was inequitable and unsustainable. We must be transparent and holistic in considering issues of this kind.

Perhaps most importantly, we have to ask: *What do we want to be as a graduate institution?* If we are being open and forthright in stating our ambitions, then surely our current and future graduate student colleagues and programs deserve no less than a unreserved commitment to thoughtful, integrated, and comprehensive implementation of self-consistent policies that support the graduate mission.