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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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## FACULTY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (FLA)

*Subject: “Impact through Inclusion: A Future for Self-Governance” (FLA 2021 Academic Senate Study and Recommendations)*

Dear members of the 2020-21 Faculty Leadership Academy:

We would like to thank the members of the 2020-21 Faculty Leadership Academy (FLA) for the time and thought they devoted to preparing the report on faculty governance at Berkeley. The findings of the survey and interviews conducted will be invaluable in charting future directions for the Academic Senate, and the report offers rich insight and many constructive suggestions. Our comments here are a preliminary response to the report; we expect to be thinking about this report for some time, as we work to sustain and strengthen the Academic Senate and faculty governance at Berkeley.

It is our conviction that the Academic Senate is generally functioning well at Berkeley. Faculty participation in Senate committees is high and the views of many more faculty are heard and heeded by the Senate leadership through various formal and informal channels of communication. The university administration meets regularly with the Senate leadership, and through this consultation process the Senate has considerable influence on all major campus decisions.

Even if not all faculty are aware of the work the Academic Senate does, all faculty benefit from it—for example (and perhaps most importantly) in the way tenure and promotion processes are transparent at Berkeley and never vulnerable to silent intervention by upper administration. At many crucial moments of decision-making and policy-setting during the pandemic, also, it has been obvious that faculty have a strong voice, and that the administration listens. But we grant the point made in the “Impact Through Inclusion” report, that this state of affairs is not visible to all faculty (in part perhaps because many have not worked on a campus *without* such a strong practice of faculty governance). We agree with the report’s observation that the power of the Senate is in part dependent on the specific personalities in the administration at a given moment, but would also note that Berkeley has a strong culture of shared governance, passed down from administrators to their successors (as well as laterally among members of the administration) that safeguards the position of the Academic Senate as a key voice in the decision-making process.

The report identifies four broad areas of activity and concern. We will comment on each of these separately, responding to recommendations made in the report and outlining the steps we plan to take to address them.

## **I. Communication and Transparency**

It is certainly desirable to increase faculty awareness of the Academic Senate and faculty governance. Beginning this year we will distribute the *Senate Monthly* (formerly *The Fortnightly*) as a CalMessage addressed to all faculty and will use it to highlight the work of Senate committees, perhaps featuring a key issue or committee action in each issue. The *Senate Monthly* will provide updates on projects undertaken by Senate committees and/or discussed by DIVCO, to ensure that faculty are aware of the results of their work. We will also urge the campus leaders who conduct workshops and orientations for faculty (including tenure workshops and orientations for new chairs) to explain the role of the Academic Senate and the ways it serves faculty.

Another conduit for raising the profile of the Senate and making faculty feel more connected is the form faculty receive each year asking them to volunteer for Senate service. Beginning this year we plan to preface that form with a single-page explanation of what the Senate does for faculty, including a list of bullet points emphasizing the main areas in which the Senate promotes faculty interests and well-being. Also beginning this year the Committee on Committees intends to send a letter to faculty who volunteered but were not selected for committees, thanking them for their willingness to serve and briefly explaining the circumstances.

We have given serious consideration to the report's suggestions for achieving broader faculty representation to the Senate, including expanding the Divisional Council (DIVCO) to include delegates from departments and creating a process by which any member of the faculty could propose issues to be taken up by DIVCO or Senate committees. Our sense at this point in time is that the advantages of increasing access in these ways would be outweighed by the greatly increased administrative complexity of what is already a complex operation. Instead we hope to provide better orientation and support for the elected members of DIVCO, to optimize both their participation in DIVCO's deliberations and their communication with the faculty as a whole.

## **II. Strategic Planning**

With the hope of making all Senate committees more effective and action-oriented, we have already begun to implement enhanced training and agenda-setting exercises for committee chairs. These include transition meetings for the chairs of all Senate committees and a streamlined Senate orientation focused on leading effective meetings and identifying strategic priorities for the year for each committee. We are looking at consolidating some committees, in the interest of streamlining and balancing workloads; however, any changes are likely to be minimal, since the Senate undertook a similar exercise in 2009 and reduced the number of its committees at that time.

## **III. Incentives**

Perhaps the most significant recommendation the FLA report makes in this category is that the campus should standardize the course relief granted for serving as chair of the Senate committees with the heaviest workloads. In their conversations and survey the FLA has discovered that one

committee chair was granted course relief, while the next chair of the same committee (whose FTE was located in a different division) was not. We believe this to be an isolated instance, and are confident that course relief for committee chair assignments is standardized across all campus units. Rather than moving toward offering course relief for a larger number of Senate positions, we will prioritize keeping the work of Senate committees manageable.

Regarding service expectations in merit and promotion cases, we are less concerned than is the FLA about communication with faculty. The report specifically suggests that few faculty are aware that an exceptional record of service (which may include Senate service as one component of the overall record) can be the basis for an acceleration in merit and promotion reviews. It is the job of department chairs and deans to make sure that faculty at each career stage know what level and kinds of service are expected, and our sense is that this message is generally conveyed clearly. Expectations for service are discussed at the orientations for new chairs and deans conducted by the Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty and are thoroughly laid out in the Berkeley Manual of Academic Personnel (BMAP; see especially [The Record of Service](#)).

#### **IV. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging**

The report identifies two challenges relating to the composition of DIVCO and Senate committees. On the one hand, it is possible that too great a service burden is falling on women and members of under-represented minorities (URM), while at the same time (the report suggests) the membership of Senate committees may not be fully reflective of the diversity of the campus.

These two intersecting issues are endemic to all service roles on campus, and Senate leadership has been working to address them for some time. The Committee on Committees (COMS), which appoints members to the other Senate committees, has long made diversity a priority in identifying potential committee members, and COMS has generally been successful in getting significant URM representation on committees and in identifying allies to join committees, even if the results may vary from year to year. We are proud of the progress the Senate has made in this area, while acknowledging that much more work remains to be done. Beginning this year COMS plans to begin its work with an overview of the membership of each Senate committee in terms of gender, ethnic, and racial diversity. This will aid COMS in setting priorities for the selection of new members for each committee. COMS also hopes to work with a Senate analyst to gather existing data on the demographics of committee membership into a single database that could become a resource for the work on COMS in the future, although achieving this will depend on the availability of funding and staff time.

The report also urges that Senate to strive to be more central and more effective in improving the campus climate and promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). Specifically, the report suggests that the Budget Committee (BIR) should make departments' commitment to DEIB instrumental in the FTE allocation process, but in fact these matters already figure in BIR's FTE deliberations. The report also suggests that the Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI) should consider anti-racism and anti-discrimination as part of its review of new courses. In our view there are better avenues for instructing and motivating faculty in creating inclusive learning environments, including workshops run by the Center for Teaching and Learning and

the Office of Equity and Inclusion, as well as initiatives at the departmental level that can guide faculty in best practices for inclusive teaching in specific subject areas.

Every committee of the Senate is attuned to the values of DEIB; issues of diversity and inclusion are in the foreground for the Graduate Council, the Undergraduate Council, COCI, BIR, and for DIVCO. Over the coming months we plan to work with the new Vice-Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion to think about campus strategic initiatives; we look forward to engaging in shared governance to work with Vice-Chancellor Matos to support and promote DEIB on our campus.

As should be clear from the foregoing discussion, the FLA report has already had a significant positive impact on the way the Senate envisions its role on campus and communicates with faculty. In some areas where the perceptions of the Senate leadership may diverge from the conclusions drawn in the report, the difference may arise from differing understandings of how the Senate interacts with the campus as a whole. We see one important function of the Senate to lie in connecting the campus's various units, constituencies, and administration offices, and set a premium on using the *shared* aspect of shared governance to create the best possible experiences for faculty and students. In some cases, the appropriate role for the Senate may be to support another office or unit in its work or to amplify that work. In conclusion, we thank the Faculty Leadership Academy once again for its sterling work in preparing this report, and we look forward to working with FLA alumni and future members of the Academy in strengthening and improving the work of the Senate.

Sincerely,



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