

# UCLA Academic Senate

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January 25, 2021

Emily Carter  
Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost

**Re: Memorandum Regarding Transparency in Searches and Hiring**

Dear Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Carter,

At its meeting on January 21, 2021, the Executive Board of the UCLA Academic Senate reviewed the attached memorandum from the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) Chairs. The Executive Board members expressed unanimous support for the memorandum.

The key requests are: (1) as quickly as possible, remove any remaining uncertainty about the disposition of any currently outstanding proposals for search authorizations in AY2020-21; (2) articulate and then communicate to all stakeholders a clear and transparent plan and logic for the allocation of searches in the coming year(s) as soon as possible; and (3) to be bold in the taking on all reasonable financial risk in targeting the largest number of faculty appointments that our current budgetary forecasts can justify.

We encourage efforts to increase transparency about the status of searches, provide clear plans for future searches, and hire additional faculty to promote academic excellence, diversity, and equity. At this moment in time, we have an opportunity to build the excellent and diverse faculty body that the future demands of the Academy.

Thank you for your on-going attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Shane White  
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

Encl.

Cc: Gene Block, Chancellor  
Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate  
Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate  
April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate  
Emily Rose, Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP  
Chairs of the UCLA Faculty Executive Committees:  
Earl G Freymiller, School of Dentistry  
Stuart Gabriel, Anderson Graduate School of Management

Eunice Eunkyung Lee, School of Nursing  
Michael C Lens, School of Public Affairs  
Jeffrey B Lewis, College of Letters & Science  
Peter B Lunenfeld, School of the Arts & Architecture  
Chon A Noriega, School of Theater, Film, and Television  
Edith S Omwami, School of Education & Information Studies  
Nader Pouratian, School of Medicine  
Joanna C Schwartz, School of Law  
Catherine Ann Sugar, School of Public Health  
Tsu-Chin Tsao, School of Engineering and Applied Science  
Elizabeth Randell Upton, School of Music

Date: January 13, 2021

Re: Memorandum Regarding Transparency in Searches and Hiring

From: Members of the Council of Faculty Chairs

To: Prof. Shane White, Academic Senate Chair

Dear Prof. White,

We write in unanimity as chairs of UCLA's Faculty Executive Committees regarding current and future plans for the hiring of ladder-track faculty and especially hires to renew our faculties following retirements or other losses. We are requesting that you submit this memorandum to the Executive Board of the Academic Senate, and then to present these pressing concerns to Executive Vice Chancellor / Provost Emily Carter. We understand that the university faces great uncertainty and substantial financial retrenchment and that these conditions may well extend for years to come. We very much appreciate the great need this creates for deliberate, wise, and careful planning. Unfortunately, the ability of our schools and divisions to be full partners in that needed planning and in securing the best possible future for UCLA is currently compromised by a lack of specific, clear, and consistent articulation from university leadership about the university's future hiring both in the immediate near term and in the years that lie ahead.

For example, even at this late date, some of our units remain uncertain about the scope of faculty hiring for the current year. It is our understanding that searches to fill positions that began in AY2019-20 and remain unfilled have been allowed to carry over for AY2020-21. However, whether the only requested searches to be approved this year are or will be those that are carryovers from last year remains somewhat opaque. Moreover, we have received little information about plans for the approval of faculty searches AY2021-22. We cannot work to secure our collective futures without timely access to this information.

We write to ask you to work with the Executive Board to communicate the following concerns and requests to EVC/P Carter, so that she may: (1) as quickly as possible, remove any remaining uncertainty about the disposition of any currently outstanding proposals for search authorizations in AY2020-21; (2) articulate and then communicate to all stakeholders a clear and transparent plan and logic for the allocation of searches in the coming year(s) as soon as possible; and (3) to be bold in the taking on all reasonable financial risk in targeting the largest number of faculty appointments that our current budgetary forecasts can justify.

The argument for our first request is obvious. We are already in the second quarter of the 20-21 academic year and if we are to be competitive in recruiting top scholars at either the junior or senior level for positions to commence on July 1, 2021, we must be able to move forward now. Alternatively, if outstanding proposed searches are not to be authorized, we must begin to revise our hiring and teaching plans for AY2021-22 and beyond.

Our second request is founded on our faith in the system of shared governance that has served our institution well through good and bad times for decades. The question of how to allocate searches and replenish faculty losses is central to the University's mission and to the academic programs over which senate faculty have authority, and as such of central concern to the FECs of our various schools. Senate faculty must continue to have a say in long-term planning, even, or perhaps most critically, in periods of retrenchment when difficult choices must be made. Because needs for new faculty are likely to outstrip opportunities for hiring for the foreseeable future, developing not only broad strategic plans, but also the specific operational search plans that are essential to minimizing rancor, infighting, and anxiety. The need for such planning is paramount for effective administration, good governance, and commity during a time in which departments and programs that face existential threat will have "to wait their turn" to hire. The sooner that we can come to a common and transparent understanding of the likely scope of future hiring and how searches will be prioritized, the sooner we can build consensus around optimal local hiring plans that will allow us to best use the hiring opportunities that we will have. The longer we wait to begin this process, the more immediate the peril faced by each department and program will seem, and the harder it will be to generate the necessary cooperation and consent around shared goals. We need strong and consultative leadership in this area and we need it as soon as possible.

Finally, we call for bold action in faculty hiring in the face of the financial risks both because these challenging economic times also create rare opportunities for impactful and efficient hiring and because the risks of inaction are themselves substantial. With no growth in faculty ranks over the last dozen years and already missing much of the early to mid-career cohort that would have hired between 2009 and 2012 had it not been for the Great Recession, the excellence of our research and teaching programs are now left dangerously vulnerable to the further losses of faculty that we face at present and over the next several years. Cohorts of faculty brought to UCLA during periods of expansion in the 1970s and 80s who have anchored our scholarly standing for decades are retiring. Without aggressive action to replenish those losses as they arise, we will be faced in the future with the daunting (and more expensive) task of rebuilding excellence rather than simply maintaining it. Furthermore, given the momentous social movements of 2020 and that anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion (AEDI) are central to our mission in the 21st century, the importance of hiring new, full time, tenured and tenure track faculty from a wide and diverse pool is absolutely vital and should not be delayed. In this regard, we applaud the announced Rising to the Challenge Initiative and the important steps that it will allow us to make toward greater diversity and inclusion. Those of us who were at UCLA before and after the Great Recession of more than a decade ago remember that slowing/stopping the replacement of departing and retired faculty had a deleterious impact on diversity. We fear that opportunities to change the composition of the faculty to reflect the student body will stall under similar austerity today.

On the other hand, the financial uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 crisis also creates opportunities that we should be bold in taking. Our position at the top of the undergraduate rankings and the excellent financial management that UCLA has enjoyed over the last decade

leave us in a stronger position than that of many of our peers. It is now a “buyer’s market” for top academic talent, especially at the junior level. We need to be in that market to bring top young talent to UCLA at a time when the competition will be relatively low. Bold action now will give us the opportunity to refresh our faculty with an infusion of brilliant scholars that would be very hard to assemble in the more competitive environment of an economic upturn.

To conclude, we urge UCLA’s Administration to draw on the lessons of the last recession. In that case, our decision to dramatically curtail new searches and hires reduced our scholarly excellence and undercut our AEDI efforts. Through bold action and a spirit of close cooperation, we can do better. We look forward to working with EVC/P Carter for a stronger, more inclusive, and diverse UCLA and to overcome the challenges that we face today and reach for the bright horizon beyond.

Thank you,

Chairs of the UCLA Faculty Executive Committees

Earl G Freymiller, School of Dentistry  
Stuart Gabriel, School of Management  
Eunice Eunkyung Lee, School of Nursing  
Michael C Lens, School of Public Affairs  
Jeffrey B Lewis, College of Letters & Science  
Peter B Lunenfeld, School of the Arts & Architecture  
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Joanna C Schwartz, School of Law  
Catherine Ann Sugar, School of Public Health  
Tsu-Chin Tsao, School of Engineering and Applied Science  
Elizabeth Randell Upton, School of Music

n.b. The Engineering FEC supports the overarching goals of this memorandum, but feels point number (3) above offers opinions and issues beyond the scope of the 2020-2021 faculty hiring and 2021-22 planning, so that portion is not supported.

The Anderson FEC has not had a chance to vote on this letter, but the chair is signing this memorandum in order to demonstrate solidarity and provide unanimous support.