January 26, 2021

Shane White, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: UCLA IT Assessment GOIT Executive Summary

Dear Chair White,

At its meeting on January 13, 2021, the Council on Research (COR) had an opportunity to review the UCLA IT Assessment GOIT Executive Summary. Members offered the following comments:

1. IT services centralization: Members weighed in on the advantages and disadvantages of centralized IT services. Is there a way in which centralized IT services can be nimbler? What is being planned for department-level services and support for the many departments that already have IT services? Is there a path through which existing IT services that already provide excellent support can be preserved? COR would like to underscore that in many cases IT centralization would be detrimental to the work of many areas on campus. It is important to COR to take into consideration the different concerns and voices. In particular, if there are existing IT resources that work because they have supported research enterprises historically, there should be mechanisms that allow those to thrive while providing similar access to departments with more limited resources. As examples, the Social Sciences Center for Education Research and Technology and the David Geffen School of Medicine DGIT already provide IT support and resources to its members and there have been concerns regarding centralizing many of those capabilities, from impacts on research infrastructure to loss of institutional memory. Some members had first-hand experience in departments that transitioned from local IT support to a centralized one. While there may be advantages to centralization, there is no transparency about the prioritization of issues and faculty have no knowledge of there being a database to manage cases (helpdesk). With centralization there is also the risk of <u>costs</u> to units and departments where existing servers may be currently more affordable.

2. Legacy systems: Similarly, other members expressed concern over legacy systems and websites and what would be done with that information if departments on campus were to move to a more centralized IT model. There should be a way to preserve legacy work, which is the result of years of faculty labor, without causing disruptions and increasing costs for the campus. Important records of research are in these systems. Members observed that there have been unilateral decisions that disrupt,

and even destroy, the ability of individuals to do their research. It is not sufficient to state that existing systems will be phased out; in order to do that, there need to be concrete systematic systems or alternatives in place. Legacy platforms are in most cases the result of faculty efforts in research. Taking a slow approach that updates and transitions all legacy systems will preserve and ensure access to datasets through systematic archiving or transitioning to new platforms.

3. <u>Communication</u>: Finally, effective communication regarding cybersecurity and ensuring transparency to promote trust would advance data security. Opportunities for improving communication could include annual reports on initiatives and updates, ensuring flexibility in how information is received (text, email, website updates). Engaging existing compliance and research safety officers to tackle cybersecurity communication. Furthermore, websites and their lack of flexibility for website platforms compliance and implementation limits the ability to support research endeavors.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. If you have any questions for us, please do not hesitate to contact me at julianmartinez@mednet.ucla.edu or via the Council's analyst, Elizabeth Feller, at efeller@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Julian Martinez, Chair
Council on Research

cc: Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect,
        Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
        April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
        Elizabeth Feller, Principal Policy Analyst, Council on Research
        Members of the Council on Research