April 9, 2021

Shane White, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Moreno Recommendations Implementation Committee Report

Dear Chair White,

At its meeting on April 7, 2021, the Council on Research (COR) had an opportunity to review the Moreno Recommendations Implementation Committee (MRIC) Report. After vigorous discussion, members and student representatives shared the following comments:

Members were discouraged by the lack of progress made since the report was released. Some were particularly affected by the faculty accounts shared on the reports. The Moreno Report is an example where external pressure prompted an introspective review that translated into tepid action and modest initiatives. The social movements of the past year have accelerated implementation of some of the MRIC report’s recommendations, again highlighting how acute external pressures appear to be the main drivers of progress.

Some COR members have been involved in working groups related to the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Task Force and offered comments related to that work. For example, a few members stated that the hiring freeze should have been avoided. It was a missed opportunity to diversify the faculty.

Other members acknowledged that while there have been efforts such as Rising to the Challenge, these are not sufficient. In many ways, inequality has increased through this pandemic, which is visible in the research environment. More specifically, is the university prepared to prioritize research, champion and fund projects that have a diverse focus, and provide a space to access research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to make sure there is equity and diversity in those spaces?

Undergraduate students identified issues around access to research opportunities. It appears that many students face considerable barriers in accessing research opportunities while completing their undergraduate studies. Student representatives shared their experience, and frequent frustration, around the many obstacles, lack of opportunities and inequity. Members wondered whether MRIC had considered the opportunities presented to transfer students. They have a shorter period of time to develop research skills at the university and are generally a more diverse group of students. What opportunities do they have? The university could consider investing in a program that would partner faculty and BIPOC students for research purposes, to break
down existing barriers. Members expressed that there is currently a significant disconnect in this area, and a suggestion was made that teaching assistants may serve as bridges to overcome these gaps.

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, Academic Senate
    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