April 10, 2021

To: Shane White, Chair
    Academic Senate

Re: Moreno Recommendations Implementation Committee Report

As requested, the Academic Senate Committee on Teaching (COT) discussed the Moreno Report Implications Committee (MRIC) report during its April 6, 2021, meeting. There was a brief but robust discussion the committee believe is important to share, in part because of our planned future sunsetting and charge related to teaching (both graduate and undergraduate). The response below includes some specific quotes from committee members, contextualized to reflect the larger discussion.

The COT members see the Moreno Report, UCLA’s response, and the MRIC’s work as addressing “serious systemic issues” and charting important “paths forward” for the institution. Several offices, positions, initiatives and other developments outlined in the report have already led to noticeable changes on campus. Chair White’s charge to all committees, councils, and senate officers throughout this year to consider how to address racial and social inequities in our positions and charges are one concrete example of this spread beyond some of the more institutionalized initiatives from the report.

The MRIC is “compelling,” and we know the work is ongoing. However, the committee discussed how the problems it seeks to address are still pervasive. “Administrative statements on commitments to change have yet to be fully realized” and what the university has done, to date, “only touches the edge of the issues.” We are glad this is an ongoing discussion and hope that it reflects and ongoing effort that continues to lead to increased equity and inclusion in areas we still see it lacking and other areas where we have yet to realize the full extent of the negative impacts.

Knowing that there is much work ahead and that future or standing committees tasked with specific goals and with much more information and expertise be the ideal drivers of change, our discussion coalesced around one of the stakeholders we saw less discussion of in the report: graduate students. Having just reviewed an impressive set of nomination packets detailing the efforts of outstanding graduate teaching assistants, we not only know our graduate students are tremendously talented, but also that their experience is one affecting the entire campus. They are, of course, students themselves, but they are also our undergraduates’ TAs, mentors, advisors, and instructors thus impacting our undergraduate student body’s experiences. They are faculty’s research and teaching assistants and collaborators. They are the future professoriate and face of the academy in industry, government, and other sectors.

Graduate students—including the majority nominated for teaching awards this year—have directly benefitted from the Cota-Robles program and from the offices and positions created on campus as part of the response to the Moreno Report. However, even in our brief committee discussion, we were able to consider “small changes that could lead to big differences.” Just as examples to provide for future consideration:

- Graduate students are often some of the people on campus in off-hours and weekends (e.g., working in labs or leading late discussion sections or weekend review sessions), putting graduate students of color at
increased risk of questioning or misidentification as trespassers at the hands of the UCPD. This is part of a larger question, do all graduate students feel welcome here?

- GRE scores, common in consideration for graduate school admission until COVID problematized test-taking this past year, are likely patterned by demographic characteristics in the same way that the ACT and SAT are (and that were dropped from UC admission requirements because of such issues). This is part of a larger question, how are we ensuring we are a diverse and inclusive campus through admissions?

- There is a vibrant effort to support first-generation undergraduate students on campus and to locate first-generation faculty, but the COT was unaware whether there are similar efforts for graduate students or the type of financial support or opportunities that may be needed by first-generation graduate students, largely students of color, to live in Los Angeles. This is part of a larger question: Are we losing first-generation talent to other universities who offer better living standards, or to additional jobs and adjunct positions that demand first-generation graduate student’s time and attention, or to attrition because it becomes to difficult to survive as a graduate student here?

We thank the MRIC committee—and all the committee and individuals whose work it details—for the tremendous effort and time put into making UCLA a more equitable and inclusive place for the betterment of all. As UCLA selects a new Dean of the Graduate School and continues to respond to the Moreno Report, we hope that questions like these are not only asked and committees charged with exploring, but also that funds and fundraising are directed toward further support of graduate students.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this report and these important topics. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at collett@soc.ucla.edu or the Committee’s analyst Renee Rouzan-Kay at rrouzankay@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Jessica L. Collett, Chair
Committee on Teaching

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