April 13, 2021

To: Shane White, Chair
    Academic Senate

Re: Moreno Recommendation Implementation Committee Report

The Committee on the Library and Scholarly Communications did not have a meeting during the period of review for the Moreno Recommendations Implementation Committee report. However, COLASC has had several conversations regarding Black Lives Matter and the challenges facing UCLA, and the following comments I hope are consistent with the tone of those conversations, though much of the following has not been vetted with the entire committee regarding its specific claims.

Based on discussions happening at various levels and in various places with the university, it would not be too much of an overstatement that addressing the concerns in the first Moreno report and the second MRIC report concerning issues of equity—particularly racial disparities for Black students and faculty—is the most significant and ongoing issue facing UCLA today.

The MRIC report is consistent with anecdotes reported across the campus: despite the rhetoric in communications and policies that flow from the central administration, racial oppression persists at UCLA. The remedies suggested in the first Moreno report appear to be insufficient to address this problem, and aside from formal bureaucratic implementation of EDI efforts, the university has not adopted measures equal to the significance of the problems it faces. We would argue that concerns for anti-racism and equity must infuse all our work at UCLA. This response is necessary for the simple reason that racism and a lack of inclusion fundamentally undermine the work of the university and democracy. UCLA’s status as an research university, as a place of higher education, and as a public institution are intimately tied to our efforts to address this problem.

It is clear from both Moreno reports that personnel processes and procedures remain significant hurdles for the university. We are sorely disappointed that there is a lack of substantial review or self-study in this regard, especially on issues of pay and promotion. Given that wages, teaching and service obligations and other components of employment at UCLA are individually negotiated across the many departments and units on campus, inconsistent practices are inevitable, and that bias in many forms is certain to creep into these inconsistent practices. Sadly, the university has made almost no effort even to inform itself on these concerns. Some units appear to be doing better than others in recruiting a diverse faculty, and yet we suspect that faculty pay in those units is lower than in non-diverse units. And the university acts as if it intentionally does not want to inform itself on these practices, given the number of calls for information on pay equity, and the lack of self-study in this regard.

Simply put, the university and its personnel review processes are insufficiently dedicated to the principle of equity. The Academic Personnel Office has made substantial efforts in explaining hiring and promotion procedures, but has not made similar efforts to making sure those procedures are fair and
equitable. UCLA must dedicate itself to equity just as much as it does to excellence, constantly, in word and deed.

But even this is insufficient for the task that faces us, even if we were to address all aspects of university concern in the way we suggest for personnel procedures. We must make sure to re-conceptualize "excellence" itself in ways that make it more equitable. If, by "excellence", we mean doing scholarship as it has always been done, then we undermine ourselves. Imagine, as a thought exercise, if we increased the diversity of our students but less successfully recruited Black students? What if we committed ourselves to hiring a number of Black faculty, and that number barely replaced the number that left for retirement or other institutions in the same period? What if we actually increased Black representation, but the university remained the same in other regards? If such scenarios were to happen this way--and it appears that they are--then this university will have failed in its ambitions, even if our data on inclusion show progress. To truly succeed not only must we recruit and retain a more diverse student and faculty body, we must also set the conditions for these students and faculty members to succeed, and success in this instance also means rethinking basic questions like "what qualifies as academic excellence?" "Do we constrain research and knowledge to exclude the contributions of others?" By excellence, not only must we be inclusive, but we must rethink how the perspectives, the knowledge and the history of those traditionally excluded change the way we do our scholarship. At that point, and only at that point, will UCLA succeed on its basic mission, and only at that point will we be a leading public university worthy of the title. The goal here is to not only remake UCLA, but to remake the university generally, and of knowledge itself.

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

Sincerely,

Gregory Leazer, Chair
Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication

cc: Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
    Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
    April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
    Renee Rouzan-Kay, Senior Policy Analyst, Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication
    Members of the Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication