April 20, 2021

To: Shane White, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

From: Andrea Kasko, Chair, Graduate Council

Re: 2020-2025 Five-Year Planning Perspectives Report

The 2020-2025 Five-Year Planning Perspectives Report was circulated to Graduate Council members for independent review. Members offered the following comments and comments for consideration.

The Perspectives observes, “In the 2020-25 cycle, self-supporting program proposals (81 items) surpassed proposals for state-supported programs (58 items) for the first time” (p. 1). Specifically:

Since the end of the Great Recession, the number of Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDPs) planning items has increased while the number of state-supported graduate planning items has decreased. The number of self-supporting program proposals increased from a low of 18 in the 2011-16 cycle to 81 in the most recent cycle while the number of state-supported program proposals dropped from a high of 104 in the 2011-16 cycle to 58 in the most recent cycle. (p. 15)

The work of reviewing the increasing number of SSGPDP proposals is substantial, and significantly impacts both the divisional Graduate Councils and the systemwide Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA). Furthermore, approved SSGPDPs require local review after three years, which is done by the Graduate Council. The Graduate Council already experiences a high workload; this additional workload will require additional resources for the Senate. Without additional resources, this additional workload could negatively impact state-supported programs by drawing the Graduate Council’s effort and attention away from issues in state-supported programs. The need for additional resources is especially acute at UCLA, which the Perspectives notes “has proposed the most SSGPDPs”: 40% of the total of all cycles, and 51% of the total of the 2020-25 cycle (p. 16).

Members noted that the Perspectives now includes an identification of the degree to which planned programs are to be “online” (10%, 25%, 40%, 50%, 80%, and 100%). However, a 100% “online” program may include synchronous components, or be fully asynchronous. This distinction may be important to consider when assessing the quality of partially- and completely-online programs: a fully asynchronous course could involve substantially less contact with an instructor.

For partially- and completely-online programs, will there be support at the systemwide level to consult on instructional design and technology, in order to maintain the consistency and trustworthiness of the “UC brand” of programs not tied to a physical location?
One member suggested that, given the number of new programs being proposed, campuses should make a concomitant effort to discontinue, consolidate, transfer, or disestablish existing programs. Doing so would reduce clutter and maintain clarity and focus.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. If you have any questions, please contact us via the Graduate Council’s interim analyst, Aileen Liu, at aliu@senate.ucla.edu.

cc:  Estrella Arciba, Committee Analyst, Graduate Council
     April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
     Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, Academic Senate
     Aileen Liu, Interim Committee Analyst, Graduate Council
     Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate