

March 7, 2022

Michael Levine, Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
Gregg Goldman, Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer

Re: Interdisciplinary Education Ad Hoc (IEAH) Committee Report

Dear Interim EVCP Levine and VC/CFO Goldman,

On behalf of the Executive Board, I am writing to share this report with your offices so that you may address the challenges facing interdisciplinary education at UCLA. Enclosed please find the Report of the Interdisciplinary Education Ad Hoc Committee (IEAH Report) of the UCLA Academic Senate. Charged by former Academic Senate Chair Michael Meranze, the IEAH Report was submitted to the Executive Board on August 2, 2021. In addition to the endorsement of the Executive Board, the Council on Research, Undergraduate and Graduate Councils, and the Council on Planning and Budget, reviewed the report.

The IEAH Report describes the manner in which inadequate support for interdisciplinary programs has undermined them and resulted in decreased numbers of cross-listed classes on offer. Many of the findings are familiar from previous reports, including lack of stable funding, space issues, limited FTE devoted solely to interdisciplinary centers, and so on. Lack of stability and predictability also makes long-term planning difficult, leading to a continuous struggle to maintain program vitality and viability.

Recommendations to Administration

The IEAH Report includes numerous recommendations to both Administration and the Academic Senate to ensure that interdisciplinary education and research have the support they need to thrive at UCLA. Below we have highlighted the recommendations for your respective areas (please see discussion of some of these recommendations below):

- The campus should lift the moratorium on the creation of new Centers for Interdisciplinary Instruction (CIIs). The committee found that while not appropriate for all interdisciplinary activity, CIIs are the most stable and sustainable form of interdisciplinary unit. Unlike Interdepartmental Programs (IDPs) and Free Standing Minors (FSMs), CIIs can hold FTEs, which allows for stable faculty and enables long-term planning. In the cases where a program does not aim to become a CII, similar sustainable practices should apply.
- Articulate Interdisciplinary education as a key priority for the university, enabled by the new budget model.
- The administration should establish predictable, documented revenue streams for all IDPs and FSMs. These must include stable specific teaching resources. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Budget should provide a report on these revenue streams to the Graduate and Undergraduate Council by June 2023, when the new budget model will have been in effect for a complete academic year.

- Sufficient and stable sources of funding must be established for all interdisciplinary programs to enable long-term planning. To facilitate this stability, a Vice Chancellor level position reporting directly to the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost should be created and endowed with substantial resourcing for interdisciplinary programs. The job description, authorities, and funding model for this position should be developed in close coordination with the Undergraduate and Graduate Council and should consider the weaknesses identified in the construction of the recently disestablished Office of Interdisciplinary and Cross Campus Affairs.
- The administration should also recognize and provide revenue from teaching performed within interdisciplinary units. Importantly, summer teaching revenues should be redirected to the programs that are offering the course and not to the instructors' home departments.
- Direct the Development Office to designate dedicated staff to fundraise for interdisciplinary programs.

Centers for Interdisciplinary Instruction (CIIs)

Similar to the Graduate Council, Executive Board members were generally supportive of the recommendation to lift the moratorium on the creation of new Centers for Interdisciplinary Instruction (CIIs) in connection with the recommendation that units should be resourced adequately; however, some members expressed concerns that lifting the moratorium would not solve the problem for existing units who may not have the necessary resources for long-term operation.

Bruin Budget Model and Interdisciplinary Education

The advent of the Bruin Budget Model (BBM) provides an opportunity to rethink how the University incentivizes and supports collaborative interdisciplinary work in general, and IDPs in particular. Much work remains to develop specific mechanisms to promote and sustain such work. We suggest that the incentives built into the BBM target both the IDPs and the home departments of participating faculty, rather than the home departments alone. Reliable mechanisms should be specified to support the programs as a whole, and not just the faculty, a detail that seems to be missing from the current budget model. Such mechanisms should apply to both self-supporting and state-supported programs, and to IDPs as well as to free-standing minors, for which funding currently depends on largess of deans.

We urge Administration to continue its work on the incentive structure of the BBM, not only to eliminate existing barriers but to create positive incentives. The campus needs more than a plan that will support our current efforts to accommodate and expand interdisciplinary education: we need a plan that is structured to incentivize creative thinking and to facilitate development of programs we have not yet imagined, and to sustain these programs once they are underway. Such planning is thus essential if UCLA is to retain its reputation as a leader in teaching and research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica R. Cattelino".

Jessica Cattelino
Chair
UCLA Academic Senate

Encl. [final report, chart of all relevant units]

Cc: April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate
Emily Rose, Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP
Jeff Roth, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Planning and Budget
Roger Wakimoto, Vice Chancellor for Research and Creative Activities
Shane White, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate