

March 28, 2022

To: Jessica Cattelino, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate  
Evelyn Blumenberg, Chair, Council on Planning and Budget  
CC: Gary Segura, Dean, Luskin School of Public Affairs  
  
From: Aaron Panofsky, Chair, Luskin FEC on behalf of Luskin FEC

The Luskin School of Public Affairs Faculty Executive Committee is writing to express some of our concerns about the proposed Bruin Budget Model. While we understand the overall rationale for the new model, there are both strategic and practical problems with it. We agree with points that have been made in previous sets of comments we've seen, including: the baking in of baseline inequalities, the inscrutability of many aspects of the model which make its consequences difficult to foresee, and the process of implementing it at a moment of great disruption and uncertainty for the University. We also have two other concerns we would like to register.

- 1) It is worth reminding ourselves that the research university is one of human civilization's greatest inventions for the production of knowledge and the cultivation of creative activity. What distinguishes universities is the diversity of these forms of knowledge and creativity that they simultaneously support. The Luskin FEC believes that neither the EVC nor the VC/CFO has made an effort to put forward a vision of the university and how it aims to value and support the diversity of research and creative activities in which its faculty, students, and staff engage. Student credit hours are relatively easy to measure, but research and creative activities less so and difficult to commensurate, which is what the BBM seems to demand. The assumption seems to be, if resources are allocated efficiently, excellence will follow. But this seems backwards to us. We need an articulation of excellence in the diversity of research and creative activities, and then to think about how the BBM can be crafted to execute a balanced version of that vision.
- 2) Next, and related, we are worried about the incentives that the BBM introduces in the absence of an articulation of quality or excellence. BBM incentives turn on quantity of activity – teaching and research – and efficiency. But we are concerned that some activities cannot be done as “efficiently” as others, and even activities that can be scaled-up don't necessarily benefit from doing so. Will the BBM set off competition among units to deliver the “cheapest” education to their students? As educational quality declines, will units need to grade more easily to attract students? The Luskin faculty takes seriously the object lesson of our peer institution the USC School of Social Work which was pushed to raise revenue through tuition and enrollment growth at great cost to its quality and integrity. We are concerned that without careful considerations of quality and excellence, matched to the diversity of intellectual and creative pursuits, the BBM will set off insidious competition among units, the establishment of ill-advised (and possibly unsuccessful) revenue generating programs, and general displacement of goals that contribute to UCLA's excellence.



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