

February 26, 2018

To: Sandra Graham, Chair
Academic Senate

From: Eric Sobel, Chair
Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication

Re: Proposed Presidential Policy on Open Access for Thesis and Dissertations

The Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication during its meeting on January 29, 2018, reviewed and discussed the proposed Presidential Policy on Open Access for Thesis and Dissertations and the FAQs. Overall, members agree with the proposed policy in principle but have some apprehension.

The proposed policy fits well with established practice in STEM fields where dissertations are often a few original, peer-reviewed articles (often before publication) with some “glue” text to unify the work.

However, when looking at other fields, e.g., in History disciplines, a dissertation can be in the form of a book that has taken several years to write (years that may have been spent on leave from the UC, working in the field). The current Open Access policy does not cover books written by UC Academic Senate members or other staff. In this regard, claiming to “extend” open access to graduate students’ thesis and dissertations is misleading as it is not similar to the current policy for faculty and staff. In many cases, dissertation books are converted to commercial texts or used in one’s journey to an academic position and promotion. The embargo option alleviates some concerns regarding commercial-quality book-length dissertations. However, it was felt that in some whole fields a two-year embargo would not be sufficient and that requiring “compelling circumstances” to lengthen the embargo period beyond two years would be too high a barrier for what could be a routine request in some areas. Also, since the students will retain copyright on their dissertations, requiring a petition to the administration for a longer embargo is counter to the spirit of ownership that students should have in their own work. Some members considered that allowing the student to select an embargo period of up to five years would be appropriate.

We have also relayed our comments on this proposal to UCOLASC, and their report has also included these concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment.

CC: Joseph Bristow, Vice Chair/ Chair Elect Academic Chair
Susan Cochran, Intermediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
Linda Mohr, CAO, Academic Senate
Members of the Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication