October 10, 2023

Andrea Kasko, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Joint Task Force Report on the Academic Mission of UCLA Campus Expansion

Dear Chair Kasko,

At its meeting on October 2, 2023, the Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) reviewed and discussed the report from the Joint Task Force on the Academic Mission of the UCLA Campus Expansion. Members offered the following comments.

1. Members noted the survey’s low response rate, and that a disproportionate number of those who did respond lived near the South Bay campus. They raised concerns regarding the potential drain of resources from the main (Westwood) campus and competition for donor funds. It remains uncertain whether development of the new campus might compromise the University’s academic mission.

2. Members raised questions about the efficiency of addressing enrollment growth with a campus located so far from Westwood.

3. Members remarked that given the skepticism and even resistance many faculty feel to what are sometimes perceived as flashy real estate purchases, UCLA campus administration needs to prioritize its financial allocations very carefully and exercise great caution in undertaking significant projects. They suggested that clear messaging about real estate issues and the potential benefits of expansion is essential.

4. Members shared concerns regarding the potential costs, uncertainties, environmental issues, and South Bay community concerns associated with this project.

5. Members also acknowledged that this acquisition occurs amid a backdrop of austerity measures and annual budget cuts across the board. Questions were raised about the level of trust the administration aims to build, given these circumstances.

Members recommended the following:

1. More emphasis should be placed on the survey results, with thoughtful consideration of campus utilization. UCLA needs to make decisions on expansion and cost reduction, determining the financial commitment required for each.

2. This report should be treated as a provisional update and not a final document.

3. Other members proposed getting more people to visit the campus and become involved in efforts to develop and integrate it.
4. Members recommended that the task force explore creative ways to make the South Bay campus self-sustaining as a business model. Ideas included finding ways to use it as an event center or opening it to community organizations, thus capitalizing on the purchase and making it productive. Rather than limit the South Bay campus to being an extension of the Westwood campus to which students would commute, it might be best to think of it as serving functions that are new and unique.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the task force’s report. If you have any questions for us, please do not hesitate to contact me at emmerich@humnet.ucla.edu or via the Council’s analyst, Elizabeth Feller, at efeller@senate.ucla.edu.

Best regards,

Michael Emmerich, Chair
Council on Planning and Budget

cc: Kathleen Bawn, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, Academic Senate
    Jessica Cattelino, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
    April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
    Elizabeth Feller, Associate Director, Academic Senate
    Members of the Council on Planning and Budget