

February 13, 2024

To: Andrea Kasko, Chair, Academic Senate
From: Catherine Sugar, Chair, Undergraduate Council
Re: **Future of Graduate Programs and Graduate Student Support Joint Task Force Report**

At its meeting on January 19, 2024, the Undergraduate Council reviewed the report of the Joint Task Force on the Future of Graduate Programs and Graduate Student Support.

Members endorsed the report and voiced support for its recommendations overall. Many shared the concern that increased costs associated with employing academic student employees and graduate student researchers will result in fewer positions available to conduct the crucial work of teaching, mentoring, and research support for undergraduates. Indeed, as members commented, this is already occurring in several departments, leading to a degradation in teaching quality and guidance provided to students as well as a decline in faculty research productivity as their instructional burden increases. Student representatives echoed concerns about larger class sizes and reduced contact with teaching assistants, particularly in courses where individualized attention and feedback is critical to student success. Overall, members noted that unless additional resources are found or instructional approaches restructured, teaching quality will suffer while instructors may be forced to reduce the amount of course material and non-didactic activities offered in their classes.

Members note that these issues deserve greater emphasis and discussion—both in the report, and on an ongoing basis within the Academic Senate and the Administration—since changes in graduate education will directly impact the undergraduate experience at UCLA. The Undergraduate Council views the report as an opportunity to reconsider existing models of undergraduate education and reimagine resources for teaching. We welcome future conversations on these important matters.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. If you have any questions, please contact me via the Undergraduate Council analyst, Julia Nelsen, at jnelsen@senate.ucla.edu.

cc: Kathy Bawn, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Jessica Cattelino, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Julia Nelsen, Principal Policy Analyst, Academic Senate