



**DATE:** February 22, 2024

**TO:** Andrea M. Kasko, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

**RE:** Future of Graduate Programs and Graduate Student Support (FGPGSS) JTF Final Report

**Concerns related to Teaching:**

--using increased technology to increase class size and also replace human TAs is going to lead to a learning environment that will be counter to our teaching and pedagogical missions. Very problematic learning environment for undergrads.

--use of lecturers to offset these costs is also problematic and will lead to more inequities between lecturers and other faculty and also be only temporary fix

--right sizing of graduate student programs seems both alarming and promising. How would this look for Luskin? There are several potential downsides, listed on p. 19 of the report that I am concerned about (how information would be used, time and labor intensive nature of this initiative, put on overburdened faculty, would maybe yield contentious results, etc).

**Concerns related to Research:**

--One of the issues that harms our ability as faculty to support graduate students financially is the rule that faculty have the financial burden of paying students' tuition when they pay them 25% time or more as a GSR. This was always a challenge and has especially become challenging after the new union contract discourages GSR appointments of less than 50% time. Many faculty find it hard to cover an additional \$18,000 in tuition in addition to a GSR salary, and have had some funders ask that the tuition be removed from the budget in years past. When students already have a guaranteed source of tuition funding (from the department, for example), it's baffling to me why this financial burden would necessarily be shifted to faculty who are paying GSRs. Other universities don't have this odd policy, so this feels like a surmountable issue. It may have arisen a long while back from a union agreement, but doesn't benefit students. We didn't see this specific issue addressed in the final report. --(This also impacts research center's ability to hire graduate students). One unintended consequence will be a shift to reliance more heavily where possible on undergraduate researchers (who may not have the skills necessary, etc).

-- especially for folks who do qualitative/ethnographic research with small pockets of funding and not large grants, it will be nearly impossible to hire GSRs due to tuition reqs (despite many graduate



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students wanting to be involved in this type of work), also sometimes one really needs only a small amount of hours of research support

**Research Center Perspectives:**

--On the research side, we need to continue emphasizing that it has become extremely difficult to justify hiring GSRs without university support to offset the new pay scale, when full-time research staff can have time allocated more flexibly and don't incur tuition expenses. This harms our ability to train students and also weakens research programs where GSRs provide critical connectivity between applied projects and broader knowledge contributions. And on the specific point that Laura raised about fee responsibility for <50% GSR appointments, that is an ongoing important hurdle for our center that I would love to see resolved.

Thank you for your considerations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "VHerrera".

Veronica Herrera  
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