February 23, 2024

Andrea Kasko, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Accessibility and Instruction Working Group Report

Dear Chair Kasko,

Following its February 16, 2024, meeting, the Committee on Data, Information Technology, and Privacy (CDITP) reviewed the report by the Accessibility and Instruction Working Group. Members made the following comments:

Overall, the report from the Accessibility and Instruction Working Group is a significant step forward in promoting accessibility and inclusivity at UCLA. By continuing to refine and implement its recommendations, UCLA can lead by example in creating a more accessible and equitable educational environment for all students.

Nonetheless, substantive challenges remain. While the report outlines an impressive array of faculty, staff, and administrative involvement, it could further emphasize the importance of student participation in the planning and evaluation phases. Students can provide firsthand insights into the effectiveness of accessibility initiatives and suggest areas for improvement. Students should also be included in the development and deployment of assessment and feedback mechanisms. To ensure the effectiveness of the recommended strategies, it would be beneficial to establish clear mechanisms for assessing the impact of implemented changes on student learning and accessibility. Regular feedback from both students and instructors can inform continuous improvement.

Specific to CDITP, the Committee would like to note the crucial role that technology plays in accessibility. Going forward, we would like to highlight the need for ongoing evaluation and integration of emerging educational technologies. In the capacious understanding of accessibility, the report sets out that this includes assistive technologies across a number of platforms and domains. Continued collaboration between the Working Group and various areas of IT and instructional IT expertise is essential.

We encourage broader awareness campaigns to further promote the importance of accessibility across the campus community and to foster an inclusive culture that values and supports diversity in learning. The committee also encourages the Working Group to explore partnerships with other institutions, non-profits, and corporations to potentially develop and provide additional resources, expertise, and opportunities for collaboration on accessibility initiatives. Sharing best practices and lessons learned with a wider community can amplify the impact of UCLA’s efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at fisher@humnet.ucla.edu or via the Committee analyst, Renee Rouzan-Kay, at rrouzankay@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Matthew Fisher, Chair
Committee on Data, Information Technology, and Privacy
cc: Kathleen Bawn, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
    Jessica Cattelino, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
    April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
    Renee Rouzan-Kay, Senior Policy Analyst, Committee on Data, Information Technology, and Privacy
    Members of the Committee on Data, Information Technology, and Privacy