

February 16, 2024

James Steintrager
Chair, UC Academic Senate

Re: (Systemwide Senate Review) Interim Report of the Academic Planning Council Workgroup on the Future of Doctoral Education at the University of California

Dear Chair Steintrager,

The divisional Executive Board (EB) appreciated the opportunity to review the Interim Report of the Academic Planning Council Workgroup on the Future of Doctoral Education at the University of California (Workgroup). EB reviewed the report and divisional committee and council responses at its meeting on February 15, 2024.

Members unanimously approved a motion to express both appreciation for the hard work of the Workgroup and disappointment that the interim report focuses on legal obligations to GSRs and TAs rather than reimagining graduate education, the outcome of which will be lower quality of undergraduate education and an inadequate provision of support for graduate education. (The graduate student representative to EB was also in favor of the motion.)

Members observed that the interim report reads like a restatement of existing and ongoing problems, which the Academic Senate had [identified repeatedly](#) over the past decade. Moreover, it appeared that charge of the workgroup was constructed to favor focusing on the legal obligations resulting from the recent labor contract rather than proposing innovative solutions that will improve undergraduate and graduate education. The current approaches proposed by the Administration to address the fundamental shifts occurring in graduate education will drive graduate students out of teaching in order to replace them with “cheaper labor.” This approach will remove much needed funding that is currently used to support graduate students, and no replacement of that funding is proposed, nor likely to be available, thus (significantly) decreasing total available resources to support those pursuing graduate degrees. That is, cutting the jobs currently available to graduate students will only further exacerbate already intractable problems.

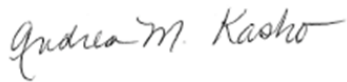
Moreover, members argued that the emphasis on efficiency in the pursuit of PhDs and MFAs, such as pushing for shorter time to degree, can run counter to diversifying the graduate student population because students with additional responsibilities and different resource levels may need more time.

Members requested evidence that the report recommendations are viable and demonstrably improve graduate education (e.g., financial modeling of proposed solutions). They asked for tangible strategies to improve graduate education that are realistic and achievable, and sought examples of where learning outcomes improve graduate education. Members were troubled by a divide between teaching and

research, both of which are definitional to an R1 university. They contended that separating research and teaching, whether among instructors of record or by removing graduate students from TAs, will lead to increased costs and lower quality undergraduate teaching.

Finally, members encouraged a focus on more of what is best for graduate students: research opportunities, funding, and affordable housing. They suggested that solutions to the problem of housing costs are best addressed at the systemwide level. Notably, a reduction in funding for graduate students will lead to students needing additional assistance with both finding funding and also affordable housing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea M. Kasko".

Andrea Kasko
Chair
UCLA Academic Senate

Encl.

Cc: Kathleen Bawn, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate
Jessica Cattelino, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate