March 6, 2024

To: Andrea Kasko
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

From: Aaron Meyer
Chair, Campus Response to the Climate Crisis Special Committee

Re: Climate Change in UCLA Curricula and Research

Dear Chair Kasko and the Executive Board,

At the January 22, 2024 meeting of the Campus Response to the Climate Crisis Special Committee (CRCC) of the Executive Board, members unanimously approved a motion to recommend that climate change should have greater prominence in UCLA’s Sustainability Plan and initiatives, and requested information about how the campus could make climate change-related courses more visible and available to students.

Members noted that the Administration recently charged a Faculty Working Group for Sustainability in Curricula and Research to implement Section 3: Curricula and Research of the UCLA Sustainability Plan. Members recommended that climate change should have greater prominence and be distinct from sustainability. The climate should be elevated to the extent that the campus is trying to advance education and research on climate, not just under an umbrella of sustainability message. Climate change needs to be a focus in and of itself in both curricula and research.

Members expressed an interest in making information specifically about courses related to climate change more readily available to undergraduates. Toward this end, members were interested in information about the best avenues to do so. They recommended that amplifying relevant courses would encourage student enrollment even without having an actual course requirement. Members recommended asking for information about how the campus can and does amplify current and potential UCLA climate change and climate crisis courses. They noted that while the Academics and Research webpage on the UCLA Sustainability website includes a link to an inventory of sustainability courses, they wondered how many students were aware of this resource and how frequently it was updated. Would it be possible for the UCLA Registrar to code climate change courses to increase visibility to students and track enrollment? What else could be done to amplify these courses? Are terms such as “climate change,” “climate crisis,” and “environment” searchable in the course catalog by students?

Lastly, members suggested asking whether there is an opportunity to encourage the creation of new courses. For instance, the Cluster program, Fiat Lux program, or another existing instrument could be used to encourage interdisciplinary courses addressing climate change. Would the Administration consider providing incentives, and a specific call, for faculty to develop courses on the climate crisis?

Thank you for the opportunity to convey CRCC recommendations and questions on this important topic.
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
     Charlotte Rose, Administrative Analyst, UCLA Academic Senate
     Members of the Campus Response to the Climate Crisis Special Committee