DATE: May 2, 2024
TO: Andrea M. Kasko, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
RE: Final Report of the University of California Systemwide Advisory Workgroup on Students with Disabilities

The Faculty Executive Committee for the Luskin School of Public Affairs expresses support for the recommendations related to including University of California students with disabilities to serve on committees whose leadership impacts them. Institutional communications should meet accessibility standards and identify bottlenecks and barriers to existing processes for receiving such accommodations.

From an instructor’s perspective the Office of Students with Disabilities -CAE- office seems to be broken and students who need services are unable to access them. It seems that case managers further complicate matters sometimes. Faculty are having to make ad hoc decisions based on limited information for accommodations at the assignment level. Sometimes case managers contradict what we propose to support our syllabi policy and the various institutional arms intended to help guide us as faculty (e.g. Office of Student Affairs) are unable to do so. This is negatively impacting the quality of teaching outcomes as well as faculty wellbeing for some faculty (p. 5 of report).

We also support creating inclusive spaces on campus. The recommendations of the report (p 6) that faculty redesign their syllabi, have student requests mediated by disability advisors, and change incomplete grading standards are more problematic. Faculty are so overburdened with workloads and as CAE has increased their criteria for students with disabilities (to include a much wider and broad set of mental health and anxiety related disabilities), these changes represent an undue and uncompensated burden on faculty and infringes on their academic freedom to design courses and grade them guaranteed by Academic Senate regulations. As more students request these CAE accommodations, it is unclear how faculty will be able to cope with dramatic work increases and what institutional support we will have to process these requests, and how faculty will be supported when students’ grievances related to faculty failure to adequately comply with these accommodations. Will there be institutional support for faculty? Will students with grievances related to these issues have a case to bring legal action against faculty or UCLA?

Thank you for your considerations.

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