

Executive Board

Graduate Education Funding

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March 17, 2025

Professor Kathleen Bawn
Chair, Academic Senate
senateoffice@senate.ucla.edu

Re: Graduate Education Funding

Dear Chair Bawn,

Thank you for your letter dated March 10, 2025, and the accompanying assessment by the Graduate Council regarding graduate education funding at UCLA. We appreciate your thoughtful examination and the urgency you have highlighted.

We agree that graduate education funding at UCLA faces structural deficits, intensified by recent reductions in federal support, and that the current decentralized model requires substantial reform. As you are aware, we have already established an implementation task force charged with examining potential funding models based on both joint campus and joint UC reports, which were created with substantial input from senate members and leadership. The academic senate's role in budgetary matters is advisory, and these joint reports constitute significant advisory input from the senate. While the implementation task force's discussions should remain confidential at this initial stage, we believe that providing periodic, high-level updates and briefings to Senate leadership would be beneficial, and we will ensure that this occurs to maintain transparency and strengthen collaboration.

We concur with your analysis highlighting the urgency of the funding concerns. We are carefully analyzing the budget to make thoughtful reductions that will minimize negative impacts on UCLA's academic excellence. The academic mission is intrinsically intertwined with UCLA's administration and operations; there are many dependencies between our investments in "non-academic" functions and our ability to deliver exceptional teaching, research and service.

One approach that we are likely to take to increase operational efficiency is increased centralization of currently decentralized functions, such as human resources, IT services, and finance. Historically, when such changes have been proposed, the faculty have been opposed and have advocated for the continuation of decentralized services. Decentralization is cost ineffective and expensive. If we are committed as a campus community to doing "whatever it takes to protect the academic mission and research enterprise," as you state in your letter, then we must have the support of the faculty to create efficiency in operational realms. Our aim is to enhance the quality of these services at the same time as we are increasing centralization, with the goal of maintaining or improving the quality of support.

Chair Kathleen Bawn – Graduate Education Funding

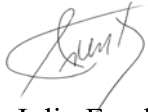
March 17, 2025

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Effectively addressing our current budget crisis will require some adjustments to our academic and research missions as well. Our goal remains to thoughtfully distribute any necessary adjustments across the institution, strategically preserving UCLA's excellence in all arenas, including graduate education and research.

We appreciate your partnership in the spirit of shared governance and will need your support to help the faculty understand that trade-offs are necessary and sacrifices are inevitable. We look forward to continuing to discuss these important matters in our upcoming meetings.

Sincerely,



Julio Frenk
Chancellor



Darnell M. Hunt
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

cc: April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Yolanda Gorman, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and Chief of Staff
Andrea Kasko, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
Brian Kite, Dean and Vice Provost, Division of Graduate Education
Emily Le, Principal Policy Analyst, Academic Senate
Megan McEvoy, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Emily Rose, Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP

March 10, 2025

Julio Frenk
UCLA Chancellor

Darnell Hunt
UCLA Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP)

Re: Graduate Education Funding

Dear Chancellor Frenk and EVCP Hunt,

At the March 6, 2025, meeting of the Executive Board (EB), members discussed a Senate analysis of the current state of graduate education at UCLA. This analysis documents the structural deficit that existed in our graduate funding model prior to January 20, 2025, as well as the devastating impact of reduced federal funding. It demonstrates an urgent need to holistically reform our approach to funding of doctoral education. Continuing the current decentralized approach in which individual academic units are expected to be self-sustaining will be fatal to our academic mission.

After discussing this analysis, EB of voted in favor of a motion to formally endorse the attached letter that Graduate Council Chair Deepak Rajagopal and I sent to you on March 4, 2025. EB also requested that each of you meet with Senate Leadership this week to review the Senate's analysis. Lastly, EB encouraged the distribution of this analysis to other Senate committees, which we will do.

We note that the Senate's analysis is based on publicly available dashboards. This is because the Administration has not provided the Senate with data and has excluded us from current planning meetings. Our analysis concludes that our present approach to graduate education funding is not sustainable even if federal funding is fully restored. It also shows that a 40% across-the-board reduction in PhD admissions will not address the structural deficit.

EB members agreed that graduate funding has been an unaddressed issue for decades, well [documented](#) in multiple Senate and Administration letters and reports. Given the slate of recent executive orders, we must assume that federal funding will not return to 2024 levels. We must protect our core mission of research and teaching even if this means reducing valuable but non-essential functions. Doctoral students are indispensable for teaching and research; reducing PhD admissions will damage our research productivity and our ability to teach undergraduates. The current passive and decentralized approach in which academic units are asked to expected to adapt individually to systemic threat is unacceptable. Bold measures are needed to address the current crisis in ways that protect our status as a premier R1 university and a worldwide leader in the creation of knowledge.

In short, we advise a holistic and strategic process, rather than a decentralized and decanal-driven approach, to any reductions in doctoral admissions for AY 2025-26. We also advocate for

implementation of a bold long-term plan to protect and replenish graduate education funding by reducing spending in other campus areas.

We look forward to sharing our analysis with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KBawn". The letters are cursive and connected.

Kathy Bawn
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

Encl.

Cc: April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Yolanda Gorman, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and Chief of Staff
Andrea Kasko, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
Brian Kite, Dean and Vice Provost, Division of Graduate Education
Emily Le, Principal Policy Analyst, Academic Senate
Megan McEvoy, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Deepak Rajagopal, Graduate Council Chair, Academic Senate
Emily Rose, Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP

March 4, 2025

Julio Frenk
UCLA Chancellor

Darnell Hunt
UCLA Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP)

Re: Graduate Funding

Dear Chancellor Frenk and EVCP Hunt,

Given the current developments in the federal funding landscape and the recent announcement of the graduate admissions review, we write to offer advisement regarding the potential implications on our overall mission of researching, teaching, and service. We know you share our view that graduate education is fundamental to this mission. Graduate students play an essential role in maintaining our status as a world-class research institution and to our highly successful model of undergraduate education.

Any decision that substantially impacts graduate student admissions must consider both short- and long-term consequences. Even if the reality is that UCLA may ultimately need to decrease the graduate student cohort sizes, this adjustment must be minimized and implemented in a deliberate, holistic and strategic manner. Graduate students are funded through a number of mechanisms, and a significant disruption to any one mechanism will inevitably ripple through to others. As demonstrated by a recent joint campus [report](#) and joint UC [report](#) on graduate education, a reinvestment in graduate funding is long overdue.

We urge careful consideration of the potential impact of any decision on the quality, competitiveness, and sustainability of all our academic programs. Additionally, we ask the Administration to commit to supporting current graduate students, not only financially but also their well-being and success.

We call on the Administration to do whatever it takes to protect the academic mission and research enterprise. In a time when tough choices must be made, research and undergraduate and graduate education must be protected above all else. Maintaining the quality and scale of our graduate programs may require curtailment or reduction of support for units and services that consume resources but do not directly support the core academic mission. UCLA may no longer be able to engage in every valuable activity we have in the past. Reduction of support for popular and successful non-academic programs may be painful. But preservation of our core mission of producing and transmitting knowledge must take top priority.

Lastly, we encourage the Administration to advise departments on innovative strategies to preserve graduate degree programs, including new models of funding and alternative sources of funding. We also encourage the Administration to proactively communicate with campus stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and graduate students, as ongoing development occurs.

We look forward to a collaborative and consultative approach as the landscape continues to evolve.

Sincerely,

Deepak Rajagopal
Chair, Graduate Council

Kathleen Bawn
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

cc: April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Yolanda Gorman, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and Chief of Staff
Andrea Kasko, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
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