

Executive Board

State of Shared Governance at UCLA

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To: Academic Senate Faculty

Dear Colleagues:

I want to begin by acknowledging something that is plain to all of us: there is meaningful concern among our faculty about the direction of UCLA's leadership, including my own. The recent Academic Senate survey underscored this reality with clarity. I take those results seriously. They are not easy to read, but they are essential to confront directly if we are to move forward together.

I have spent most of my professional life associated with UCLA. This institution is not just where I work — it has been central to my intellectual journey and identity. That is why I care so deeply about how we respond to the moment we are in.

The truth is that UCLA, like all of higher education, is operating in a chaotic and increasingly hostile environment — marked by declining public trust, political encroachment on academic freedom, constrained budgets, and heightened tensions around speech and inclusion. These external forces pose a common threat to our shared mission and to the ideals that have long defined this university. The rest of senior leadership and I have worked hard to manage these overlapping pressures in ways that protect UCLA's core mission and standing as one of the world's leading public research universities, which includes our [ongoing engagement with the Academic Senate](#).

At the same time, I recognize that the pace and style of decision-making have sometimes left colleagues feeling unheard or excluded. If our processes have seemed opaque or insufficiently consultative, we must repair that together. Shared governance is not ornamental — it is the backbone of UCLA's identity, and it must be strengthened, not eroded, during times of turbulence.

Going forward, I am committed to several concrete steps:

- **Enhanced consultation:** Working with Senate leadership to develop new, more nimble models for Senate consultation prior to major administrative decisions.

- **Greater transparency:** Developing shared dashboards and regular reports on financial and administrative priorities.
- **Values in action:** Reaffirming UCLA’s commitment to academic freedom, inclusion, and the primacy of teaching, research, and service in every decision we make.

One thing I'm looking forward to most immediately is the launch of our True Bruin Values refresh project. Following a year of surveys and dialogue, we’re engaging in an additional year of input, feedback and engagement to collaboratively define our values. You will hear more about this next week.

We will not always agree on every decision, but we share something more powerful than our differences — a deep commitment to UCLA’s mission and to the principles that make this university an enduring force for public good. In the face of the challenges ahead, it is in all our best interests to **stand together, work collaboratively, and move forward** with clarity of purpose and mutual respect.

If we meet this moment together, with candor and courage, we can not only sustain UCLA’s excellence but also reaffirm the values that have defined it for generations.

With humility and respect,

Darnell Hunt

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

The UCLA logo is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a solid blue rectangular background.

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September 17, 2025

Darnell Hunt
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP)

Re: Shared Governance at UCLA

Dear EVCP Hunt,

Thank you for your September 8, 2025, response to the Senate Chair's letter of August 28, 2025, titled "2024-25 State of Shared Governance at UCLA." I write here to continue that conversation, as well as provide some perspectives and facts that I believe will improve shared governance.

I believe we agree about many things, starting with our shared commitment to UCLA's mission and future. We agree that we face uncertain times, which many have characterized as the greatest challenge we have faced in the history of the institution. While the exceptional nature of the current crisis calls many things into question, we agree that that UCLA's historic institutional strengths can help us weather the storm.

I also believe we agree that shared governance is a source of strength for UCLA. Through it, there is the opportunity to draw on the expertise of the hundreds of faculty who serve on the committees, councils, and the assembly of the Academic Senate, who interact collectively with the thousands of faculty throughout the institution. Harnessing this expertise and insight will strengthen strategic campus decisions and direction during these trying times. Working in partnership starts with mutual respect and the understanding that as professionals, we are all well-intentioned, competent, and motivated to protect and improve our university.

I believe we could make significant progress defining and potentially improving shared governance at this juncture if we can come to agreements that respect the bylaws laid out by the Regents and re-establish practices that enable meaningful and effective exchange. In our prior correspondence, we seem to be at cross-purposes as to whether there is already (or has there been) adequate "consultation" of the "Senate." First, I will provide some clarifications (laid out in the sections below) that I believe will be useful on this matter. Then, I will address some potential misperceptions that may seem to be barriers to effective consultation. Finally, I will close this letter with some efforts to move forward.

What is the “Senate?”

It is likely that some points of disagreement relate to different perceptions of what is meant when one discusses “the Senate.” The *membership* of the Senate is quite expansive, including the President, Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, and others in addition to rank-and-file members. Beyond job titles, Senate membership is diverse and covers a broad variety of units, roles, and experiences.

However, when we refer to “the Senate” we generally mean the *institution* that Senate members have collectively and democratically established (within the powers granted to them by the Regents) that exists to aggregate, inform, and pursue the interests of members of the Senate and act as their agent or representative. While it is understandably difficult to incorporate all views or preferences from such a diverse set of constituents, we want to emphasize that the Senate is precisely the body created to accomplish this goal. The Senate’s democratic elections of key officers, wide participation and deep expertise of key committees or councils, broad unit representation in a democratic Assembly, and continuing engagement with faculty helps identify, distill, and communicate the advice and decisions of Senate members in the shared governance process.

If the Administration appoints individuals to committees or groups to provide “Senate faculty perspective” without the input of the institutional Senate, it undermines the legitimacy of those appointments precisely because it bypasses the structure established to represent their views. While people of goodwill might choose to disagree with any decision, we believe a key tenet of shared governance is respecting the institutional role of the Senate to choose its own representation. Notably, the Senate would be unlikely to endorse a senior administrator as a Senate representative on a committee to avoid potential conflicts between the incentives and requirements of their administrative role and the necessity that they faithfully represent the interests of the broader Senate membership.

Informing versus Consulting

We seem to have disagreements defining the point in time at which Senate representatives or that Senate committees or councils should be involved in discussions that allow the Senate to serve its advisory role and the information that is needed to inform their advice. Unfortunately, there have been instances that feel as though the Senate is being *informed* of decisions rather than *consulted* about them.

While some crises clearly call for greater expedience and confidentiality than “business as usual,” bypassing shared governance not only violates the authority granted to the Senate by the Regents—which is not conditioned on circumstances—it may also reduce the quality of the decisions reached. Current issues were noted in our August 28, 2025, [letter](#), and recent past breaches of shared governance at UCLA were specifically mentioned in a systemwide [letter](#).

To be clear, I recognize that not all circumstances require consultation by the Senate. However, ideally, Senate consultation would be welcomed with the recognition that our colleagues or committees would make valuable contributions based on their position, experiences, or scholarly activities. While there are some places where this has occurred (UCLA’s Unhoused Task Force is one example), I ask for

broader consultation not just “because we have to” but because it is recognized as a good idea. If this belief is firmly in place, then consultation isn’t a hurdle, but a strategy used to come to informed decisions.

As part of this process, I need to make it clear that the Senate is operationally capable of making contributions. Logistical barriers or misperceptions might lead to a preference for “informing” rather than “consulting.” To set to rest some concerns that have been previously articulated, I am describing here our plans and practices of timeliness, confidentiality and structure. While these may already be understood, I feel it is worth highlighting them here and I hope this information is broadly disseminated:

1. **Timeliness**-To ensure that we can contribute to emerging crises on a compressed time scale, the Senate streamlined our protocols, including those pertaining to instructional modality decisions in response to changes in campus operating status. To validate these new protocols, we completed a tabletop exercise with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus and Community Safety that applied the emergency responses within the Senate. The exercise was so useful that we have scheduled another one. We would also appreciate Senate inclusion in future Administration-organized tabletops regarding campus emergency responses, which your letter mentioned would be planned.

For [consultation](#) and decisions on longer timelines, early involvement of the Senate would help streamline the overall process including expeditious referrals to the appropriate Senate councils and committees. This early involvement also avoids repercussions later caused by delays in getting information circulated. Such was the case with the budget last year; we have proposed a consultation [plan](#) for this fiscal year and we are awaiting your response.

2. **Confidentiality**-Senate representatives are professionals and can be entrusted to maintain confidentiality to the same degree as Administrators. It is inaccurate to suggest otherwise.
3. **Navigating interactions with the Senate**-The Senate committees and councils have developed over decades to organize expertise that encompass specific areas of the academic mission. This may appear unwieldy. However, our practice has been that the Senate Chair and the Executive Director are available to guide interactions with the Senate, provide rapid responses about where and how issues should be addressed, and offer follow-up once a topic is under consideration. I encourage you to avail yourself of us as resources early when issues arise, so that we can get the issues to the relevant committee in a timely fashion. We hope that early communication can reduce some needless confusion and delays and result in a more effective process.

Moving Forward

Our expectation is that continuing discussions will improve our partnership. I have begun speaking with your Special Assistant on Academic Planning and Budget, whom you assigned to this effort, about potential paths forward toward shared processes that are “nimble, collaborative and bidirectional.” While some misperceptions/misunderstandings can hopefully be easily cleared up, in other cases more difficult changes to attitudes and operations are needed. For this activity to be meaningful, we all need to be receptive to the information gleaned from these discussions. I welcome direct conversations with you so that we can come to common understandings.

Additionally, your letter mentions the importance of utilizing factual information to inform views. As discussed above, the Senate itself is designed as an institution that informs, aggregates, and deliberates the view of UCLA’s faculty. The many Senate meetings throughout the year involving hundreds of Senate faculty add up to much more than anecdotal information. While further information comes to us from interactions with our peers, emails, and other sources, we agree that relying on information from one (or a few) individuals is not ideal. To this end:

1. A special Legislative Assembly meeting will occur on September 30th to discuss issues of shared governance and the campus budget situation and effects on faculty. As with all our Legislative Assembly meetings, all Senate faculty (including Administrators who are Senate members) will be welcome to attend and voice their perspectives.
2. In part based on feedback we have received from you and others after the successful August 14 town hall meeting, we intend to have more frequent town halls to allow greater communication and provide more venues to hear from faculty.
3. As you suggested, we will conduct a survey in the fall quarter to receive quantitative and qualitative feedback from Senate faculty on a range of important issues.

In conclusion, it is clear that we at UCLA have work to do. I take full ownership and responsibility over the next year to act on behalf of the Senate to strengthen shared governance. I’m looking forward to working together to help achieve that positive change.

Sincerely,

Megan McEvoy
UCLA Academic Senate Chair

Cc: Kathy Bawn, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Julio Frenk, Chancellor, UCLA
Tim Groeling, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate



September 8, 2025

Megan McEvoy, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Professor Kathy Bawn, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate
Tim Groeling, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate

RE: Response to “2024–25 State of Shared Governance at UCLA”

Dear UCLA Academic Senate Leaders,

This letter responds to the Academic Senate’s “2024–25 State of Shared Governance at UCLA,” dated August 28, 2025. The record it attempts to create – of persistent administrative disregard for Senate input – requires correction. This response is direct and detailed, because the claims presented publicly in your letter are serious and, in many cases, inaccurate. A fair and factual account of shared governance must reflect the complexity of roles, the urgency of recent challenges, and the reality of how decisions are made in a large public research university.

Shared Governance: Respecting Distinct Roles

Shared governance is a foundational value of the University of California, and the Administration remains committed to its principles. But shared governance is not unilateral authority. It is a framework of collaboration that depends on mutual respect, clarity of roles, and realism; especially amid the extraordinarily complex financial and operational challenges facing the University today. The reality is that we are experiencing an existential crisis driven by external forces. Business as usual is not an option.

Under UC Regents Bylaw 40.1, the Academic Senate is granted authority over admissions, curriculum, degrees, and educational policy. In other areas – including the budget, administrative operations, emergency management, and space planning – the Senate’s role is advisory. These distinctions matter. The Administration is responsible for daily operations, long-term planning, and crisis response. That responsibility requires timely decision-making and, at times, confidentiality. Respect for shared governance also requires respect for that role.

We remain committed to partnering in good faith to strengthen shared governance and develop more effective models of engagement. Our suggested next steps for a path forward can be found at the bottom of this letter.

Budget Consultation

The letter claims there was no meaningful consultation with the Senate on the 2025–26 budget. That is incorrect. Senate representatives had multiple opportunities for engagement with the EVCP, CFO, and Academic Planning and Budget. The absence of a formal budget memo to CPB does not equate to exclusion from the process.

The suggestion that strategic workgroups represent a breakdown of shared governance mischaracterizes how institutions function in periods of fiscal instability. Administrative working groups are standard practice. They are necessary for timely and coordinated planning. They do not replace consultation, but they are not subject to it either. As made clear in University policy, the Senate does not have budgetary authority.

Graduate Education

The implementation work on graduate education referenced in the letter followed a joint Senate–Administration task force and included more than 50% Senate faculty, and its draft recommendations were shared with the Senate on July 9, 2025 for initial discussion. Detailed action items associated with these recommendations will be shared with the Senate for consultation as they emerge in the coming weeks and months.

The letter omits the Senate’s historical delays in responding to consultations – delays that have, in some cases, stretched to six months or more. The Senate has recently indicated interest in improving these timelines, which is welcome progress. A more responsive consultation process is essential to effective governance in a time of institutional urgency.

Instructional Modality and Emergency Response

The letter criticizes the Administration’s decision to shift to remote instruction during the protest and fire events. These decisions were made in coordination with campus safety officials and emergency services and based on the obligation to protect life and safety. The claim that they were made for administrative convenience is not accurate.

Emergency response is governed by legal, regulatory, and operational requirements that cannot be paused for full Senate consultation. Instructional authority resides with the Senate in normal conditions. In emergencies, the Administration must act.

To support clearer processes going forward, the campus has adopted a new **operational category framework** to guide decision-making in emergency situations. Each category reflects defined levels of campus impact, from minor disruptions to full-scale emergencies, and includes clear protocols for assessing risk and determining instructional modality. To test and refine this system, we will hold a **single-purpose tabletop exercise** focused on simulating a shift in campus operational category and assessing instructional responses. This exercise will include both administrative and Senate leadership and is intended to ensure we are aligned and prepared.

We are encouraged by the productive collaboration that has taken place to develop a joint emergency protocol. We welcome this as a shared tool that strengthens our capacity to respond swiftly and in coordination during future events, balancing academic integrity with our fundamental duty to safeguard the campus community.

Trust, Transparency, and Responsibility

While the Senate continues to call for greater transparency, it is helpful to remember that consultation is not about control, but about offering thoughtful input that strengthens decisions. Shared governance works best when all voices contribute to shaping outcomes, without the expectation of unilateral authority or veto power.

Trust in governance is built when we engage each other with consistency, reciprocity, and a spirit of collaboration. Together, we can move beyond looking backward in critique and instead lean into the complexity of decision-making as shared work. By doing so, the Senate can play an essential and constructive role in guiding the university forward.

Representation and Evidence

Your letter includes broad references to “faculty opinion,” “widespread concern,” and “erosion of trust.” These assertions, presented as fact, are unsupported by data. If Senate leadership wishes to speak for the broader faculty body, it must ground such claims in evidence – surveys, participation data, and transparent methodologies – not anecdote or presumption.

We ask that future statements claiming to reflect faculty sentiment be supported by verifiable data. Doing so will strengthen the Senate’s voice and ensure that it accurately reflects the diverse views of the faculty it represents.

Moving Forward

As part of our continued efforts to strengthen shared governance, Jeff Lewis, in his role as Special Assistant to the EVCP, will focus this year on deepening the Administration’s relationship with the Academic Senate. He will work to support the development of consultation models that are nimble, collaborative, and bidirectional – responsive to both the pace of institutional decision-making and the need for meaningful faculty input. He will also continue to contribute a faculty perspective to budgetary and strategic planning processes.

We recognize the Senate’s stated commitment to collaboration and shared governance. At the same time, the letter’s characterization of the Administration as routinely violating protocol, excluding faculty, or prioritizing convenience over mission stands in tension with that commitment. Such framing risks overlooking the efforts of the many faculty, staff, and administrators who are working tirelessly, often under intense pressure, to uphold UCLA’s mission and respond to extraordinary institutional challenges.

September 8, 2025

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We welcome the Senate’s partnership. But let it be based on:

- Respect for the distinct roles and responsibilities of governance partners;
- Data-informed perspectives rather than anecdote;
- Professionalism and solution-oriented engagement;
- And a shared commitment to UCLA’s mission and future.

If those principles guide our interactions, meaningful collaboration is not only possible, it is inevitable. Now more than ever, our ability to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and shared purpose will shape our ability to meet the challenges ahead and preserve the excellence that defines UCLA.

Sincerely,



Darnell M. Hunt
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

cc: Julio Frenk, Chancellor, UCLA

August 28, 2025

Darnell Hunt
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP), UCLA

Re: 2024-25 State of Shared Governance at UCLA

Dear EVCP Hunt,

I'm writing to summarize the state of shared governance at UCLA during the 2024-25 academic year. There were some areas of progress, particularly regarding communication protocols about instructional modality during emergencies and the very recent inclusion of the Senate Chair as a permanent member of the Chancellor's Cabinet. But these gains were overshadowed by the magnitude of deficiencies regarding proactive consultation with the Senate on this year's budget, and the troubling trend of excluding the Senate from critical early stages of decision-making.

Shared governance is mandated by the University of California in Regents Bylaw 40.1 which "recognize[s] that faculty participation in the shared governance of the University through the agency of the Academic Senate ensures the quality of instruction, research and public service at the University and protects academic freedom" ([UC Regents Bylaw 40.1](#)). The Regents have delegated authority over admissions, degrees, courses, and educational policy to the Academic Senate, and formally empowered the Senate to create "committees to advise the President and Chancellors on campus and University budgets."

Shared governance helps the Administration make better informed decisions, decisions that take into account the expertise and experiences of the Senate Faculty who carry out the university's academic mission. We have repeatedly seen the deleterious consequences of decisions made without Senate consultation: the ASE contract negotiations, Ascend, various real estate purchases, and the graduate funding crisis.

Budget. There was no meaningful Senate consultation on the 2025-26 budget. The Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) received no data or other written materials from the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) about the budget situation, and was unable to fulfill its duty to "specifically review and formally articulate a Senate view regarding the campus budget and each major campus space-use and building project at each project's proposal, planning, and building stages." ([Divisional Bylaw 65.3.C](#)) We appreciate your promise that the CFO will work with CPB in accordance with this bylaw in the 2025-26 academic year. A repeat of this year's failure by Administration to provide data and solicit substantive Senate advice on the budget will damage not only the level of trust between Administration and Faculty, but also the likelihood of buy-in and support for any additional budgetary measures that may be needed.

Workgroups without Senate Representation. In the absence of consultation with CPB, strategic decisions regarding the budget and deficit reduction were made by an unofficial, behind-the-scenes administrative workgroup from which the Senate was excluded, despite repeated requests by Senate leadership. Similarly, campus strategy with regard to the future of graduate education was developed by an administrative workgroup. Here, too the Senate was excluded despite repeated requests. A [letter](#) on this subject from the Senate Chair went unanswered.

Senate consultation must not be shirked. The above concern about excluding the Senate is greatly mitigated when there is meaningful subsequent Senate consultation, that is, when the administration provides a written proposal so that Senate committees with appropriate expertise can read, discuss and provide feedback. Including Senate leadership on workgroups is an acceptable substitute only in rare cases of issues that are truly too urgent or too sensitive for full consultation. For example, including the Senate Vice Chair/Chair Elect on the Federal Actions Advisory Committee is a reasonable case where this is appropriate. But issues like the campus budget and graduate education funding are long-standing issues that warrant full consultation.

As you know, the Senate has become more agile in providing formal advice: through additional meetings, independent review, and subcommittees, Senate committees have responded quickly when warranted. We will continue to do so. Indeed, the Senate has repeatedly found ways to quickly respond to "time-sensitive" and "emergency" situations only to find that the Administration fails to act promptly (e.g., Data X, Research Park, graduate funding implementation). Invoking time sensitivity to avoid formal consultation damages trust and credibility when the alleged urgency repeatedly proves false.

To underscore the main point: Meeting with Senate leadership and/or Senate committee chairs is not a substitute for Senate consultation. Nor is including Senate leaders on administrative workgroups. Administrators must not conflate conversations with individuals in Senate leadership positions and consulting with the Senate as an institution. This has occurred repeatedly, particularly in areas under the responsibility of the Administrative Vice Chancellor, leading to overall degradation of trust.

Instructional Modality during Emergencies. The administration does not have the authority to mandate remote instruction during emergencies. Only the Senate can make this decision. This authority was breached during the Spring of 2024, when a small (but serious) protest in one building led to a weeklong imposition of remote learning. Campus was open for all activities except instruction. This was a low moment for shared governance, and a clear instance of administrative convenience being prioritized over the academic mission. To avoid further such instances, the Senate developed a protocol for rapid decision-making regarding instructional modality during crises. The protocol was unfortunately not followed by Administration during the early weeks of January's fire emergency. At the Senate's insistence, the administration began following the protocol toward the end of the fire emergency, and the Senate demonstrated its ability to deliver clear and appropriate decisions about instructional modality when it receives accurate and timely information about emergency conditions. Since that time, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus and Community Safety (AVCCCS) and the Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP have worked in partnership with the Senate to hone the protocol to ensure that campus is kept safe and that emergency decisions appropriately consider the academic. Good faith leadership by the AVCCCS in engaging with the Senate and following up give us reason to believe that genuine progress has been made in this area.

Moving Forward. The absence of consultation and lack of transparency regarding the budget is stoking toxic divisions among Faculty at a time when unity in the face of outside threats is essential.

Going forward, we ask the following:

1. The CFO will follow historic and systemwide norms in engaging with CPB: he will attend all meetings or send the AVC for Academic Planning and Budget in his place. CPB will receive written information on the state of the budget at the beginning of the academic year and throughout, with sufficient detail to allow it to offer meaningful input well before the finalization of the budget.

2. Administration will respect Senate authority over instruction and follow the protocol for changes in campus operating status.
3. The Senate will be included in groups convened for emergency planning from the outset, regardless of the nature of the emergency (physical threats to safety, federal activity, etc.) whenever there is potential impact on research and teaching.
4. All proposals that may affect the academic mission, even indirectly, will be formally reviewed by the Senate before implementation following our [consultation process](#). This process includes space usage, IT and Goal V planning.

Senate leadership is accountable to the Senate Faculty as a whole. Across campus, Faculty are asking questions about the budget process, and about the state of shared governance at UCLA. These questions deserve answers. Toward this end, and in keeping with the Senate's ongoing commitment to transparency, we will post this letter on the Senate website. We hope to receive a reply from you that we can post as well. In response to Faculty concerns, the Senate intends to incorporate more frequent reports about the state of shared governance in Senate communication going forward.

We are happy to continue working to find ways to make Senate consultation more efficient and effective. We approach our role in shared governance with a spirit of good faith engagement and commitment to the academic mission. We hope for substantive, consistent, and strong shared governance in the 2025-26 academic year at UCLA, a time when our unity is so important.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bawn
2024-25 Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

Cc: Julio Frenk, Chancellor, UCLA
Tim Groeling, 2025-26 Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate
Andrea Kasko, 2024-25 Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Megan McEvoy, 2025-26 Chair, UCLA Academic Senate