MICHAEL T. BROWN
CHAIR, INTERSEGMENTAL COMMITTEE OF ACADEMIC SENATES

Re: Academic Senate Review of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Dear Michael,

I am pleased to report the outcome of the Academic Senate’s review of the proposed ICAS Resolution on the Proper Use of the CAHSEE. The proposed resolution received general support from three Senate divisions and four systemwide Senate committees, and support for some assertions from three of the four divisions that oppose the resolution in its present form. There was general agreement with the concern being expressed in the proposed resolution that high-stakes decisions like high school graduation should not be based on a single exam score and there was general concern about unequal schools. Among the Senate divisions opposed to the proposed resolution, at least as currently written, there were concerns expressed about the apparent attack on the idea of a graduation exam itself, its limited view of the “proper use” of the CAHSEE, and a lack of evidence for certain assertions about the CAHSEE.

The Academic Council therefore is unable to support the proposed ICAS Resolution on the Proper Use of the CAHSEE in its present form. The Academic Council commends the proposed resolution’s intent to draw needed attention to the effects of the CAHSEE, particularly as it impacts students who are powerless to control the quality of education they receive from the state. The Academic Council believes further consideration is needed regarding the goals of the proposed resolution, the evidence and research needed to support its conclusions, and the best means for consensus building among the three segments of higher education in California.

Following is a summary of comments and recommendations received from the systemwide Senate committees and divisions who responded to this review. Please see the attached letters for the entirety of their responses.
I. **General Comments**

**Support**
- Not supportive of the use of single metrics for making high-stakes decisions and agree that “unequal schools are a real problem in California, with direct impact on student achievement and preparation for college.” (Berkeley, Davis, and UCLA)
- “very supportive” of Resolution phrases #1 (Irvine and Santa Cruz) and #2 and “…[encourage] gathering more information on how ethnicity and income correlate with pass rates, how the exam affects dropout rates, and what is meant by “achievement gap.”” (Irvine)
- “… this exam lends itself to the practice of teaching toward a specific exam, which is pedagogically unsound.” (UCLA)
- Support for Resolution and its attention to the UCLA/IDEA study – that UC admission should not be based on simplistic formulae; see no merit to the use of CAHSEE entirely (Riverside, UCEP).
- There may be risks to challenging the concept of proficiency testing, but risks to UC’s principles are greater (Riverside).
- Resolution “makes a great deal of sense”; “mindful of the value of an exit exam, [but] think that the tests can be misapplied.” (Santa Cruz).
- Majority support – individual students should not have to pay the price for the poor education they may have received from the state (BOARS, UCOPE).
- Strong support – CAHSEE should no longer be used as sole determinant; need to assess impacts particularly on under-represented and economically disadvantaged students (UCAAD, UCEP).
- “…there are enough questions about CAHSEE’s value and impact to call its use into question” (UCEP)
- Measured support: support especially for whereas clause #8, addressing the resource disparity (UCOPE).

**Concern**
- Resolution’s goals are unclear. The structure of the resolution, particularly the preamble, seemed more an attack on the idea of a graduation exam itself (thus, a political argument/statement) than a discussion of the best uses of CAHSEE. (Berkeley, Davis, San Diego, Santa Barbara, UCLA).
- Assertions are not supported by citation of evidence (Davis, San Diego, and Santa Barbara).
- UC faculty were not asked for advice on the proper use of CAHSEE, and are not qualified to tell the CA Department of Education how to evaluate high schools and students (Davis).
- Resolution phrase #3 not supported – it is reasonable to establish graduation standards (Irvine, BOARS minority opinion); do not want to appear unsupportive of high academic standards (UCEP minority opinion).
- A possible use of such an exam is to evaluate the remedial/preparatory education impacts on UC of admitting student who did not pass the exit exam (San Diego).
- Some are reluctant to endorse the resolution due to CAHSEE’s complex legal history, and unanswered questions relating to consequences for those who do not pass (UCOPE).
II. **Offered Drafting Suggestions**

- Suggest that the primary use of CAHSEE should be to improve pupil achievement in high school (Irvine); identify subjects needing more work (Los Angeles); direct resources to schools most in need (Santa Cruz, UCAAD, UCOPE); and, provided that it is not used as the sole determinant of graduation eligibility, the test should accurately assess twelfth-grade level competency expectations (UCEP).

- “… express concerns about the use of the exam as a sole determinant of graduation”; explain how we avoid similar practices at the university level, with evidence when possible (Davis).

- Encourage gathering of more information on how ethnicity and income correlate with pass rates; how the exam affects dropout rates; and define “achievement gap” (Irvine).

- Include a recommendation to study the full impact of CAHSEE on curriculum and pedagogy, leading to a cost-benefit analysis for abandoning the CAHSEE altogether (Riverside).

- Include research on the CAHSEE and information on possible impacts on other institutions of higher education, such as the California Community Colleges (Santa Barbara).

- CAHSEE may still have value (but unconvinced), if only to highlight educational inequality. CAHSEE may even exacerbate inequality by encouraging frustrated students to drop out, and punishing students that are unlucky enough to attend underperforming schools or those that fail to align their pedagogy to CAHSEE (UCAAD, UCOPE).

On behalf of the Academic Council, I applaud the spirit of the proposed ICAS Resolution on the Proper Use of the CAHSEE. The Academic Council would be pleased to entertain another review of the proposed resolution should ICAS choose to submit a new version.

Sincerely,

John B. Oakley, Chair
Academic Council

Encl: 12
Copy: Academic Council
María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director
JOHN OAKLEY
Chair, Academic Senate

Subject: Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates proposed resolution on the proper use of the California High School Exit Exam

Unfortunately, the Proposed resolution on the proper use of the California High School Exit Exam arrived too late in the semester to receive a full review by our division. The following are informal comments by the divisional Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education (AEPE), prepared by its chair. The comments were not discussed and endorsed by Divisional Council, and therefore do not represent the position of the Division on this issue. We hope, however, that they will help inform the deliberations of this proposal by Academic Council.

The chair of AEPE relayed the following:

“In general, we are not supportive of single-score tests as an indicator, either for UC admissions or high school graduation. There was general agreement that unequal schools are a real problem in California, with direct impact on student achievement and preparation for college.

“However, there was concern about the structure of the resolution, particularly the preamble, which seemed more an attack on the idea of a graduation exam itself than a discussion of the best uses of CAHSEE. Principled arguments are available on both sides of the question of whether there is a basic minimum of performance which students should be required to demonstrate before graduating from high school. Several members of AEPE were hesitant to weigh in on a resolution, which they felt was more a political argument than a statement about education itself, particularly higher education.

“Had AEPE more time to discuss this as a group, I think it likely that we would be able to give you a more coherent answer. For now, the best I can do is convey that we are in basic agreement that the CAHSEE can receive too much emphasis, which would be bad; that we’re not certain that it currently does receive too much emphasis; and that we are uncertain of the wisdom of being perceived as making an aggressive attack on it under cover of educational values.”
Sincerely,

William Drummond
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Cc: Bob Jacobsen, Chair, Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education
    Anita Ross, Senate Analyst, Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education
June 14, 2007

JOHN OAKLEY, CHAIR
Assembly of the Academic Senate
Academic Council
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senate’s Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

The aforementioned proposed resolution was forwarded to all of the Davis Division standing committees and chairs of the Faculty Executive Committees in the schools and colleges.

The Davis Division is certainly in agreement with the view, which is implicit in the resolution, that the use of multiple metrics is far preferable to reliance on a score on a single exam in making decisions as momentous as whether or not a student should graduate from high school. We also support the notion that, if students at particular schools demonstrate poor average performance on the exam relative to students at other schools, then efforts should be made to determine and rectify the causes of such gaps. However, we found the tone of the resolution to be pedantic and presumptuous. The resolution makes assertions about the CAHSEE which, while plausible, are not supported by citation of evidence, and it makes recommendations that, while reasonable, are somewhat condescendingly expressed. As university faculty, we do not have the background and experience necessary to qualify us to dictate to the California Department of Education how it should evaluate the academic performance of high schools and high school students and we do not support the publication of such a strongly worded document, especially if we have not been asked to provide advice on this matter. We feel that a more prudent approach, and one that we hope would be more favorably received, would be to express concerns about the use of the exam as the sole determinant of high school graduate, to explain how we make efforts to avoid similar practices at the university level and the importance of doing so, citing specific examples when possible.

Sincerely,

Linda F. Bisson
Professor of Viticulture & Enology
Chair of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate
After reports by the relevant Senate committees, the Irvine Division Academic Senate Cabinet reviewed the Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

By way of background, all California public school students beginning with the class of 2006 must receive passing scores on the CAHSEE, as well as meet all other state and local requirements, in order to receive a high school diploma. A UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education and Access report based on Fall 2005 data showed that schools with large numbers of students who have not passed the CAHSEE were also schools with poor learning conditions (i.e. fewer certified teachers, more overcrowded, shortages of math teachers). Recognizing these problems, the ICAS resolution offers three recommendations regarding appropriate use of the CAHSEE:

1. The Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) recommends that a proper use of scores on the CAHSEE is to target those schools demonstrating lower pass rates for investment with the resources necessary to raise quality;
2. ICAS also recommends that a proper use of the scores is to counsel those students not passing CAHSEE of the value of improving their competencies and of how they might do so (such as making use of the community colleges);
3. ICAS recommends that the scores on the CAHSEE should not be used as either the sole or major determinant of high school graduation or the awarding of diplomas until questions about the impact of the exit exam program are answered—it is imprudent and potentially harmful to students to do otherwise.
Overall, the lead committees, the Council on Educational Policy and the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools, were very supportive of the Resolution, and its recommendations. They encouraged gathering more information on how ethnicity and income correlate with pass rates, how the exam affects dropout rates, and what is meant by “achievement gap.” They also noted that the primary purpose of the CAHSEE should be to improve pupil achievement in public high school, and not as a means to penalize students for a poor educational system. The Senate Cabinet while supportive of the Resolution, expressed concern with Recommendation #3 and agreed that it was reasonable to establish standards for graduation. Therefore, the Irvine Division unanimously endorsed Recommendations #1 and #2, but opposed Recommendation #3 (3 in favor, 5 opposed).

The Irvine Division appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

[Signature]

Martha Mecartney, Senate Chair

C: María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director, Academic Senate
June 12, 2007

Professor John Oakley
Chair of the Academic Senate
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

In Re: Proposal from the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates

Dear John:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposal from the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS). The proposal was sent to all committees of the Academic Senate, with the specific request that the Undergraduate Council (UgC), the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools (CUARS), and the Executive Boards opine. Our campus is divided (Executive Board and UgC against, CUARS in favor). As the Executive Board ultimately speaks for the division, UCLA does not support this resolution as currently written.

- The proposal is unclear with regard to its goals. UCLA is not against some type of exam and believes that this exam can serve an important role in revealing that much of California’s education is substandard, especially in the Los Angeles area. However, the existence of this exam lends itself to the practice of teaching toward a specific exam, which is pedagogically unsound. (Executive Board and UgC)

- An appropriate use of an exam of this type is direct a student’s future study to areas needing more attention and work; a single exam must not determine eligibility for graduation. (Executive Board)

I am attaching both the responses from the UgC and CUARS; CUARS is submitted as a minority report. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Vivek Shetty
UCLA Divisional Senate Chair

Cc: María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director, UC Academic Senate
    Jaime Balboa, CAO, UCLA Academic Senate
June 14, 2007

John Oakley  
Professor of Law  
Chair, UC Systemwide Academic Senate  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear John:

RE: System-wide Senate Review of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates  
Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Our Undergraduate Council has been concerned about the California High School Exit Exam for some time and has previously engaged in a detailed discussion of the implications of the exam on admissions policy at UC Riverside. The fundamental question for admission is whether or not a student is eligible if they have not passed the exam, irrespective of their performance in high school or other mitigating factors. Each campus may choose to treat this circumstance differently. However, a UCLA/IDEA study provides another powerful indication that admission to UC must be based on evaluation of student achievement in the context of their opportunities and challenges rather than simplistic formulae based on scores. Data are available systemwide concerning CA high schools and each student’s full application needs to be mined for insight about socio-economic background and life experiences.

The numbered "whereas" statements list the obvious potential misuses of CAHSEE scores. At best the scores can be applied as a means evaluate schools and reallocate funding to restore equity. While that insight could prove very valuable, the process of institutional evaluation comes at a direct cost to the students taking the exam. As the UCLA statistics show, low CAHSEE performance correlates with all the obvious indicators of distress in a high school. More testing should not be needed to determine such obvious funding priorities.

The recommendations seemed to be minimal and about damage-control. No real merits were identified for continuing the CAHSEE at all. There ought to be a recommendation to study the full impact of CAHSEE on curriculum and pedagogy, leading to a cost-benefit analysis for abandoning the CAHSEE all together. Perhaps the writers could not find consensus to proceed this far; we don't know; there is no minority report. Perhaps it is politically risky to challenge the concept of proficiency testing; but there are also risks to a University that places political expedience before principled recommendations.

Thomas Cogswell  
Professor of History; and  
Chair of the Riverside Division
June 11, 2007

Professor John Oakley
Chair, Academic Senate
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California  94607-5200

Re: Systemwide Senate Review of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates’ *Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam*

Dear John:

In response to your request of May 1, the San Diego Division received comment from the Committee on Preparatory Education, and the Senate Council considered the ICAS Resolution regarding the proper use of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) at its June 11, 2007 meeting. The Council was unable to endorse the Resolution.

Although identified as a “statement of educational principles” in the transmittal, the Resolution impressed many reviewers instead as a political statement, which raised questions about its purpose. Reviewers expressed concern that Divisional support for the underlying points of the Resolution was implied even though Divisions have not previously discussed the CAHSEE. The materials included did not indicate the data or other forms of evaluation used by ICAS when developing its recommendations.

Most reviewer comments focused on the value and wisdom of using the CAHSEE as an eligibility indicator given the improbability that a student who failed the exam would be admitted to UC. If such a student were to be admitted, potential issues regarding remedial/preparatory education impacts on UC would be unavoidable, especially since the level of the test material is considerably lower than that generally considered to be at a high school level.

Our Committee on Admissions has also discussed this matter. The Chair has promised a letter which I await, but hope to have in hand by the time of our forthcoming meeting of Academic Council.

Sincerely,

Henry C. Powell, Chair
Academic Senate, San Diego Division
June 5, 2007

John Oakley, Chair
Academic Council

RE: Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Dear John:

The proposed resolution on the proper use of the California High School Exam (CAHSEE) by the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates was reviewed at UCSB by the Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Relations with Schools and the Undergraduate Council. Neither group reached a consensus on the proposal. Some members were strongly in favor, but others felt that it should not be supported because it was primarily political in nature or because there was insufficient information to enable them to reach an informed decision. The net result is that UCSB cannot endorse the proposal at this time, although there is some support for the principle. A proposal that included results of more on-going research on the CAHSEE and information on possible impacts on other higher education institutions, particularly community colleges, might receive a more favorable review.

Sincerely,

Joel Michaelsen
Divisional Chair

Cc: Omer Blaes, Chair, Undergraduate Council
June 12, 2007

John Oakley, Chair
Academic Council

RE: Review of Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Dear John:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the draft resolution of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates on the proper use of the California High School Exit Exam. Some of our Senate Committees were able to opine. The consensus is that the resolution makes a great deal of sense. Even as we are mindful of the value of an exit exam, we think that the tests can be misapplied. One function of the tests should be to direct resources to schools that need them and that can make good use of them.

One of our committees believes that the exit examinations might make special accommodations for English learners.

We hope our opinions are of use to Council and to Assembly.

Sincerely,

Faye Crosby, Chair
Academic Senate,
Santa Cruz Division
June 12, 2007

JOHN B. OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re:  BOARS’ Comments on the ICAS Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Dear John,

BOARS considered the proposed ICAS Resolution on the Proper Use of the CAHSEE at its June 1, 2007 meeting. Following a brief discussion, BOARS approved the proposed resolution by a vote of 8 in favor, 1 against, and 1 abstention. While the majority seemed to feel that individual students should not, all by themselves, have to pay the price for the poor education they may have received from the state, at least one member was sympathetic to the view that some minimum, and testable, standard of academic achievement should attend the granting of a high school diploma, and that the CAHSEE does set a rather low standard.

Best wishes,

Mark M. Rashid, Chair
BOARS

cc:  BOARS
      Maria Bertero-Barcelo, Executive Director, Academic Senate

MMR/mr
June 4, 2007

JOHN OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Systemwide Review of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Dear John,

The University Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity (UCAAD) has reviewed the proposed resolution from the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) for the “Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam” (CAHSEE).

UCAAD strongly supports the ICAS resolution. We agree that CAHSEE should no longer be used as a sole determinant of graduation from California public high schools until lingering questions about its value and impact are answered. It seems quite clear that more study is needed to assess the impact of CAHSEE and other high stakes tests on the educational achievement of California high school students, particularly the under-represented and economically disadvantaged.

The CAHSEE exam does not address what to us are the underlying issues affecting the quality of education in California public high schools – the economic inequality in the state related to race, the inequitable learning conditions of California public high schools, and the resulting ethnic gap in UC eligibility. Rather, it appears that CAHSEE may actually exacerbate these problems in a number of ways – by encouraging frustrated students to drop out, and by effectively punishing students who are unlucky enough to attend schools that have inadequate learning conditions or that fail to adequately align their pedagogy with CAHSEE standards.

That said, we agree with ICAS that CAHSEE may still have value (although we are not convinced of this), but only as a tool to highlight educational inequality and identify the high schools most in need of additional resources and investment.

Respectfully,

Gibor Basri
Chair, UCAAD

cc: Director Bertero-Barceló
UCAAD members
June 14, 2007

JOHN OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Systemwide Review of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS)
Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Dear John,

The University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) has reviewed the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senate’s proposed resolution for the “Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam” (CAHSEE).

UCEP members believe there are enough questions about CAHSEE’s value and impact to call its use into question, and for that reason, our Committee acted to endorse ICAS’ three-pronged resolution by a vote of seven to zero with one abstention. Both of UCEP’s student representatives also supported the resolution.

There was broad support in UCEP for the resolution’s first two recommendations, and many of our members felt strongly that ICAS’ third recommendation – against the use of CAHSEE as a sole or major determinant of high school graduation – was appropriate in light of a number of concerns: the apparent correlation between CAHSEE scores and the inequitable distribution of resources in California public high schools; evidence that CAHSEE (and standardized tests in general) carry a cultural bias that has a disproportionately negative effect on underprivileged and underrepresented minority students; and concerns about the effects of standardized testing on pedagogy.

There were a few additional reservations about the resolution noted by individual members of UCEP that were not endorsed by the committee as a whole. Specific reservations about ICAS’ third recommendation included concerns that anecdotal evidence was being used as a basis for arguing against CAHSEE and that Senate support of the resolution might lead to a perception that the faculty do not value high academic standards or are unwilling to apply a measure of those standards and attach consequences to the measurement.

Other individual members noted that CAHSEE really has no “proper use;” and that it is never good educational policy to use a single instrument for any high-stakes determination or to treat an
exam as an independent measure of a student’s achievement or ability when the results appear to be heavily determined by factors outside of the student’s control. Finally, it was noted that CAHSEE inappropriately tests mastery of middle-school or early high-school level material. A more proper use for CAHSEE – provided that the exam is no longer used as a sole determinant of graduation eligibility – would be to test at a twelfth-grade level, which would reflect more accurately the expectations for high school competency.

Sincerely,

Richard Weiss
Chair, UCEP

cc: UCEP members
    Executive Director Bertero-Barceló
JOHN OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC SENATE

RE: Review of the ICAS Proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam

Dear John,

The University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) has discussed ICAS’ proposed Resolution on the Proper Use of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). We offer a statement of measured support for the resolution.

Many members feel particular affinity for the principles underlying the ICAS resolution, especially the eighth “Whereas” clause: “Schools where large numbers of students have not passed the CAHSEE are also schools with poor learning conditions (i.e., fewer qualified teachers, overcrowding, and reduced time for instruction)”. That this resource disparity frequently mirrors otherwise already charged demographic situations calls for sensitive and well-considered action.

The committee agrees that students should not be penalized for their schools’ lack of performance, and some argue that the CAHSEE could serve as a tool to highlight inequalities in resource levels. To others, the CAHSEE could be part of a student’s graduation (or college application) portfolio, though not the decisive factor. Nonetheless, some are reluctant to endorse the resolution due to CAHSEE’s complex legal history and due to unanswered questions relating to consequences for those who do not pass.

Consequently, we must urge both caution and reflective consideration of the impacts on test-takers, secondary schools, and post-secondary schools of such a statement.

Cordially,

John Eggers, Chair
UCOPE

cc: UCOPE
Maria Bertero-Barcelo, Executive Director, Universitywide Academic Senate