

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Office of the Chair
Telephone: (510) 987-9303
Fax: (510) 763-0309
Email: Cliff.Brunk@ucop.edu

Assembly of the Academic Senate, Academic Council
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

October 13, 2005

PRESIDENT ROBERT C. DYNES
PROVOST M.R.C. GREENWOOD

Re: Academic Council Report, *The Decline of UC as a Great International University*

Dear Bob and M.R.C.:

At its September 28, 2005 meeting, the Academic Council unanimously endorsed the enclosed report, *The Decline of UC as a Great International University*. The Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) authored this report out of continued concern over the steady deterioration in the quality of the graduate enterprise at the University of California, and its witnessing of the imminent erosion of the University as a one-time preeminent international university to one that is increasingly regional in scope.

No issue has so captured the devotion of the Academic Council as that of the urgent need to increase graduate student support, and ensure that this issue soundly and prominently remains as the first priority for the Academic Senate and the senior administration at UCOP. The Academic Council wishes to acknowledge the efforts that have been made so far on behalf of the University, but finds that the issues addressed in the enclosed report continue to be ripe and have yet to be resolved. During the Academic Council's discussion of the report, current CCGA Chair Duncan Lindsey emphasized the dramatically low number of graduate to undergraduate student enrollments, a ratio which is embarrassingly disproportionate next to the University's peer institutions and which places the University at an unfortunate political and reputational disadvantage.

On behalf of the Academic Council, I respectfully request that you widely distribute this report to all corners of the University community and interested parties alike, to heighten awareness, encourage open discussion, and provoke considered and swift action for dramatically increasing graduate student support.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cliff".

Cliff Brunk, Chair
Academic Council

Encl.: Academic Council Report, *The Decline of UC as a Great International University*

Copy: Academic Council
Duncan Lindsey, Chair, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA)
María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director
Todd Giedt, CCGA Analyst

The Decline of UC as a Great International University

Endorsed by the Academic Council

on September 28, 2005 ¹

Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) continues to be extremely concerned about what appears to be a secular crisis in UC graduate education. For a number of years now, this committee has witnessed a steady deterioration in the quality of the graduate enterprise at the University of California. While this deterioration can be linked to a number of factors, its net effect will be the erosion of the UC as a one-time preeminent international university to one that is becoming much more regional in scope. In other words, whereas once UC attracted the best and brightest graduate students from around the world, now UC is in serious jeopardy of only attracting *some* of the best graduate students in California.

This issue of graduate support is extremely important to the quality of UC's graduate enterprise for a basic reason. If the top out-of-state and international graduate students cannot afford to come to UC to study, or do not receive financial packages that are competitive with those given by other high-caliber institutions, most of them will not. This decline in our ability to recruit the best-and-brightest graduate students must eventually lead to an overall weakening of UC's research, scholarship, and undergraduate teaching. As the quality of UC's graduate programs deteriorates, we expect that even the best California residents entering academic graduate programs will increasingly choose to pursue graduate programs in other states or in private institutions. Since graduate students are an integral part of UC's research mission and undergraduate teaching, such a qualitative decline would have a profound effect on UC's ability to maintain its preeminent reputation, as well as to attract the best faculty. Indeed, the long-term ability of UC's research enterprise to economically benefit our state, a crucial part of our institutional mandate, is jeopardized by the increased difficulty of recruiting and training the best students available on a world-wide basis. The current portfolio of high-tech industries within California requires superb students trained at the graduate level, and the progressive regionalization of UC's graduate enterprise will have the ultimate effect of annihilating the long-term reverse brain-drain that has so profoundly benefited California's industries and tax-base.

The Current Graduate Education Crisis

It is certainly no secret that the number of new international graduate student enrollments has fallen dramatically in the last few years. For example, the 2003-04 academic year marked the third consecutive year in which the Council of Graduate Schools has registered international graduate student enrollment declines of between six and ten percent. On the UC side, the Council of Graduate Deans reported to CCGA that in 2003-04, UC experienced a 20 percent drop in new international graduate student enrollments at the doctoral level systemwide, and there has been a 27 percent decline since 2000.

While the 9/11 tragedy (and its associated student visa reforms) did play a role in these declines, CCGA strongly believes that one of the more formidable impediments to UC graduate study continues to be the large out-of-state tuition expenses that international graduate students face within their first couple of years of study. These expenses, combined with inadequate UC graduate support packages (when weighed against to comparable universities) only contribute to the problem. For instance, two reports

¹ As submitted by the 04-05 Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs

published by UCOP showed a relative UC graduate support gap of about \$2,000 of the support packages offered to doctoral applicants in 2001; but most importantly, this gap did not significantly decrease in the intervening years between 2001 and 2004: in short, it appears that a shortfall in our support packages for graduate students has become part of our institutional culture. The lack of competitiveness in UC's financial offers for graduate students has a profound and demoralizing effect across the University: it has become standard practice to watch our most desired graduate recruits turn down our offers of admission in favor of more lucrative offers at other institutions.

Recommendations/Support for Current Proposals

In response to these concerns, a number of new NRT reduction plans have been discussed and proposed this past year. Council is currently considering two such plans. The first plan, which originated from CCGA, calls for treating all GSI's as residents from the second year on with respect to tuition. Another proposal, from UCSB, argues that the tuition and fees from non-resident graduate students are largely generated by faculty who attract these students. Therefore, the differential between resident and non-resident tuition should be returned to the respective campuses that recruited these students. Specifically, this plan calls for returning 75% of NRT to the respective UC campuses, and perhaps to the programs from which the funds originate. Although these plans would redirect existing monies within the university, CCGA views both proposals as only steps that begin to redress the systemic and long-term problems with the funding of graduate education at the UC.

CCGA is also encouraged by the recent proposal from President Dynes that would earmark the savings that comes to the General Fund through the University's Strategic Sourcing Initiative for graduate student support. We also applaud the recent efforts by the Academic Council to gather graduate student financial data in order to quantitatively evaluate the above NRT reduction proposals. CCGA hopes that some form of NRT reduction will be adopted as UC policy in the near-term. However, the onus remains on the University as a whole (and on the Academic Senate in particular as the steward of our academic programs) to carry through on existing proposals, and produce creative solutions for increased funding for the graduate enterprise at the UC. Without relief from such high NRT and/or better graduate support packages, committee members sincerely believe that UC will only continue to lose its academic edge.

In our view, there is no issue that holds a greater long-term danger for the quality of the University of California than the increasing lack of competitiveness of UC for recruiting the most talented graduate students on a world-wide basis. If we continue down our present path, we run the very real risk of simply becoming just another regionally-based large public university. We believe that there is consensus among UC faculty for the Academic Senate to remain active in generating creative solutions to the problems of graduate student funding (or lack thereof).