

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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*Assembly of the Academic Senate, Academic Council
University of California
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April 10, 2006

**RORY HUME
ACTING PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

RE: UCEP Recommendation for the Formation of a Task Force on Undergraduate Education

Dear Rory,

Last November, the Academic Planning Council requested the University Committee on Education Policy (UCEP) to consider whether the University of California should form a Task Force on Undergraduate Education that would make recommendations to the Provost and the President about the University of California's enrollment and program planning decision-making over the next decade. The Academic Planning Council also charged UCEP with determining specific aspects of the charge of such a Task Force, along with its overall mission.

Enclosed, please find UCEP's recommendations for the formation of a Task Force on Undergraduate Education, unanimously endorsed by the Academic Council at its April 5, 2006 meeting. The Academic Council wholly concurs with UCEP's findings, and that this Task Force "... is essential to make visible the distinctive value of the undergraduate educational experience of UC and to articulate UC's philosophy and objectives for undergraduate education."

On behalf of the Academic Council and UCEP, I respectfully request that the enclosed document be placed on the April 11, 2006, Academic Planning Council agenda for full consideration and action, and we look forward to future developments on this significant initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "JO".

John Oakley, Chair
Academic Council

Enclosure 1
Copy: Academic Council
 Denise Segura, Chair, UCEP
 María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director, Academic Senate



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
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March 27, 2006

JOHN OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Task Force on Undergraduate Education

Dear John,

In November 2005, UCEP was asked by the Academic Planning Council (APC) to consider whether UC should form a Task Force on Undergraduate Education that would make recommendations to the president and provost about UC's enrollment and program planning decision-making over the next decade. As part of its consideration of this issue, the APC also asked UCEP whether one charge of such a task force might be to develop and articulate a clearer philosophy of undergraduate education that would enhance public understanding of the unique value of an undergraduate education at UC. UCEP was also asked to advise the APC on critical areas of undergraduate education at the UC in need of greater analysis that could be part of the charge of such a Task Force. It was suggested that the Task Force have a mission comparable to that of the Task Force on Planning for Doctoral and Professional Education (PDPE).

UCEP consulted broadly to ensure that our recommendation about a Task Force on Undergraduate Education would not reproduce past knowledge. Our discussions integrated campus standpoints, from which we developed a sense of issues and challenges that could be usefully analyzed systemwide. We reviewed campus documents, including WASC accreditation statements, websites, and the report of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education in a Research Context at UC Santa Barbara (2003). UCEP also received input from campus undergraduate councils, educational policy committees, deans, Assistant Vice Provost Linda Guerra, Director of UCLA's Center for Community Learning Kathy O'Byrne, Former Student Regent Jodi Anderson and Director of International Program Development Gretchen Kalonji.

First, we sought to define what makes the undergraduate experience at a large research university unique. Clearly, the opportunity for students to benefit from, and participate in, research should be one of the defining strengths of a UC undergraduate education. The excellence of a research university reflects the productivity of its faculty, who generate new knowledge that informs classrooms, textbooks, public policy, and community services. UC faculty strive to integrate the discovery and creative processes inherent in research into their teaching and community service activities.

Each campus emphasizes the desirability of incorporating research opportunities into the undergraduate education experience, but at the same time the campuses do not provide enough quality opportunities for undergraduates to do research under faculty supervision. Furthermore, the ways in which undergraduates benefit from our research endeavors are not well documented. The Task Force could investigate what research experiences have demonstrably enhanced undergraduate education most effectively, helping UC develop educational strategies that play to our inherent strengths more effectively, so that we may meaningfully integrate undergraduates into the investigation and discovery processes with faculty and graduate students. Harnessing the intellectual resources of our graduate and research programs in this way will strengthen the quality of undergraduate education.

More generally, the Task Force on Undergraduate Education should be charged with determining educational objectives and outcomes that demonstrate the distinctiveness of a UC education. Campuses should be encouraged to develop strong mission statements that articulate how they strive to establish close connections between faculty excellence in research and the quality of graduate and undergraduate education, including a vision that embraces the welfare of the larger community. Ideally, campus mission statements and educational objectives that speak to a synthesis between research and teaching could then be disseminated to the public.

UCEP is interested in the senior “capstone” requirement offered or required by some departments on the campuses. A capstone experience gives undergraduates a way to synthesize the knowledge they have been interrogating throughout their years at the UC. It would be useful to obtain systemwide information on the value of this experience and best practices for accomplishing this and perhaps implementing it in a more systemwide fashion.

In addition to undergraduate research opportunities, the University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) identified service learning as another area of strong interest by undergraduates seeking to enrich themselves with new skills and experiences. Many students want part of their education to involve a deeper connection to the larger community, and are interested in academic programs that promote civic engagement. The Task Force on Undergraduate Education could gather information on the availability and development of service learning and civic engagement programs across the UC, consistent with the recommendations of the recent Universitywide Civic Engagement Symposium held at UC Berkeley on June 10, 2005.

One of the most nettlesome issues in undergraduate education is general education—in particular, how institutions are balancing the goals of liberal learning with the need to prepare students for future careers. Each campus has either recently engaged in GE reform or is considering such reform. It would be useful for a systemwide entity to gather campus-specific principles (as opposed to a set of classes) to highlight what each UC campus believes to be critical features of a general education. This exercise could then develop a synthesis of general education features that include shared components and distinct qualities.

Innovations in technological change present both opportunities and challenges for undergraduate education at UC vis-à-vis online and distance learning, and related activities such as “podcasting”. Moreover, there are few systemwide guidelines relating to the identification of the

best methods for ensuring academic integrity in the evolving online environment where vast amounts of information and resources of varying quality and origin are instantly available. An overview from the Task Force on critical issues within online and distance learning will provide valuable guidance as individual campuses develop policy and procedures to incorporate this new methodology into the curriculum.

International education is another other critical theme for a Task Force on Undergraduate Education to consider. UC has made international education a priority, and we concur that support for education abroad programs and experiences is highly desirable. Moreover, UC's emerging international strategy includes sharpening the focus and scope of existing international education and research collaborations, which will open up new opportunities for UC faculty and undergraduate students to participate in international research.

Finally, UCEP wishes to encourage discussion of several themes in its potential charge to a Task Force on Undergraduate Education: leadership preparation programs; organization of the freshman experience; honors programs; the place of ethics in the curricula; and the value of small classes to the quality of undergraduate education.

In sum, UCEP believes the formation of a Task Force on Undergraduate Education is essential to make visible the distinctive value of the undergraduate educational experience of UC and to articulate UC's philosophy and objectives for undergraduate education. The Task Force should be charged with gathering information on the critical issues relevant to enhancing undergraduate education at UC that take advantage of the distinctive environment of each campus. The Task Force should survey the campuses for information about the relationship between campus administrative entities and senate committees in curricular development and oversight of undergraduate education, with an eye to recommending best practices in academic support functions. The Task Force should identify best practices in the program review process across departments in the UC that would increase the focus on undergraduate education. In addition, the Task Force will need to consider a wide array of issues to inform systemwide educational policy and illuminate UC's unique contribution as a research university in undergraduate education to the broader public, including the distinct opportunities that go along with being an undergraduate in a large research university, and how undergraduate education might be enhanced by such elements as research, international education, service learning, a capstone requirement, and new technologies and other future innovations. Finally, the Task Force should serve a program advocacy role and make long term planning recommendations. We envision one tangible outcome of the Task Force to be a white paper on Undergraduate Education for UC in the Next Twenty Years.

We recommend that the Task Force be structured similarly to the Task Force on Planning for Doctoral and Professional Education (PDPE). It would be a joint Senate and administrative body co-chaired by two leaders in undergraduate education, one from the Senate and one high-level administrator. It should organize a work plan for itself and present recommendations to the president and provost by the end of 2007 to help guide UC's undergraduate enrollment and program planning and decision making over the next decade. We recommend that the Task Force operate alongside the new systemwide academic planning process to ensure that these cross-

cutting undergraduate issues do not get lost in the discussion of how the distinctive campuses fit together into a whole university.

The Academic Senate, with the help of appropriate administrative entities, is best positioned to provide leadership in defining a vision undergraduate education at UC should be now and into the future. The importance of this undertaking cannot be understated in the current environment of fierce competition for public resources, a rapidly diversifying student body, and a growing need for better-educated citizenry. With planning, imagination, and “vision,” the UC can meet its myriad challenges to better serve the public.

Sincerely



Denise Segura
Chair, UCEP

cc: UCEP members
Executive Director Bertero-Barceló