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June 3, 2026

Academic Senate Division Chairs

Re: Outcome of Systemwide Review – Proposed Senate Committee on
Climate Change and Sustainability

Dear Senate Colleagues,

At its May 2026 meeting, the Academic Council concluded a review of the [proposal](#) to establish a systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability, following systemwide Senate review and Council’s consideration of divisional and committee comments.

Council appreciates the thoughtful feedback provided by the divisions and systemwide committees. After discussing the feedback, Council determined not to advance the proposal. At the same time, Council reaffirmed the importance of continued Senate leadership and engagement on climate and sustainability issues and identified a number of alternative approaches for strengthening coordination and faculty input through existing structures and processes.

Attached is a summary of the review and Council’s discussion, including several approaches recommended during the review process for advancing climate and sustainability goals without creating a new standing committee.

Thank you again for your participation in this review.

Sincerely,

Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Academic Council

cc: Academic Council
Senate Division Executive Directors
Senate Executive Director Lin

Proposed Systemwide Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability

Summary of Comments: All 10 Senate divisions and four systemwide committees ([UCEP](#), [UCPB](#), [UCORP](#), and [UCRJ](#)) provided [comments](#) in response to the [proposal](#) to establish a systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability. In general, reviewers agreed that climate change and sustainability are important long-term priorities and that the Senate should play an active role in addressing them. Many emphasized UC's responsibility to provide leadership through research, education, and operations, and expressed support for improved coordination across campuses. However, there were mixed views on whether a new systemwide standing committee is the best mechanism to meet these goals.

While some reviewers supported the proposal as a way to increase coordination and provide a dedicated forum for faculty input into sustainability issues, many expressed skepticism. Several raised concerns that systemwide committees are usually organized around core functions rather than specific topics and that creating the committee could set a precedent for additional issue-specific committees.

A related concern was the potential redundancy with existing structures. Several reviewers pointed to the existing Senate committees and administrative bodies already engaged in sustainability efforts and questioned whether a new committee would add value or instead duplicate or fragment existing work. Some suggested that concentrating responsibility in a single committee could even reduce broader Senate engagement with climate issues.

Many reviewers noted that the proposal lacks clarity regarding the committee's charge, scope, and authority. They called for clearer delineation of responsibilities relative to existing committees, better definition of its advisory versus operational role, and more detail on how it would interact with campus-level structures and represent divisional perspectives.

Reviewers also questioned how a systemwide committee would align with campus-level structures, noting that most Senate divisions do not have a corresponding committee and instead rely on administrative bodies to address climate change and sustainability issues. In this context, UCRJ clarified that [Senate Bylaw 325](#) requires each division to designate a corresponding committee for every Committee of the Assembly. As a result, approval of the presented proposal would effectively require each division to establish a parallel committee.

Reviewers also raised concerns that creating a new standing committee would increase faculty service obligations and require additional staffing and financial support, yet the proposal does not provide cost estimates or identify necessary resources. Several noted that committees are more often created than eliminated and suggested that any new committee should be accompanied by reductions elsewhere or supported with new resources.

Several reviewers expressed concerns about potential overreach into curriculum and educational policy. They emphasized that any systemwide body must respect divisional control over academic programs and preserve academic freedom and recommended explicitly clarifying these boundaries in the proposal.

Some reviewers expressed interest in alternative approaches, such as charging existing Senate committees; creating subcommittees, time-limited task forces, or a pool of experts; convening regular systemwide meetings to address relevant topics; or pursuing non-Senate structures.

In summary, reviewers agreed that climate change and sustainability are high priorities and that greater coordination across UC is desirable. Support for the proposal is concentrated among the

proposing divisions (UCSF and UCSD) and one additional division (UCSB), while others either declined to support or expressed mixed views. As a result, there is no clear consensus in favor of establishing a new systemwide standing committee. The prevailing view is that the proposal requires further clarification and stronger justification, particularly around scope, added value, and resource requirements, before it could receive broad support.

Conclusion: Given the lack of consensus in support of establishing a new standing committee, Council decided not to advance the proposal. At the same time, the systemwide review identified several recommendations for strengthening and advancing Senate engagement and coordination on climate change and sustainability issues without creating a new standing committee. These recommendations generally fall under one of four different approaches:

1. Use Existing Structures

Several reviewers recommended leveraging existing Academic Senate committees and administrative bodies rather than creating a new committee. This could include clarifying or expanding the roles of current Senate committees and increasing engagement with systemwide bodies such as the [Global Climate Leadership Council](#), which advises the UC president on sustainability issues and includes Senate representation, and the [Systemwide Sustainability Steering Committee](#), which helps coordinate implementation of UC sustainability policy and initiatives across the system.

2. Form a Targeted or Time-Limited Body

Some reviewers supported creating a more flexible structure, such as an Academic Council special committee, subcommittee, or time-limited task force composed of subject-matter experts. This approach could allow the Senate to assess needs and demonstrate value before committing to a permanent standing committee.

3. Establish a Pool of Experts

Another suggestion was to create a “pool of experts” or advisory network that existing Senate committees could call upon as relevant issues arise, allowing climate expertise to be integrated across governance structures rather than centralized in a single committee.

4. Enhance Systemwide Coordination

Additional suggestions included convening regular systemwide meetings to share best practices across campuses and more actively using existing reporting and consultation processes to elevate Senate input and improve coordination.

Positions: The following summary of divisional and systemwide committee positions is based on submitted responses. These provide a high-level sense of views and do not represent a formal vote.

Position	Senate Divisions	Systemwide Committees
Support	UCSD, UCSF, UCSB	—
Did Not Support	UCB, UCD, UCLA, UCSC	UCEP
Mixed Views / Conditional Support	UCI, UCM	UCORP; UCPB (conditional support; suggested subcommittee/task force alternative)
No Clear Position	UCR	—

UCRJ did not take a position on the merits of the proposal, but noted that Senate Bylaw 325 would require each division to designate a corresponding committee for any committee of the Assembly.