



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Academic Senate

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September 10, 2026

James B. Milliken
President, University of California

Re: Report on the State of Shared Governance at the University of California,
2025-26

Dear President Milliken:

In the tradition of several past Academic Senate chairs, I am pleased to conclude my term with a report on the state of shared governance at the University of California.

Over the past year, the Senate has worked closely with you, the administration, and the Board of Regents on several critical issues. These collaborations have been largely productive and have reinforced the importance of faculty engagement in University decision-making. I particularly appreciate your responsiveness to Senate concerns and your recognition of the Senate's authority in areas of its responsibility.

My report highlights both examples in which shared governance worked well and several instances in which earlier and more meaningful Senate engagement could have improved the process and outcome. A central theme is the importance of ensuring that expectations for consultation are understood and practiced consistently across UCOP. As both President of the University and a member of the Board, you are particularly well positioned to help reinforce those expectations.

It has been a privilege to work with you in the interest of the University over the past two years. I am confident that the University will continue to thrive under your leadership, with shared governance a key element of its success.

Sincerely,

Ahmet Palazoglu
2025-26 Chair, Systemwide Academic Senate

cc: 2025-26 Academic Council
Vice President and Chief of Staff Kao
Secretary and Chief of Staff Lyall
Senate Division Executive Directors
Senate Executive Director Lin



Report on the State of Shared Governance at the University of California, 2025-26
Ahmet Palazoglu, 2025-2026 Academic Senate Chair

September 10, 2026

The past year both tested and reaffirmed the strength of the University of California's shared governance system. Regular, substantive engagement between the Academic Senate and the president, systemwide provost, executive leaders at UC Office of the President (UCOP), and the Board of Regents contributed to better decisions and outcomes on several important matters. At the same time, a number of significant initiatives affecting academic programs, faculty, and the University's core missions moved forward without sufficiently early Senate involvement. These experiences reinforce an important lesson: shared governance works best when faculty consultation begins while proposals are still being shaped, rather than after key decisions have already been made.

The Senate's longstanding practice of involving the president and senior administrators in Academic Council and Assembly meetings has sustained shared norms and values, while the monthly leadership meetings have strengthened communication between the Academic Senate and UCOP.

The process culminating in revised language in the Faculty Code of Conduct (Academic Personnel Manual Section 015) and the Faculty Discipline Policy (Section 016) demonstrated a strong working partnership among the Academic Senate, UCOP, and the Board of Regents. That partnership was also evident in discussions concerning the use of standardized testing in UC undergraduate admissions, where the president and Regents appropriately respected the Senate's authority over admissions policy and asked the Senate to conduct a review and develop a recommendation. President Milliken also affirmed the Senate's authority to determine its own membership, reinforcing an important Regents policy and principle of shared governance.

Senate faculty representatives to the Board of Regents play a critical role in shared governance, participating in critical debates and offering faculty perspectives on matters affecting the University. Their presence at regular meetings of the Board, including closed sessions, underscores the value the Board places on faculty consultation.

These examples stand in useful contrast to several programs and initiatives proposed at the UCOP level this past year that, in retrospect, would have benefited from earlier and

more robust Senate engagement. In most cases, the Academic Senate was brought into the process late, or not until the program was publicly unveiled. Earlier engagement would have yielded a multitude of benefits. For instance, faculty expertise could have anticipated shortcomings and identified mitigations before launch; and Senate involvement from a program's inception tends to build stronger faculty buy-in and can create broader consensus. Bypassing Senate consultation, which is an essential part of UC's shared governance structure, creates unnecessary tension and erodes trust between the Academic Senate and our UCOP partners.

Some of these difficulties reflected individual leadership styles and practices rather than a broader breakdown in the relationship. President Milliken generally responded constructively when Senate concerns were brought to him directly. However, the experience demonstrates the importance of ensuring that expectations for early and meaningful Senate engagement are understood and practiced consistently across UCOP.

Going forward, it is imperative to reaffirm the commitment to shared governance that has made UC the institution it is today. Below is a list of programs that would have benefited from fuller, earlier engagement with the Academic Senate.

Programs Developed Without Early Senate Consultation

Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (PPFP)

The elimination of the *Search Waiver Exception* and the *Hiring Incentive* for the PPFP proceeded without input from the Academic Senate, generating serious backlash from the faculty systemwide. While the reasons for these actions may have been defensible (e.g., federal mandates, resource constraints), how these changes were communicated (or not communicated) lacked transparency and clear justification. Early Senate engagement could have opened a different path, such as restoring the *Hiring Incentive* or launching a systemwide review of *Search Waiver* policies and could have eased the transition. Instead, the process damaged trust and the principles of shared governance. When these concerns became apparent, President Milliken engaged directly with Senate leadership and changed course, an important example of shared governance functioning to correct a problematic process.

Degree Plus Pilot Program

The Academic Senate was again caught by surprise when the pilot programs at UCSD and UCSB were announced. The Degree Plus Program builds on a student's current major and augments it with a campus Extension certificate program and a paid internship, both of which affect students' degree progress and financial aid eligibility. The Senate's University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) would have been well positioned to advise UCOP

on the program's design and help create an assessment plan with appropriate metrics of success for the review of the pilot in 2-3 years. Given apparent interest in expanding this program systemwide, partnering with the Senate going forward will be essential.

Early Career Faculty Research Excellence Awards (ECFREA)

Following the elimination of the Advancing Faculty Diversity (AFD) Program, ECFREA launched in 2025 to fund research and creative activities for early-career faculty. The program was launched absent consultation with the Academic Senate, and faculty input was sought only after the fact. Early Senate participation could have shaped eligibility requirements, types of projects, funding levels, and other program elements. Because the \$50K awards relied on funds that otherwise supported campus priorities, the decision also raised questions about the appropriate balance between systemwide initiatives and campus-based decisions about research investment. The program would have benefited from a broader discussion of research funding priorities, discipline diversity, and how best to target research funding gaps and mitigate declining PhD cohorts in many disciplines.

Global Language Network (GLN) Program

The GLN program is intended to offer low-enrollment language classes systemwide to ensure robust student participation and preserve UC's ability to provide access to a variety of languages as part of students' education. The program, however, appears to have originated with Humanities deans and was not a grassroots faculty effort. The faculty who teach these languages, and their departments, were not part of the GLN's development. As a consequence, the program was viewed as a top-down measure, rather than one developed collaboratively with the faculty directly responsible for the curriculum. That perception was reinforced when the program was promoted prominently by UCOP leadership before faculty concerns had been addressed. Earlier engagement could have produced a stronger program and ensured broader faculty support. Once a program is underway, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to reengage key stakeholders and reshape the program's intent and relevance.

External Consultant Reviews and Studies

Both the *Total Remuneration Study* (Deloitte) and the *Systemwide Assessment of Online Education* (Noodle/Huron) could have benefited from early Senate engagement. Both studies were developed and contracted without meaningful early consultation with Senate faculty with relevant expertise. When faculty were eventually given an opportunity to review the work, significant methodological and design concerns became apparent, but only after the scopes of work had been established and contracts executed. In both cases, earlier engagement with faculty experts would not simply have increased faculty confidence in

these studies; it could have materially improved their design, methodology, and usefulness to the University.

Situations Presenting Special Consultation Challenges

Litigation, Personally Identifiable Information, and the Brandeis Settlement

Litigation matters are generally confidential and conducted under attorney-client privilege, which limits how much can be communicated to the Academic Senate about strategic decisions made during the litigation process. In the past year, however, two litigation outcomes generated significant anger, backlash, and concern among the faculty about UCOP's defense of academic freedom. These reactions were driven not by the confidentiality of the litigation itself, but by how UC administrations handled the situations.

The first one was the announcement of the disclosure of personally identifiable information to the federal government pursuant to an investigation. The second was the Brandeis settlement at UC Berkeley, which impinged on the faculty's academic freedom protections in developing and teaching courses. In both cases, an earlier, appropriately scoped read-in of Senate leadership—consistent with privilege and confidentiality requirements—would have helped anticipate the faculty response and allowed the Senate and UCOP to work together on alternative strategies, as well as to devise mitigation and communication strategies, before each outcome became public.

At the same time, we appreciated President Milliken's prompt responses when the Academic Council formally raised concerns about these matters. His engagement demonstrated the value of direct communication between the Senate and senior leadership even when circumstances limit opportunities for broader consultation.

Additional Reflections

Regarding the practice of shared governance, two additional points should be highlighted.

UC Health

The rapid growth of UC Health presents a distinct shared governance challenge. Existing mechanisms for faculty consultation in the health enterprise are far less developed than those characterizing the Senate's relationship with UCOP more generally. In fact, no mechanism currently exists for broad clinical faculty solicitation and consultation on critical matters. The Presidential Task Force on Health Sciences Clinical Faculty Governance highlighted the need for broader, more systematic faculty input into decisions affecting the health enterprise, and its recommendations will set the stage for establishing genuine shared governance in the UC Health context, in partnership with the Academic Senate. That culture change, however, will take time and sustained effort.

Opportunities to strengthen Senate-Regents engagement

The Senate's engagement with the Board of Regents is substantially stronger today than it was several years ago. Faculty representatives have meaningful opportunities to contribute to Board discussions, and Senate and Regents leadership have productive channels for direct engagement. That progress is important and should be preserved. Against that positive backdrop, two exceptions merit attention going forward. Both appear rooted in specific circumstances or individuals rather than in any deliberate change of principle or policy, and both are worth revisiting.

First, the faculty representative to the Board had, for many years, also served on the presidential search committee—a practice that lapsed for the two most recent searches (though none is expected in the near term). The most recent search did include a Faculty Advisory Committee led by the systemwide Academic Senate chair, but the Senate chair was not seated on the Regents' search committee itself, and advisory participation is not the same as direct membership.

Second, Academic Senate leadership was not included directly in the Regents' Governance Committee's deliberations on the U.S. Department of Justice letter to UCLA or in the Committee's subsequent discussions of related matters. Although in both of these instances, Senate leadership sought and received limited information about those deliberations, they are not equivalent to the direct engagement codified in Regents Policy [1201](#). Going forward, the Senate expects the direct engagement provided for in Regents Policy 1201 to be honored.

Conclusions

The experiences of the past year reaffirm both the strength of UC's shared governance system and the importance of practicing it consistently. President Milliken has demonstrated a commitment to productive engagement with Senate leadership and responded constructively when significant concerns have been brought to his attention. The challenge going forward is to ensure that this same expectation is understood and practiced throughout UC's senior leadership. The principal lesson from the examples above is that consultation is most valuable when it occurs early enough to influence an initiative's development, not simply after a proposal has largely taken shape. Building that expectation more deliberately into UCOP and Regental processes would strengthen decision-making, faculty confidence and, ultimately, the University itself.