



CHAIR, ACADEMIC SENATE
RIVERSIDE DIVISION
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BUILDING, RM 225

THOMAS COGSWELL
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
RIVERSIDE, CA 92521-0217
TEL: (951) 827-5530
E-MAIL: THOMAS.COGSWELL@UCR.EDU
SENATE@UCR.EDU

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Michael T. Brown
Professor of Counseling/Clinical/ School Psychology
Chair, UC Systemwide Academic Senate
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Michael:

RE: REGENTS' TASK FORCE ON DIVERSITY REPORTS

Four Senate Committees reviewed the Diversity Report. Two of them – Faculty Welfare as well as Diversity and Equal Opportunity – endorsed the document with a hearty shout of “omnia bene.” Two others, however, made substantive comments, which I now summarize.

While the Graduate Council approved the overall Report, its members expressed concerns about two major issues.

(1) **Comments on Recommendations of the Work Team.** The report notes among its recommendations in the area of *A. Leadership* that senior administrators must take proactive steps to maintain both academic excellence and equal opportunity by ensuring enrollment of a diverse graduate student body, and support faculty and administrators in achieving these goals. We note that the UCR Graduate Division has an existing diversity plan. Successful implementation of this plan depends on both faculty involvement, especially by graduate advisors and recruitment committees of departments/programs, and the guidance and leadership of the Graduate Division and UCR administration. There are two Graduate Division staff whose jobs relate solely to graduate student diversity. These individuals are part of the first sphere of the administration's oversight and facilitation of graduate diversity. Currently, these staff positions are funded by soft money. It would be a strong affirmative statement of support for graduate student diversity by the senior administration if it were to provide hard funding for these staff positions.

The Graduate Council agrees with recommendations under *B. Academic Planning* that “diversity will not thrive unless it is incorporated into academic planning...” At its most recent meeting, the Graduate Council voted unanimously in support of adding the following question to the list of questions given to outside reviewers to consider during a 7-year review of a graduate program: “How does this program conceptualize diversity? Is it working to increase diversity? If it is working to increase diversity, how is it doing so?”

Under recommendation *C. Resource Allocation and Assessment of Departments and Schools*, bullet two, it is noted that chancellors and deans should require action plans from departments/schools/units still needing to improve diversity. The Graduate Council has two comments related to this area. The first is that administrative units should be given the opportunity to enunciate a diversity plan adapted to their particular environment and needs. The second comment is to underscore that it is critical that administrative units receive sufficient support to enact their plans. Thus, it is recommended that chancellors should also require action plans from deans and ensure that appropriate support and rewards are in place to enact that plan (this is also discussed in the Report in the recommendations under *E. Accountability*).

In the area of *D. Recruitment and Retention*, it would be a benefit to all graduate students with children and those URMs with fewer financial resources if the campus were to substantially augment available day care resources. Anecdotally, there is currently a 2-year waiting list for day care through the campus.

(2) **Comments on Methodology/Definitions.** It is critical to properly define the pool against which diversity is

assessed. The diversity of the top 10% of high school graduates, and baccalaureate students who qualify for graduate school admission are the appropriate pools to judge diversity of the undergraduate and graduate populations of UCs, not all high school or college graduates (in the state of California). Graduate Council does not disagree, however, that an important goal is to narrow the gap between the diversity of the state as a whole and the diversity of the respective qualified student populations. The Graduate Council also notes that when judging pool diversity, local demographics should be taken into account as many students will elect to attend a UC for undergraduate or graduate studies in the vicinity of where they attended high school or university, respectively. UC faculty have direct roles to fulfill at many different levels to achieve diversity goals. K-12 outreach, effective teaching and research mentoring of undergraduates, and thoughtful strategies for recruitment and retention of graduate students will all help to contribute to diversity of the graduate student population. Finally, as a premier university of the state of California, UC is also striving to keep its status as a top international research institution. Therefore, the demographics of graduate students, especially at the highest, Ph.D. level, cannot be confined to paralleling those of the state. In summary, the state and local demographics along with many other factors can contribute to the composition of our graduate students, and we do not agree with the statement in the report that: "Absent discrimination, we believe the demographic profile of UC students generally will reflect the gender, racial and ethnic profile of the pools from which UC recruits and selects students." The reasons are two-fold. The use of the term pool is too open-ended, and this sentence implies that if the demographic profiles of UC students do not reflect the pools from which UC recruits and selects students, there is discrimination. Instead, we suggest the following statement as more appropriate: "We believe the demographic profile of UC students should mirror the gender, racial and ethnic profile of the pool of qualified applicants; where this pool fails to reflect appropriate diversity, effective outreach must be a part of the UC mission."

It is also notable that Graduate Division must use Section 31, Article 1 of the California Constitution (Proposition 209), and not the UC diversity statement, to define diversity when making diversity awards with state funds. A parallax situation may result when diversity is defined differently by UC and the state, and state funds are the engine to achieve that goal. For example, proposition 209 requires consideration of the background of a student before making an award, including whether they are from a single parent or low income household. The report does not explicitly consider these factors.

The Report also generated a detailed response from the Undergraduate Council. Its members agreed that the Report addressed thoroughly laudable goals that they would all like to reach, but their main concern is that the Report might languish as a wish list. They chose to make some recommendations, rearrangements and additions in hopes of turning the Report into a more motivational mission statement. Since I find it nearly impossible to summarize UC's remarks without losing much of its nuance, I will simply quote at length:

"To understand our suggestions, imagine the Report as a military briefing. It would then follow a standard sequence: situation, mission, execution, administration, etc. If the Report reorganized its recommendations into situation and mission components, we believe it would better support the execution phase that should follow.

SITUATION: We would start with a statement of the legal mandates and constraints, which the Report reserves for its final two recommendations. The University is required by the State of California to apportion its admissions according to population so that all portions of the State enjoy equal privileges (Organic Act, 1868) and by the federal government to avoid disproportionate negative outcomes for minorities (Civil Rights Act, Title VI). At the same time, we have constraints (Proposition 209) that limit our options in the admissions process.

The Report assembles statistics to show that diversity has not been achieved system-wide, even though the Riverside campus is a national leader among public universities for the diversity of its undergraduate population. (The Report congratulates UCR and recommends that we seek HSI status. The Council is informed that we already had that status.)

MISSION: This is captured by the first two recommendations in the Report: the University recognizes the compelling interest of achieving greater diversity and needs a comprehensive plan that responds to unequal educational opportunity.

EXECUTION: The report recommends several means to advance the mission. We support them all, even though two that concern schools are probably beyond the direct influence of the University. In the remainder of our review we explain why the statistical approach in the report is inadequate for the

execution phase and explore some implications of the Report's recommendations for the admissions process at UC Riverside.

STATISTICS: Measures that suffice to show that diversity has *not* been achieved may be quite inadequate to guide the pathway to a harmonious and representatively diverse community.

- The Report seems rather limited in the groups that it uses to measure and represent ethnic diversity. These categories may have a basis in legal considerations, but they do not effectively capture the full complex of ethnic heritages that our students bring to the University. Increasingly, race does not necessarily indicate the nationality, region, and culture in which an individual was raised. It is not surprising that students report difficulty in categorizing themselves within the options we provide.
- True diversity encompasses much more than ethnicity. Creed, class, and gender surely deserve to be considered and probably still do not capture all the differences that can enrich or divide a University community. Wealth, for example, is not necessarily correlated with class, especially when considered across ethnic groups. Practical goals for diversity and measures of success need to cross-correlate all these aspects that differentiate individuals and properly describe the collective University community. (Although members focused on the undergraduate report, some noticed that the implicit definitions of diversity varied between the reports on students and faculty).
- Diversity and campus climate need to be considered at the level of the functional social units of the University. The Report appears tied to system-wide and campus level accounting. To achieve diversity for the benefit of all members of the University community, however, we need a more finely resolved accounting that considers the mix of participants in much smaller units. It is at the level of departments, classrooms, and residences that individuals experience the practical stresses or the comforts and educational advantages of diversity. Under-represented groups may vary considerably between these units.
- Measures of success in diversification should move from admission statistics to retention, graduation, and employment rates. It is not enough to balance the numbers entering our departments and classrooms; the social climate must encourage comfort and success in these units.
- Our shared anecdotes indicated that there will not be a simple formula for one climate that nurtures everyone's comfort and success. For some, a comfortably diverse community might be one in which their background ceases to be noticed. Others may be disappointed if cultural differences are not openly and positively celebrated.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS: The report makes several recommendations concerning the admissions process; they align with eligibility reforms proposed by the systemwide Board on Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), which the Council endorsed earlier this academic year.

- Recommendation to rethink eligibility: Undergraduate Council has already endorsed the move to an enlarged applicant pool that is "entitled to review," so that UCR may exercise a more nuanced and insightful selection process than is possible with a limit set by a GPA- and SAT-driven formula.
- Recommendation to align admissions to best practices: For UCR this means moving to comprehensive review and the reading of each candidate's entire file to measure achievement in the context of individual opportunity. When Undergraduate Council designed the current formulaic approach to comprehensive review, we envisioned that it would be replaced after two years by a more insightful process. This second phase has been postponed because UCR's enrolment targets cause us to "deselect" very few students.
- Recommendation to streamline the admissions process: UCR already gains some advantage by making offers of admission as earlier than other campuses. Further streamlining may be possible by centralizing parts of the read process. UCOP is already exploring the opportunities for shared

reading of the files. UCR should have several concerns about this: 1) It must not delay notification; 2) Measures currently used to seek the best bets among the high ranking students may not be well suited to recognize the good risks among the low ranking students; and 3) Sufficient campus autonomy must be maintained so that centralized review not become a centralized apportionment of talent and a formal tiering of campuses.

- Academic Senate members and their research findings could be better engaged in the UCR admissions process if UCR had a dedicated Senate committee for Admissions. We are the only campus without at least a subcommittee dedicated to admissions.”

Suffice to say that the Diversity Report found widespread support in the Division, and it generated a considerable amount of commentary, which I am certain will be of use in finalizing the Report.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Cogswell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Thomas Cogswell
Professor of History; and
Chair of the Riverside Division