



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

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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: Informal^[1] Systemwide Senate Review of A Proposed UC Undergraduate Mission Statement

The proposed language of the Mission Statement was sent out for review to the Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction, Undergraduate Council and Educational Policy. Rules and Jurisdiction chose not to opine and Educational Policy had no significant issue with the proposed language. Undergraduate Council provided the rhetoric below:

The language of the Mission Statement provoked no strong reactions from members of Undergraduate Council or from those with whom we discussed its content. The current draft articulates the obvious and honorable elements of an undergraduate education. Although it seems reasonable for the University to have such a document, we did not identify any problems that have arisen solely for lack of an undergraduate mission statement. The proposal does, as claimed, "reflect what we think is or should be occurring in undergraduate education."

Before suggesting how the statement might be improved in a few details, we offer a broader observation about the intended audience. It arises from our consideration of admissions policy and our classroom experience. In short, the best mission statement should not only guide our curriculum development and admission practices but could also give incoming students a sense of their responsibilities and what is expected of them.

EXPECTATIONS and RESPONSIBILITIES

We imagine that few members of the Academic Senate would have any trouble describing what "should be occurring in undergraduate education." One of our tough challenges is to achieve that mission for those students who lack the communication skills, work habits, motivation, or ethics that we expect and which we attempt to encourage through our admission requirements. The mission statement might motivate three constituencies with potential to reduce the frequency of these distressingly mismatched expectations. High-school students, their teachers, and their parents might better understand the deeper intellectual qualities we seek through our rather formulaic admissions criteria. The faculty might be encouraged to develop better integrated progressions of general education and upper division courses. Those who set campus enrolment targets might be helped to strike a more manageable balance between educational goals and fiscal needs.

The mission statement does not speak directly to all its constituencies in turn. When reading the closing statement about relevance, each must balance their own responsibilities against their expectations of others in realizing the mission. We note that Senate committees and administrative task forces are currently at work on all three issues. Much will depend upon finding measures of progress and means for improvement in pursuing the ideals of the mission statement.

Responsibilities: The statement might clarify that the responsibility for keeping a public university "on-mission" is shared, unevenly perhaps, between faculty, students, administrators, staff, and parents.

Relations with Schools: UC's undergraduate curriculum is inextricably linked to the curricula of the California high schools and community colleges from which we draw our students. We develop "a-g" high-school course requirements and community college transfer pathways to ensure that our admittees are adequately prepared and to encourage positive changes in pre-college curricula. Our mission includes an obligation *to demand pedagogically sound, sufficient admission requirements and to build a curriculum seamlessly upon those requirements*. As the most advanced tier in the State's public education system, we also have unique opportunities to influence the curriculum in other tiers.

Length of the Statement: The proposed mission statement provides a précis and a helpful elaboration. The word "really" in the connective subheading is quite inappropriate, however, and potentially upsetting; the précis is neither misleading nor beyond most readers' understanding. It simply has practical ramifications that deserve more detailed exposition. As a possible alternative heading, consider: "What does this statement mean in practice?"

Historic Perspective: The statement is forward-looking. It stresses current concepts and innovation. Will readers appreciate that "viewing . . . from a variety of perspectives" includes the historical view? The way forward is surely eased by understanding the rise and fall of ideas or practices that are no longer current.

Yours faithfully,

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

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