May 12, 2010

SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Re: Area ‘b’ Task Force

Dear Colleagues:

As you know, at the April 2010 Academic Council meeting, Council endorsed a recommendation by BOARS that an intersegmental Task Force be formed to reexamine the Area ‘b’ (English) admission requirements to UC and CSU. The Task Force will include representatives from UC and CSU and will work under the auspices of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS), as a similar task force on the Area ‘c’ (Mathematics) requirement did in 2007-08.

While the Task Force will not convene until the 2010-11 academic year, we request that you consider nominating Senate members with appropriate expertise now to serve on the Task Force next year. BOARS will then select several UC members to serve. Please note that BOARS recommends that at least one member of the Task Force be an expert on second language acquisition. I have attached BOARS’ letter describing the Task Force in greater detail.

Please submit names of nominees to Martha Winnacker in the Senate office by July 1, 2010 (Martha.winnacker@ucop.edu).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Henry C. Powell, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Senate Directors
Academic Council
Martha Winnacker, Academic Senate Executive Director

Encl.
April 15, 2010

HENRY POWELL, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Area ‘b’ Task Force

Dear Harry,

In 2007-08, the Academic Senate convened a Task Force of UC, CSU, CCC, and K-12 representatives to examine the criteria in areas ‘c’ (Mathematics) and ‘d’ (Science) of the UC Freshman admissions requirements. BOARS subsequently revised the descriptions of these criteria, and the a-g approval process is being realigned to be consistent with the new statements.

BOARS now believes it is time to examine the area ‘b’ (English) requirement. National College Readiness Standards in English and Mathematics are currently being adopted and receiving considerable attention; the California Diploma Project (of which President Yudof is a signator) is actively pursuing options for testing college readiness in English and Mathematics; and UC has not examined the area ‘b’ criteria since before the ICAS Academic Literacy Competencies were revised in 2002. It is vital that the area ‘b’ statement be updated. In addition, failure to enroll in an approved area ‘b’ English course in ninth grade is a significant obstacle to a-g completion for many students. It is important that the criteria be clear to ensure potential UC access to as many students as possible when they start high school.

We propose a process similar to the 2007-08 Math and Science Task Force. The Academic Council would issue a call to the campuses for representatives this spring; CSU and Community College faculty representatives would be sought as well; and the California Subject Matter Projects could help us identify K-12 representatives. The Task Force would meet during the 2010-2011 Academic Year. Considering the large number of English language learners in California high schools, we suggest that at least one second language acquisition expert be included in the Task Force.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Hurtado
BOARS Chair