


January 4, 2018

To: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Richard Seto 
Committee on Physical Resources Planning

Re: Campus Review. Sustainability Ad Hoc

The Committee on Physical Resources Planning reviewed the [Campus Review] Sustainability Ad Hoc at its November 6, 2017 meeting. Issues regarding sustainability have taken an important role in world affairs on topics such as global climate change, the establishment of new technologies aimed at more energy efficient modes of transportation, and the sustenance of different populations of people. The University of California has set forth goals in response, such as the Carbon Neutrality Initiative.

UCR has had a very successful Office of Sustainability, led by John Cook which has had many successes outlined in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability. In December of 2016, this office was abruptly re-organized, and John Cook was dismissed without consultation of the faculty. While there were assurances of the continuing support of sustainability issues on campus, we find this a complete disregard for shared governance and a corresponding lack of transparency, leading to unwise decisions in which matters regarding sustainability were transferred to the AVC for Capital Assets, which in turn falls under the purview of the Vice Chancellor of Planning and Budget. The report from the Ad Hoc Committee outlines three pillars of a sustainability strategy. (1) Academic Programs in which students are trained in issues regarding sustainability (2) Facility Services, including the upkeep and repair of infrastructure and (3) Planning and Budget which includes the planning for buildings and other facilities. In addition to the disregard of shared governance, we find that there are two additional problems. First, the issues regarding sustainability pertain to, more than fall under, the purview of the Vice Chancellor for Planning and budget, but also include Academic Programs, and Facilities Management. Secondly, the recent actions have replaced individuals with expertise in sustainability issues, with administrators with very little experience in the relevant fields.

The report recommends a “three pillars” approach (“Academics”, “Facilities”, and “Planning and Budget”), with the academic pillar being led by a new appointed Vice

Provost for Sustainability which would coordinate a new standing academic senate committee on sustainability. Coordination between the three pillars would be done via a monthly meeting. While the Senate Committee on Resource Planning endorses the general ideas, two points need to be made. First, it must be clear that the role of the new Vice-Provost (an administrator) would be as a coordinator for programs such as internships and outreach events and as a liaison with other programs on campus, and not as a coordinator of academic programs which is solely the purview of the faculty. The report also recommends that this VP would coordinate a new standing academic committee on sustainability. It is not clear what is meant by “coordinate” in this context. It is not appropriate for a new standing senate committee on sustainability to be chaired by an administrator. Such a person can, of course, be a non-voting ex-officio member. Secondly, a monthly meeting to coordinate the role of the three pillars is probably not adequate to facilitate cooperation since many of the activities may need to be more tightly coordinated. For instance, the person given leadership of sustainability would need to be active in the planning for new construction, or the repair and upkeep of facilities in an environmentally friendly manner.

The committee does not endorse a specific set of actions, but recommends that the issue be taken up by the Senate executive committee, taking into consideration the report of the Ad Hoc Committee. The resolution of the recent difficulties relating to the previous EVC might serve as a good model. The hiring of administrators is the purview of the administration with the faculty serving in an advisory capacity. One solution would be that senate executive committee discuss the matter of the organization of the sustainability effort on campus (with or without administrators’ present) coming to a general consensus. Further and more specific discussions could happen during the Senate Chair’s regular meeting with the Chancellor and EVC. They can be joined by others chosen by the Senate Chair or the Executive Committee who can render expert advice. In the present case, they might also be joined by other appropriate administrators such as the VC on Planning and Budget. In this way, a mutually acceptable and beneficial resolution could be reached on the leadership of sustainability issues on the campus.