

To: Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

From: Thomas Cogswell, UCR Assembly Representative to the UC Academic Senate

RE: Report of the Meeting of the UC Academic Senate Assembly, February 12, 2020

For nearly a decade, UC Assembly meetings have been held online with the help of zoom. Unfortunately, these meetings are largely terse affairs lasting about an hour and a half, most of time being taken up with presentations from senior administrators and desultory discussions among the representatives. Yet on 12 February for the first time in years, the Assembly gathered in Oakland for a face to face meeting, lasting six hours. What a contrast!

President Napolitano renewed the University's commitment to protecting DACA students and to formulating a more sensitive policy about Native American remains, one guided by extensive discussion with the local tribes. Most of her time, however, went to discussing various labor issues. Center stage belonged to the wildcat strike of the Santa Cruz graduate students. She emphatically and repeatedly announced that she would not under any circumstances negotiate them until the current contract expired, and it has years to go. Members then began interrogating her, pointing out that the students had valid points, that the strike might spread to other campuses, and it might become politically embarrassing. In response, she said that various concessions have been offered to the students, and all rejected, although the actual details she offered were vague. She did confirm that UCSC had planned to build a graduate dorm -- alas, the local government blocked the plan. While no vote was taken, the Assembly members were generally sympathetic to the students and urged her to resolve this issue quickly.

Then she turned to the recent budget negotiations. While the state has given the system more money -- huzza! -- the university's finances remain in a perilous state because costs are rising faster the state's increased allocation. Consequently, it was essential, she argued, that the University increase tuition fees. Of the various proposals, she liked the odds of a cohort-based increase eventually finding support. Under this arrangement, students would be guaranteed a fixed tuition cost for their entire time as undergraduates. That amount, however, could increase for the next cohort and so on. The question of a tuition increase, currently front and center with the Regents, will likely be resolved shortly. At the end of her presentation, one member asked what advice she had for her successor. The question prompted her to dissolve into prolonged laughter, and after a quick wave off, she departed.

Provost Brown then took over. He too firmly rejected the idea of any discussion with the UCSC graduate students. He then sketched out his early vision for UC 2030 -- more undergraduate and graduate students graduating more quickly -- and lamented the unsatisfactory nature of the system's relationship with the legislators in Sacramento. Better public relations, he boldly argued, was not the answer; instead he urged us to reach out to our local representatives.

Chair Kum-Kum Bhavnani reported that the search committee for a new UC President was considering 400 candidates, and she thought it likely that Napolitano's successor will be announced at the May Regents' meeting. She also reported a disturbing development -- she was excluded from the Search Committee. After a long discussion of this matter, the Assembly passed the following resolution:

Resolution on the Search for a new UC President

WHEREAS in previous searches for UC Presidents the Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee was invited to attend ALL meetings of the respective Regents Special Committees; and

WHEREAS Regents Policy 7101.E specifies that "In general, the consultative practices followed in recent presidential searches shall be carried forward"; and

WHEREAS we understand the current Regents Special Committee has (with the exception of an initial meeting on November 6, 2019) met without the Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee;

Resolved, that the Assembly of the Academic Senate wishes to express its concern and disappointment about the exclusion of the Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee from the meetings of the Regents Special Committees. Faculty can contribute invaluable insights into the role played by the President in ensuring the University fulfills its education and research missions for the State, as well as in the overall functioning of the University. We hope that the Regents Special Committee will include the Chair of the Academic Advisory Committee in all future meetings and deliberations."

Finally, the Assembly discussed the report of the Standardized Tests Task Force, co-chaired by Henry Sanchez and our own Eddie Comeaux.* The Task Force established that parts of the SAT were biased. Nevertheless, standardized tests were very good at predicting academic success for students in unrepresented groups. Hence, the report recommended that UC continue to use the SAT for the next nine years until a suitable alternative can be developed. An extensive discussion followed, one which generally supporting the report. The Academic Council, and various Divisions and Committees, must opine on the report before the Assembly will take a final vote on the matter.

* For the full report, see <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/underreview/sttf-report.pdf>