

January 14, 2013

Ralph J. Hexter

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

RE: Prioritizing and Strengthening Graduate Education at UC Davis Report

The report was forwarded to all Davis Division of the Academic Senate standing committees and Faculty Executive Committees within the schools and colleges for comment. Detailed responses were received from Committees on International Education, Planning and Budget and Research as well as Graduate Council, and the College of Letters and Science Faculty Executive Committee.

The Division supports efforts to prioritize and strengthen graduate education at UC Davis. We continue to believe that graduate education must be integrated into the campus's strategic planning. Separating decisions concerning graduate education from the implementation of the new budget model is still a cause for concern. Our review of the report and its recommendations caused significant debate and we wish to articulate the following points, some of which align with those made in the report:

Advancing the future of graduate education at UC Davis must address graduate groups and department based programs equally. The campus must determine how to allocate necessary faculty resources to graduate groups, since relying on many faculty members teach graduate courses on an overload basis is not a reliable strategy.

The campus must develop a clear definition of the responsibility and accountability associated with serving as "lead" dean of a graduate program.

The Graduate Council is concerned that the consequences of Non-Resident Student Tuition (NRST) were not given adequate attention in the report, and should be made a priority. The cost of NRST influences decisions regarding graduate education, specifically admissions and employment decisions. With the increasing cost of graduate student researchers (GSR), particularly ones subject to NRST, many post-doctoral scholars provide principal investigators with "more bang for the buck," having a negative effect on GSR employment. In addition, high costs for supporting international students affect graduate programs' ability to admit the best students regardless of their country of origin.

With graduate student dependence upon Teaching Assistant (TA) positions, we are uncertain why the issue was not addressed in the report.

The report does not provide a detailed plan for strengthening graduate education on campus. The campus should have an organized approach to guarantee funding for graduate education so students can be certain that funding will be available for them to complete their education. The following are some suggestions for changing how funding and resources will affect graduate students:

- Graduate students employed as a GSR on a grant that pays full overhead should not have to pay in-state fees or NRT. The downside with this change is the student may not qualify for graduate program fellowship funds since in-state tuition graduate fees pay for

some of the graduate program fellowship funds. A similar benefit can be offered for TA positions, along with a proportional reduction in graduate program fellowship funds.

- Financial incentives for faculty should be added to Master's degree programs in order to reflect faculty time spent on classroom instruction, as well as adding a financial incentive for faculty who teach larger classes. If Master's programs are offered on a larger scale, the campus should consider transitioning them to a self-supporting model.
- UC Davis must make fundraising for graduate student support a high priority, and increase merit fellowship funds that support students before they are supported as a GSR or TA.

The development and implementation of metrics that evaluate graduate program outcomes fall within the authority of the Academic Senate and must be approached cautiously. Graduate Council opined that metrics must be designed by individual programs, since each program has grossly different methods, goals and definitions of successful outcomes. In addition, the effects of implementing metrics should be monitored to ensure that rewards for certain aspects do not distort efforts regarding another aspect, and that metrics tied to resource allocation do not affect the overall quality of graduate education.

Graduate students should be provided with more opportunities to present their work at professional meetings and with more funding for student-driven research outlets that will stimulate opportunities to publish peer-reviewed research. Graduate students should be made aware of the large number of funding opportunities and encouraged to seek these funds to supplement the University's financial support. Our graduate students underutilize supplementary mechanisms for supporting attendance of international conferences and for research. Graduate students should be encouraged to apply for outside funding from various public and private agencies.

Clearly, it will be important to coordinate the implementation of the recommendations in this report with the recommendations that relate to graduate education in the International Advisory Committee report and the 2020 report. In addition, it is important to ensure transparency in strategic planning and throughout the process of allocating resources.

The Davis Division strongly supports efforts to strengthen graduate education at UC Davis and endorses the recommendations made in the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruno Nachtergaele', written over a horizontal line.

Bruno Nachtergaele, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Mathematics