

June 21, 2010

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Chancellor

Re: Davis Division Review: Chancellor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Research Draft Report

The draft report was forwarded to all of the Academic Senate standing committees and the Chairs of the Faculty Executive Committee in each college and school. Responses were received from the Committee on Research-Policy, Committee on Academic Personnel-Oversight, Graduate Council, College of Letters and Sciences Executive Committee and College of Engineering Executive Committee. Some respondents indicated it would be useful to address the resource implications of each recommendation. Further, some suggested revision of the recommendations, sorting them to reflect which unit/position must perform the work. They would prefer to see prioritization of recommendations under each category in terms of importance.

We recognize that this committee was asked to focus on the research enterprise. The focus of the report on increasing our collective pursuit of extramural funding is predictable during this time of decreased financial resources and flexibility. However, some of the recommendations communicate a preference for encouraging and rewarding the successful pursuit of extramural funding at the expense of quality scholarship. We suggest reworking the recommendations to ensure they are consonant with the teaching, research and service mission of UC. The faculty merit and promotion process is based on balanced progress toward all three. This assures that we have well-rounded faculty who are outstanding educators. We do not believe it is in the long-term best interest of UC or UC Davis to lose sight of a balanced approach to our core mission as we strive to excel.

The following is a summary of Academic Senate input by recommendation category and in some cases to specific recommendations:

Recommendation I: Create a culture of research excellence

There is general agreement with the overall goal suggested by this recommendation. Some believe UC Davis already has a culture of research excellence. However, the recommendations under this heading also focus on how people should behave, such as, how the Deans should prioritize hiring, and how administrative training should be structured. This section may be seen as devaluing the already successful efforts of UC Davis research faculty who know they are excellent but are hindered by external forces such as administrative "over-compliance" with agency rules. We suggest a) modifying this section such that it does not imply a lack of existing faculty excellence and; b) separating the sub-recommendations into specific reorganization, training and hiring actions. Identifying who must perform the work would be helpful.

Strategic hiring of senior researchers could be a shortcut to greater prominence for UC Davis. An important consideration, however, is that if the newly hired faculty are compensated at a much higher rate than longer-term employees, then the pay scale inversion will harm overall morale and could drive currently successful faculty to leave. It is also worth having a broader discussion about the trade-offs between targeting open searches in specific problem areas, and top scholars who do not define themselves broadly within a discipline and would truly be excellent hires. The campus experience with hiring into specific research initiatives is mixed and reflects a view that research priorities are set by the administration, and not by the faculty in a specific discipline.

I.2: There is some support for this recommendation. However, here and elsewhere the description of a "unit" is essential to know the pathway for implementation. If our goal is to build a better university, or to increase the standing of the university, this will be done through departments. It is important to recognize that the goal of this recommendation can be achieved by hiring faculty who increase the standing of a department and consequently increase the standing of the university. Said differently, it would seem to be

an unusual circumstance when someone is hired who is "best" for the university as a whole" but is not clearly able to enhance the quality of the home department. It should also be recognized that defining "best" more broadly can be an argument for hiring into multiple departments. In an era when we are expecting significant decreases in the number of faculty, we must be sure to focus on our needs to develop outstanding departments that will be the backbone for continued campus excellence.

I.3: It is crucial to set some specific numerical targets for the capacity to undertake TOE hires. Although the home department and the campus will generally benefit by attracting such individuals, in a fiscally constrained environment, there are opportunity costs associated with making too many of these hires.

I.4: If senior faculty require mentoring so they can mentor mid-career faculty, why not have the people who would mentor senior faculty, mentor mid-career faculty. Most people who reviewed this are unaware that there are issues in this arena. The implied assertion for this recommendation begs the need for concrete data before costly programs are undertaken that may divert precious resources where they are not really needed. In particular, it is already the responsibility of department chairs to create an environment in which all faculty, particularly junior faculty, can thrive.

I.6: The Committee on Academic Personnel - Oversight sees records from all units of the campus and finds that this recommendation is already being implemented.

I.8: The source of this recommendation is unclear. Individual faculty are free to promote their accomplishments. Are there specific examples where there are stigmas? Perhaps there are issues in individual units. If so, those issues should be specifically addressed. Creating a campus-wide program to address a problem that may or may not exist campus-wide would not be productive.

I.10: This is strongly supported by faculty.

I.11: This is vague and should be addressed through the Organizational Efficiency Initiative.

Recommendation II: Align UC Davis expertise with societal needs/opportunities

Some see value in developing a broad campus-wide research mission. Although a broad strategic mission absent an execution plan will not have an impact. Some argue that UC Davis expertise is already aligned with societal needs/opportunities. Research agendas are developed by individual faculty within departments. Central administration should not exercise undue influence over the campus' research direction. To the extent that there are efforts to centralize the shaping of the direction of research, it is a tacit statement that the administration believes that researchers pursuing their own opportunities, interests, and rewards do not tackle the most important problem areas. It is highly doubtful that a centralized approach will provide a better approach to addressing significant societal problems. Indeed, to cite a current example, researchers at UC Davis have taken highly visible lead roles with respect to the Gulf of Mexico oil crisis. There was no central role in leading these researchers to the types of research that would allow them to address the wide spectrum of issues that are arising. In a similar way, UC Davis has had researchers working on many aspects of water research. This is an area that increasingly is being recognized as perhaps the central major societal issue in the 21st century. It is the general view that administration's role is to provide administrative support to research endeavors, not to lead them.

II.2 : This recommendation confounds several issues. A "Strategic Plan" is generally a campus-wide plan that will be executed in service of the campus Academic Plan. This would seem out of place as a research specific action item. At the same time, pulling together plans to develop the research infrastructure of the campus (equipment, some key faculty hires) and to keep vigilant about upcoming major research initiatives by government agencies and foundations should be a critical activity of the Office of Research.

Recommendation III: Incentivize research and researcher excellence

III.2: There is some need to fully understand the current allocations of indirect costs before they are redirected. It is not even clear that indirect costs fully compensate the campus for providing infrastructure--both facilities and variable costs like electricity--to the point that there are surplus funds to be allocated. Further, there are two overarching needs for any flexible funds that should be directed towards fulfilling this recommendation 1) providing funding for contributions to the University of California Retirement Program (UCRP) and 2) making faculty salaries competitive with other universities. It is particularly important to recognize that researchers who are funded on grants and who are covered by UCRP have had a twenty-year period during which they have not needed to request contributions from their funding agencies for UCRP. This has now changed, but there is a huge unfunded liability as a result of the hiatus. We must now pay for this "holiday." It would seem entirely appropriate that agencies that have enjoyed a very low benefit rate from UC should now be held responsible.

III.3: This is an admirable goal and there was some support for the concept. In particular there was support for returning the funding to PI's to assist further development of contracts and grants. However, indirect cost recovery will increasingly figure into the basic operating funding within academic departments. Can we afford to jeopardize this? Every active faculty member benefits from the recruitment of graduate students and competent handling of contracts and grants. Unless we anticipate every faculty member hiring her or his own people to perform these functions, the funding will be needed for the collective activity centered in academic departments. Also, see III.2.

III.4: This is important to consider as Colleges, Schools and Divisions develop new budget models. For example, if base budgets are to reflect research activity through extramurally funded research expenditures, should those expenditures include the indirect costs generated? Policies that were in effect during better budget times did include associated indirect costs (see Section IV, page 2, footnote 3 of <http://budget.ucdavis.edu/documents/budget-planning/obpbook.pdf>). A policy such as this directly rewards units whose grants provide full indirect costs.

III.8: This is a sound recommendation. Oversight should be performed by a joint Office of Research/Academic Senate committee.

III.11: The Academic Personnel Manual (APM) specifically gives department chairs the authority to assign teaching. The faculty through the Academic Senate has Regental delegation of control over curriculum and courses. Departments, acting as agencies of the Academic Senate, deliver the curricula with the specific vested day-to-day authority resting with department chairs through APM 245. In the last decade, this authority has been undermined to some degree. Department Chairs need the flexibility to develop strategic initiatives that enhance our research. There is no reason to believe that priorities set at the dean level will appropriately balance the needs of our teaching mission. The UC mission and the criteria for faculty advancement have three categories: research, teaching and service. Favoring one component over the other would lead to an imbalance in assessing faculty performance. It could destroy departmental collegiality, as the contribution to a departmental public good comes with a clear opportunity cost. Furthermore, research productivity (and excellence) is not synonymous with funding and would unfairly disadvantage some faculty members.

It is worthwhile to note that the UC-wide Academic Senate's Academic Council recently provided a position on buy-out of ladder-rank faculty from teaching responsibilities in response to the Commission on the Future of UC first round of recommendations. In response to the Research Strategies Recommendation 4 (page 12) it stated: "The Senate, as a whole, opposed this recommendation, primarily because of the suggestion that research grant funding should be used to buy out ladder-rank faculty from instruction. Respondents argued that buy-outs will create inequities in teaching loads, will disproportionately burden younger faculty or faculty in disciplines with limited funding opportunities, and may increase student-faculty ratios. (http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/reports/HCP2Yudof_FirstRound_Senate_Comment61110.pdf)

III.13: Graduate Groups are not responsible for teaching assignments. This recommendation would severely undercut not just undergraduate but graduate education. Faculty teaching obligations are

derived as a result of the hiring unit. Given the likelihood that we will have fewer faculty in the coming years, it is especially important for department chairs to have authority in this area reaffirmed.

The Graduate Council opined that this issue gets to the heart of a serious problem hampering the Graduate Group structures and their ability to fully capitalize on offering a multidisciplinary research environment. In response to a charge by the Academic Senate Executive Council, Graduate Council in 2007 performed a survey that found that “*non-departmentally-based programs faced larger problems in involving faculty in their programs for teaching and administration of the groups compared to departmentally-based programs*”. [Report On Graduate Education At UC Davis: <http://www.gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/APD%20Report%20Grad%20Education%202008.pdf>] The 2007-08 *Report on Graduate Education* from the Graduate Council subcommittee on Academic Planning and Development made recommendations related to faculty in graduate groups that could serve as a starting point for the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Provost in addressing this issue. These recommendations are not without controversy and were made in an environment of campus growth.

III.14: CAP has proposed a set of streamlining guidelines that are currently under discussion by Senate and administrative bodies. The issues outlined in this recommendation are addressed there.

III.15: As part of the new streamlining guidelines, CAP emphasizes the use of MyInfo Vault (MIV) for electronic dossier submission and review. Letters have always been sought only for promotions and advancements to barrier steps, not routine merits. Furthermore, all Deans have recently agreed to provide shorter letters for approvals of actions.

III.16: Faculty research is evaluated through peer-reviewed publications and creative works and the impact they generate locally, nationally and internationally.

Recommendation IV: Build on existing strengths in interdisciplinary collaboration

While not explicitly mentioned, the UC Davis Graduate Groups are a key part of our campus' reputation for collaboration. Strengthening these groups would greatly improve the research environment for the affected students.

IV.4: The existing merit/promotion process duly recognizes the need for and rewards the success of multi-disciplinary research activities that result in publications with multiple authors. Academic Personnel Manual (APM) and local interpretations provide clear language as to how a faculty member's scholarship and role in such studies can be determined and judged. CAP believes that special attention should not be given to any type of research and current standards of review should be retained. Furthermore, APM UCD-220 provides guidelines on the personnel process for joint appointments. It indicates that all joint appointees shall be reviewed by the “non-primary” departments (non-review/non-vote would violate Davis Division Bylaw 55) but these departments do not need to add any material to the review file.

There is some broader concern about what is implied by this recommendation. Faculty at UC Davis pride themselves on campus culture of interdisciplinary research. There are many, many examples of faculty whose careers have been successful by every measure, including obtaining merits and promotions that reward their activities. Rather than assert that there is need for some sort of remedial action, it is necessary to bring forward specific cases where interdisciplinary research has not been rewarded or has actually impeded a faculty member's progress. These examples could be reviewed by the Committee on Academic Personnel – Appellate and the Vice Provost for Academic Personal. If a pattern is found this could then be used to identify what policies need to be put in place. Further, if someone has not been appropriately rewarded, there could be a request to bring that individual forward for a Career Equity Review.

IV.5: In evaluating a faculty member's research record for merit/promotion actions, the most often used criteria are independence, productivity, impact and quality. If a faculty member demonstrates willingness and leadership in engaging in multidisciplinary research and/or large scale research initiatives, such activities have always been deemed as value added to the review file.

Recommendation V: Optimize function of Centers and Organized Research Units

Several of these recommendations appear to be based on information other than the official campus policy governing ORU's. A review of the campus policy in comparison to the recommendations may be wise before finalizing this draft.

Inefficiency in an ORU or Center is, of course, inappropriate. However, their efficiency is a pale issue compared to the fact that the Office of Research, on behalf of the UC Davis campus, has not properly set policies for elimination of financial support for ORU's or Centers. The campus policy governing ORUs and Centers should be revised to include very strong sunset clauses in the financial relationship with Office of Research or a Dean's Office.

The Davis Division continues to strongly recommend that all ORUs and Centers be required to achieve "revenue neutrality" within a set period (perhaps 3 years) so that the total amount of Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR) generated each year is greater than or equal to the amount of central support the ORU/Center is provided. ORUs/Centers that fail to achieve revenue neutrality before their scheduled review should lose financial support from the Office of Research or Dean's Office. If the ORU/Center is disestablished, the former director should be returned to a salary appropriate for his/her rank.

Recommendation VI: Encourage "large" grants, including infrastructure, core, center and training grants

VI.1: See III.2 above. What is the basis for a 10% ICR return to the PI? There is some sense in this and the III.2 recommendation that the work associated with a grant (in this case, an undefined "large" grant) is undertaken by the PI with little or no support. How will the graduate students working on these projects be recruited? Who will cover their costs during the first few quarters of residency while they are taking courses and are unable to be covered on the grants? There are many layers, many unfunded, that build a strong research enterprise. Further, if ICR was returned to a head PI what about the co-PIs?

Recommendation VII: Facilitate knowledge transfer

VII.2: This recommendation is somewhat vague and needs further clarification. There are many avenues for knowledge transfer (including open-access) and all need to be accommodated within the merit/promotion process. We look forward to more information on this specific item. Further, the merit and promotion process has always recognized patents as one of the metrics for creative output.

Recommendation VIII: Expand resources for research and researcher support

This is a laudable goal and is supported by the Committee on Research-Policy. A specific concern, however, is what is meant by "Perform a formal cost-benefit analysis of the MD-PhD and DVM-PhD programs." It is hard to imagine how we can be leaders in clinical medical research if we do not have training programs for clinical researchers. Viable responses may include a review of how these programs are funded as well as seeking out endowment support.

VIII.7: The reference should be VIII.6 rather than VIII.4.

VIII.13 & VIII.14: Faculty salary scales are a UC issue. Notwithstanding, this recommendation is troubling: extramural funding may not result in any contributions (scholarly or otherwise) and much of the best research on campus has not been conducted with external research support (e.g., Pulitzer-prize-winning research in history). Excellence in scholarship, teaching and service should be the main criteria for adjusting faculty salaries. In fact, UC salaries are defined by salary scales and attainment of a salary increase is based upon merit. Most faculty recognize that the peer-review system has been critical in developing and promoting excellence of our faculty. Off-scale salary components (often associated with appointment and retention cases) notwithstanding, tying faculty salaries to grant funding success would fundamentally change this philosophy. Rewarding grantsmanship at the expense of scholarship is ill advised.

VIII.15: This recommendation is redundant unless revised to: "Encourage academic plans that provide an appropriate balance of graduate student and post-doctoral training opportunities; ensure tuition policies support this goal."

More importantly, the recommendations should be reordered to reflect their importance; recommendation 18 is arguably the most important and difficult challenge and should be noted first, followed by 15 and 19 together. Recommendations 16 and 17 should be moved to the bottom of the list.

Recommendation IX: Remove administrative barriers and increase transparency

External review by true experts must remain the primary tool for assessment of the faculty's research performance. We want UC Davis to be a leader. In order to do this, we must, of course, know agency goals and target funding to support our programs. More importantly, however, we should seek out opportunities to shape funding agency goals to the real needs of society as our research determines. There are many non-medical, non-technical faculty that could receive grant funding if these mechanisms were well supported. The Office of Research is the appropriate unit to facilitate improvement of broad success to funding aimed at the humanities and social sciences. There are many smaller agencies (e.g. Spencer, Guggenheim, Wenner-Gren, American Philosophical Society) that give out prestigious awards, but are not always tapped because the research branch of the administration does not know about or understand them.

XI.5: Six sigma is fine, but recognize that this was an industry trend in the 1990's. Fads like these do not replace the need for serious analyses of campus needs and the best way to meet those needs.

XI.18: Achievement will require very special consideration by the Dean of the Medical School. A primary barrier to collaboration is a lack of protected research time for the MD investigator. Protection of their research time is as essential as protecting the time of the large grant "rainmakers" discussed above since clinical investigators have access to large research projects related to clinical trials and basic science translation to medical practice.

Recommendation X: Standardize reporting of UC Davis research metrics

No comment.

Recommendation XI: Enhance visibility of UC Davis research, including high impact public relations campaign

No comment.

Sincerely,



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