



# **Davis Division Academic Senate**

## **Request for Consultation Responses**

### **Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan**

**December 4, 2015**

The Office of Student Affairs submitted the Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan for review winter quarter 2015. Student Affairs agreed to postpone Senate consultation to the 2015-2016 academic year based on a request the Academic Senate Chair expressing concern regarding committee workload. The report was generated from a larger initiative known as the Blue Ribbon Committee on for Enhancing the Undergraduate Student Experience. If a committee is attempting to focus its review, there are two or three recommendations that specifically assign action to the Academic Senate. However, we are interested in feedback concerning the entire implementation plan.

# Faculty Welfare

**December 8, 2015 8:42 AM**

The Committee on Faculty Welfare agree that implementing a plan to enhance student life is important to the health and wellness of UC Davis Students. The majority of our concerns involve the availability of funds/resources and we are reluctant to add more responsibility to faculty's existing responsibilities. We also have a couple recommendations. First, QPR training should be available to the faculty. Due to the nature of QPR, it is best used as a frontline tool in aiding an individual who may be in distress. Second, we reconsider large classrooms with hundreds of students. As classes have gotten bigger, the instructional staff (faculty and TAs alike) have more difficulty knowing their students in a substantive way, and this makes it less likely that students with real problems will get the help they need. If you have one class that's 200 people and the rest are 30 or 50, your absence or distress is likely to be noticed in the smaller classes. But more commonly today, our students are in large classes regularly, many on the verge of anonymity, invisible if they wish to be. In these circumstances, we cannot help because we cannot see the issues.

To conclude, we would like to see a more precise proposal of the Implementation Plan before feeling comfortable giving full support.

# **Graduate Council**

**December 4, 2015 8:30 AM**

*Response continued on next page.*

November 30, 2015

**To: Academic Chair Knoesen**  
**Re: Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan**

In response to your request for comment, the Graduate Council, partially based on the deliberations of its subcommittee on Academic Planning and Development, acknowledges the needs for enhancing the undergraduate student experience, including support for students experiencing mental health difficulties. With respect to student mental health needs, the training of faculty and the appointment of a departmental lead for Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) are sensible.

Graduate student TAs should be made aware of the mental health problems that may affect their students and of the channels for communicating any concerns related to student mental health. It is the recommendation of Graduate Council that such awareness might be best achieved as part of regular TA preparation, along with the provision of instructional pamphlets, rather than through a special training session dedicated to this issue.

The reasons for this preference are several. First, recent surveys have indicated a significant fraction of graduate students experience mental health difficulties. Such difficulties might be compounded by feelings of responsibility for the mental well-being of other students. Second, graduate students come from diverse backgrounds and might possess widely differing abilities to handle the subtleties of identifying potential mental health issues. Providing awareness of mental health issues as part of regular TA preparations could avoid extensive forms of TA training that may inadvertently imply TA's responsibility for the mental health of other students. TAs should not be put in a position where they are instructed to identify or red flag students that may be at risk.

In addition, we see many analogies between the first year experience of undergraduates, whether straight from high school or transfers, and first year graduate student life. Therefore, we suggest administrative support for a study (with recommendations after identification of issues) on improving the first year experience of graduate students, similar to the Blue Ribbon Panel study.

Sincerely,



Kyaw Tha Paw U, Chair  
Graduate Council

# Undergraduate Council

December 9, 2015 9:07 AM

Re: RFC - Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan

The UGC has discussed the “Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan.” Here I convey a summary of UGC comments and suggestions on the two strategies of the implementation plan directed specifically to the Academic Senate and UGC.

Recommended Strategy 2 (pg. 5): This strategy suggests that a departmental lead be appointed to be the “expert” in QPR. The UGC understands both the needs and concepts behind this strategy but concluded that the appointment of a single departmental lead is probably too narrow an approach to this important topic. Other concerns expressed during discussion included (but were not limited to): potential liability for a single lead, whether a single departmental individual with QPR training is sufficient, and the question of whether QPR training is sufficiently broad with respect to distressed and distressing students and today’s need for departments to appropriately address both types of students. The UGC proposes alternative approaches to realizing the aims of this strategy:

- a) Any training that is provided to the campus should address both distressed and distressing students.
- b) To provide widespread campus capacity to respond to student needs, such training (as in a) should be made required of all campus staff, faculty, and administration (in a manner similar to training on the prevention of harassment and awareness of ethical issues are mandated).
- c) Absent the capacity to implement a required training as in (b), perhaps online QPR training could be a part of the training for all academic advisors on campus and the training also be readily available “on demand” for all faculty and administration.
- d) Rather than a single lead, each department should designate a team of at least two individuals (a faculty member and a staff member) to serve as local sources with knowledge of appropriate referrals to campus mental health resources as in (a). The team will have training (as in (a)), and specific responsibility of supporting one another to assure availability. The department members (students, staff, faculty) need to be made aware of the team members and how to contact them.
- e) The campus “Red Folder” should be routinely visible on the front page of campus web pages routinely used by personnel working with undergraduate students (e.g., MyUCDavis, SmartSite, the new LMS, OASIS) to increase awareness of the resource and to assure its ready availability.
- f) Although the “Red Folder” contains many useful telephone numbers, UGC suggests that the campus should seriously consider the implementation of a single phone number that will serve as the equivalent of a “mental health 911” for true mental health emergency situations.
- g) The campus has made tremendous strides in furthering resources that support campus mental health; however, there are still improvements possible (e.g., there are still considerable “wait” times for access to non-emergency mental health counseling),

and provision of additional resources for true campus “experts” in mental health remain desirable.

Recommended Strategy 3 (Page 6): This strategy suggests establishment of a student welfare subcommittee of the UGC. This strategy was discussed by UGC and members agree with the priority of student welfare. The UGC concluded that a UGC subcommittee on student welfare may not be sufficient to achieve the aims of this strategy. Although UGC has the authority to impact policy regarding undergraduate academic programs (and thereby some aspects of student welfare), there are multiple aspects of student life that influence their welfare and consequently student welfare involves many areas of campus responsibility beyond the academic domain. Further, since the aim of the strategy is to (in part) “enable SHCS and other student services leadership to receive updated information regarding concerns of faculty and professional staff...” UGC suggests that a multifaceted approach to this strategy is desirable. The UGC suggests the following alternative strategies for consideration by the Academic Senate and appropriate administrative units (e.g., UE and Student Affairs):

- a) UGC suggests that a representative of the SHCS should be invited by the Academic Senate to serve *ex officio* on UGC. The appointed individual should have skills and knowledge concerning student mental health, and by attending UGC meetings will learn of academic issues being considered by the UGC. The individual would be charged with bringing other issues and concerns regarding undergraduate students to the UGC for consideration.
- b) A small workgroup or task force should be appointed to enhance communication among campus units that have responsibility for aspects of undergraduate student welfare. The workgroup membership should be small but include members representing the Undergraduate Student Association, Academic Senate (e.g., UGC), Academic Federation, Undergraduate Education, Student Affairs, SHCS, and SJA. Each representative to the workgroup will be liaison to his or her unit. The aim will be that issues and insights identified by the workgroup can be immediately relayed to the most appropriate office(s) on the campus for consideration and action.

The issues addressed in the Student Life and Co-Curricular Experiences Implementation Plan are important. These recommendations conveyed here on behalf of the UGC are respectfully offered as alternatives to those strategies proposed in the implementation plan.