

APPROVED MINUTES
BERKELEY DIVISIONAL COUNCIL
Monday, February 24, 2025 – 12:10-2:00 PM
Zoom Video conference

Divisional Council (DIVCO) met on Monday, February 24, 2025, via *Zoom* video conference. Division Chair Amani Nuru-Jeter presided. A quorum was present as shown on the attached attendance chart.

I. A. MINUTES of the special meeting of February 10, 2025

ACTION: The minutes were approved as corrected.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Committee on Committees nominations

ACTION: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Division Chair Nuru-Jeter

Chair Nuru-Jeter briefly explained the topics of the February 13, 2025 Special Assembly meeting, which covered three primary agenda items: information technology (IT) security plans, faculty salary adjustment dates, and increasing health care costs. Two UC Berkeley faculty members, John Kubiadowicz, Chair of the Committee on Information Technology (CIT) and Anthony Joseph, former chair of the systemwide's University Committee on Academic Computing and Communications (UCACC), both attended to share insights on the IT issue. The salary adjustment topic addressed concerns about faculty receiving increases on October 1, whereas highly paid administrators received them on July 1. The final agenda item addressed the rising cost of health plans. Representatives from the Office of the President acknowledged faculty concerns and explained the factors driving these increases, including greater healthcare utilization and budgetary constraints.

Two motions emerged from this Assembly meeting. One proposed aligning chancellor salary adjustments with faculty raises on October 1, which did not pass. Another motion, addressing concerns over a proposed UC systemwide common calendar, was rescinded after being deemed exclusive to campuses that have quarter calendars. However, both motions will be revisited in a follow-up special Assembly meeting scheduled for March 25, 2025.

Chair Nuru-Jeter discussed the Federal directives on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, and legal responses affirming the legality of DEI initiatives. She also informed DIVCO members about developments regarding artificial intelligence (AI) tool adoption on campus. A working group is assessing the implications, particularly concerning the campus' sustainability goals and biases in large language models; a full discussion is scheduled for the March 31, 2025 DIVCO meeting.

Chair Nuru-Jeter raised some procedural clarifications regarding student participation in Senate committees. While students serve on various educational committees, they cannot vote on final Senate decisions. A reminder will be issued to ensure compliance with these rules, with the possibility of treating student votes as advisory to promote inclusion while maintaining procedural integrity.

Additional announcements covered the upcoming April 24, 2025 Spring Division Meeting, which will focus on optimizing research infrastructure investments—a reframing of concerns about deferred maintenance in research facilities. The meeting will feature key university leaders, such as Chancellor Lyons, Marc Fisher and Sally McGarahan, with a panel discussion format to encourage faculty engagement. Chair Nuru-Jeter concluded with reminders about upcoming DIVCO discussion topics, including the proposed UCSF *Memorials*, a preview reel of the Academic Senate video project, and a faculty-led Black History walking tour of the campus.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Discussion/action: Campus Draft Disability Strategic Plan

DIVCO's discussion surrounding Berkeley's Strategic Plan for Disability and Accessibility revealed a series of concerns regarding its effectiveness, implementation, and coherence.

One of the primary critiques of the plan is its failure to establish clear priorities. Multiple DIVCO members emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between legally required accommodations and aspirational goals. The absence of a structured prioritization framework makes it difficult to determine which initiatives should take precedence.

Another critical issue identified in the discussion was the omission of graduate students in certain sections of the report, which raised concerns about their visibility within institutional policies. This reinforced the broader problem in campus-wide initiatives, where graduate students often feel neglected. Similarly, the data presented in the plan was critiqued for its inaccuracies and inconsistencies.

The Disability Access and Compliance (DAC) committee primarily focuses on legal compliance, whereas the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) provides a broader range of support services for students. Some questioned whether DSP should have been more involved in drafting the strategic plan, given its direct role in implementing disability accommodations.

DIVCO members reflected on their own experiences with disability accommodations in hiring and academic settings, mentioning frustrations regarding unclear policies on funding accommodations for faculty members with disabilities, and recounting personal challenges in securing necessary resources. The discussion underscored the importance of not only addressing student needs but also ensuring that faculty and staff receive adequate institutional support.

DIVCO members proposed several improvements to the strategic plan, which included:

- A clearer articulation of the problems the plan seeks to address, supported by reliable data;
- The importance of setting priorities based on legal obligations and institutional capacity;
- A concrete implementation plan, detailing financial resources, responsible offices, and specific timelines;
- Advocating for improved collaboration between DAC, DSP, and other relevant stakeholders to foster a more cohesive approach to accessibility on campus.

ACTION: DIVCO authorized Chair Nuru-Jeter to draft a letter forwarding committee comments to Co-Chairs of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Disability Access Planning.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion only: Disabled Students Program Discussion

*Guests: Justin Davidson, Faculty Liaison for the UC-Berkeley Disabled Students' Program (DSP)
Carmen Varela, Executive Director, Disabled Students' Program
Carolyn Swalina, Senior Policy Analyst/Accessibility & Inclusion Expert Advisor*

Executive Director Varela of the Disabled Students’ Program, Professor and Faculty Liaison Davidson, and Senior Policy Analyst Swalina attended DIVCO to present on Inclusive Excellence and Disability Support at UC Berkeley, an active, ongoing effort to ensure excellence in teaching, learning, and student development across diverse stakeholder groups, including students, faculty, and staff. An essential component of the discussion is the evolving landscape of students with disabilities. Historically, students with learning disabilities constituted the largest demographic within the Disabled Students’ Program (DSP). However, recent trends indicate that students with psychological disabilities now make up the highest proportion. While disabilities related to vision and hearing remain low-incidence, they demand the highest allocation of resources, including alternative media, captioning, and sign language interpretation, reinforcing the need for comprehensive and flexible support systems.

A misconception with DSP’s work is that it functions merely as an accommodation provider. However, their broader mission is to ensure students with disabilities graduate successfully and transition into meaningful employment. Despite UC Berkeley’s high graduation rates for students with disabilities, there remains a stark disparity in post-graduation employment. National data reveals that people with disabilities face significantly higher unemployment rates than their non-disabled peers, often experiencing underemployment and economic hardship.

Faculty play a crucial role in ensuring equal access in the classroom, implementing universal design principles, and fostering an inclusive learning environment. DSP relies on faculty engagement to enhance accessibility efforts, dispel misconceptions about disability services, and integrate disability rights into broader campus policies.

DSP is actively working to improve service efficiency and resource allocation. One of its priorities is reducing student wait times. Further investments have also been directed toward the Disability Cultural Community Center and tools that enhance service delivery. Expanding faculty partnerships and external collaborations have further elevated DSP's role as a leader in universal design and disability advocacy.

Some of the concerns brought up in discussion with DIVCO members included the following:

- The number of students with psychological disabilities, especially anxiety, among students seeking accommodations, particularly after COVID-19 has increased.
- The DSP expenditures at Berkeley has risen significantly and Berkeley had higher numbers of disability claims compared to similar institutions;
- The role of faculty in accommodating students, particularly concerns about whether disability accommodations should require fundamental changes in pedagogy, was brought up. DIVCO members noted that accommodations are intended to remove barriers rather than alter the core structure of courses.
- DIVCO discussed mid-semester accommodation requests that require changes to syllabi or teaching methods Faculty members worry that allowing remote participation could lead to an expectation that courses default to an online format.
- The authority to determine whether accommodations fundamentally alter a course should remain under Academic Senate oversight rather than being determined by administrative officials such as the Vice Provost for Faculty.

B. Discussion only: Associated Students of UC (ASUC) Grief Absence Policy for Students Proposal (GAPS) Update

Guests: Antonio Angel Caceres, ASUC Student Advocate

Britnee Stephen, Grievance Caseworker, Restorative Justice liaison, Student Advocate's Office

The Student Advocates Office (SAO) has been working on the implementation of a *Grief Absence Policy for Students* (GAPS) since 2018 to address the lack of guaranteed academic accommodations for students experiencing bereavement. The proposed policy would allow students to take at least seven instructional days off within a semester following the loss of a loved one, ensuring a formalized and standardized approach to bereavement accommodations. Currently, no guaranteed academic adjustments exist for grieving students, leading to inconsistencies in how professors handle such situations.

The Center for Support and Intervention (CSI) has reported that faculty members often misdirect grieving students to their office, highlighting the need for a structured process. Under the proposed GAPS policy, students experiencing a loss would notify a newly established "GAPS Coordinator," ideally housed within CSI. The coordinator would facilitate the process by:

- Receiving bereavement leave requests through an online portal;
- Informing instructors of a student's bereavement leave;
- Ensuring that students submit supporting documentation within 30 days;
- Transferring documentation to professors upon request, though CSI would not be responsible for verifying its legitimacy.

Professors would retain flexibility in granting academic adjustments, such as excusing missed assignments, allowing make-up work, or granting incompletes if the bereavement occurs near the semester's end. However, failure to submit documentation within 30 days would result in the student losing eligibility for GAPS accommodations.

Some faculty members raised concerns about potential abuse of the policy, particularly regarding retroactive documentation and compliance enforcement. The current focus remains solely on grief-related absences, with the possibility of expanding the policy in the future. Concerns about faculty workload were addressed through data from Purdue University, a peer institution with a similar bereavement policy.

One significant challenge in implementing GAPS is securing funding for the proposed GAPS Coordinator position. Given the university's current budget constraints, SAO plans to apply for a CACF (Campus Academic Continuity Fund) grant or similar university grants to establish the role, since this policy cannot be implemented without dedicated administrative support.

- C. Forward****Systemwide Senate Review: Proposed Revisions to Senate Bylaw 170 and Rescission of Senate Bylaw 192*
Forwarded to the committees on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education (AEPE), Rules and Elections (R&E), and Undergraduate Council (UGC). DIVCO discussion tentatively scheduled for April 14, 2025.

**A copy is available on the DIVCO Box site on the tentatively scheduled meeting date.*

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- A. Guidance for Institutions re: the DoE Dear Colleague Letter

The meeting was adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

INVITED GUESTS *	1/27/25	2/10/25	2/24/25	3/10/25	3/17/25	3/31/25	4/14/25	4/28/25	5/12/25
Caceres, Antonio Angel			P						
Davidson, Justin			P						
Mou, Antonia			P						
Stephen, Britnee			P						
Swalina, Carolyn			P						
Varela, Carmen			P						

SENATE STAFF	1/27/25	2/10/25	2/24/25	3/10/25	3/17/25	3/31/25	4/14/25	4/28/25	5/12/2025
Banaria, Jocelyn Surla	P	P	P						
Hashimoto, Dorothy	P	P	P						

P=Present A=Absent * Non-voting