



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

May 24, 2019

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR AND PROVOST PAUL ALIVISATOS

RANDY KATZ, VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH

Subject: Strategic Plan's Signature Initiatives reports

Dear Paul and Randy,

On May 13, 2019, Divisional Council (DIVCO) discussed the reports of five of the Signature Initiative (SI) working groups, informed by the written commentary of the committees on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA); Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate (DECC); Graduate Council (GC); and Undergraduate Council (UGC), and oral reports by the committees on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations (BIR), and Research (COR). The committee commentary is appended in its entirety, for your consideration.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the SI reports at this stage of development. Given the limited time available to conduct our review, DIVCO's discussion generated high-level observations, and identified the following concerns.

While we find that each SI represents a promising academic undertaking for the campus, DIVCO is disappointed by the limited disciplinary breadth. We agree with CAPRA that the "documents focus heavily on the applied social sciences and data science, but are thin on the role of basic research, especially in the physical sciences and arts and humanities." We understand and appreciate the desire to attract donor funding through the initiatives, but we believe that they should reflect the comprehensive excellence that defines Berkeley.

On a related point, DIVCO discussed the implications of the initiatives for faculty FTE allocation. To the extent that the initiatives drive FTE allocation, it is critical that they provide opportunities across disciplines. We also noted the need for the campus to develop new frameworks for evaluating interdisciplinary work for the purpose of promotion and advancement. BIR looks forward to being a partner in this effort.

DIVCO is disappointed by the scant attention paid to involving students, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, in the initiatives, as discussed in the GC and UGC reports.

GC noted:

Overall we were disappointed that graduate education, a defining feature of UC Berkeley, received so little attention. This low priority ignores the fact that graduate students are often most adept at bridging disciplines and adapting practice – critical challenges noted by all the Initiatives.

The GC report goes on to highlight two of the initiatives as models of "thoughtful inclusion of opportunities for graduate students."

UGC observed, "...while all of the signature initiatives are very interesting, they tend to operate at a high level of abstraction, to be very research-oriented, and to miss opportunities for involving undergraduates." The UGC report provides a number of concrete suggestions for actively involving undergraduate students in the initiatives.

DIVCO also underscored DECC's observation with respect to disability issues:

The only point we make is that disability issues could play a more prominent part in the proposals, and especially in the proposals for Equality, Equity, and Opportunity and Future of Democracy. In the Equality, Equity, and Opportunity initiative, disability issues are an important dimension of educational opportunity.

In closing, as the campus looks ahead to the next phase of development of the Signature Initiatives, we would appreciate clarification of the process going forward, especially how the Senate will continue to be involved.

Sincerely,



Barbara Spackman
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Cecchetti Professor of Italian Studies and Professor of Comparative Literature

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cc: Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Chair, Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation
Raka Ray, Chair, Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations
David Ahn, Chair, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate

John Battles, Chair, Graduate Council

Jonah Levy, Chair, Undergraduate Council

Jack Colford, Chair, Committee on Research

Sumei Quiggle, Associate Director staffing Graduate Council and Undergraduate Council

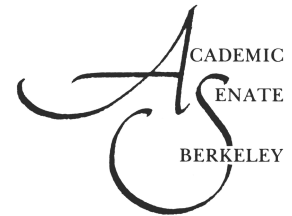
Will Lynch, Manager, Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations

Linda Corley, Senate Analyst, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate

Deborah Dobin, Senate Analyst, committees on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation, and Research

Chris Yetter, Special Advisor, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Verna Bowie, Project Policy Analyst, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

April 25, 2019

PROFESSOR BARBARA SPACKMAN
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Re: CAPRA comments on reports on the Signature Initiatives

The Committee on Academic Resource Planning and Allocation (CAPRA) discussed the five reports from the Signature Initiatives Working Groups at its meeting on April 17. The sixth report will apparently come later, building on the work done in these five groups. This memo addresses issues of academic and physical planning, budget, and resource allocation that emerged through our discussion of the five reports, consistent with the charge of CAPRA.

CAPRA members expressed deep appreciation for the thoughtful work that our colleagues have done in developing these five themes. The committee recognizes that the themes have to be pitched at a high level of abstraction, making space for visions of potential futures that could be achieved with a three-million-dollar gift at the same time as a three-hundred-million-dollar gift. Many shared the view that this is a challenging genre, and that these texts do an excellent job of striking a hard balance between leaving space for imagination and convincing detail. Several colleagues stressed the view that these documents really are inspirational, and that we are proud to work at a university with colleagues of such high caliber.

At the same time, there was the sense that these documents capture only a piece of our future, and that a large fraction of the university is left out here. These documents focus heavily on the applied social sciences and data science, but are thin on the role of basic research, especially in the physical sciences and arts and humanities. As an imperfect but efficient measure of the orientation of the documents, one colleague collected the following word frequencies:

Mathematics	1
Astronomy	1
Anthropology	2
English	4
Literature	6
Physics	8
Business	26
Professional	39
Economics	101
Data	151
Policy	186

When we think about the university's history and future, the role of basic research in the sciences and humanities seems to us more central than is implied by these documents, both on its own terms and even as part of the process of figuring out the answers to some of the pressing questions in the signature initiatives. For example, basic science research will help find answers to the challenges of climate change and neurological degeneration with age, but the role of that research is downplayed compared to the translational and policy work.

There was some disagreement about how or why this imbalance occurred: was it the result of who was appointed to the groups, the need to have the themes be attractive to donors, or the challenge of finding text that colleagues from across a wide swath of the university could assent to? In any case, the committee feels that these documents represent academic planning for only some parts of the campus, and that we still need some process by which priorities can be set for the others. Some members hoped that the missing 6th report could do some of the remaining envisioning work; others were less optimistic about that possibility.

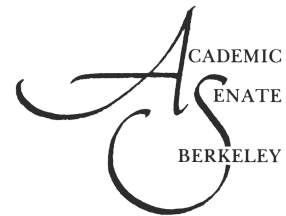
Finally, CAPRA members were concerned about the financial implications of the signature initiatives. We hope that they will become effective vehicles for philanthropy for the core mission of the university, such as for new faculty lines or graduate student funding. But there are many ways that something else could happen: several members expressed concern that the philanthropic gifts will narrowly follow the emphases of the reports; others expressed concern that we'll expend considerable resources around these ideas even in the absence of new funding; and still other expressed concern that philanthropy will be used to create more centers, institutes, and other new administrative structures, buying out teaching, and ultimately depleting our departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Johnson-Hanks', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Chair
Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

May 7, 2019

PROFESSOR BARBARA SPACKMAN
Chair, 2018-2019 Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Re: DECC's Comments on the Strategic Plan's Signature Initiatives Reports

The Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate (DECC) reviewed the Strategic Plan's Signature Initiatives Reports.

The DECC is generally supportive of cluster hiring. We believe that considered long-range planning of faculty hiring in an intentional manner helps focus consideration on diversity equity issues. It also ensures consideration of diversity within a specific academic unit, but also across units that study a common theme. The success of cluster hiring in the life sciences is at least some evidence of the promise of this design.

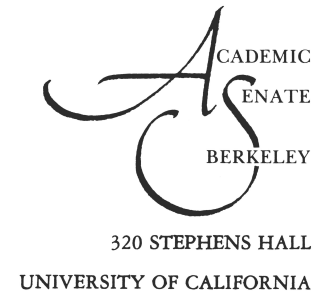
We generally support the presented initiatives. The only point we make is that disability issues could play a more prominent part in the proposals, and especially in the proposals for Equality, Equity, and Opportunity and Future of Democracy. In the Equality, Equity, and Opportunity initiative, disability issues are an important dimension of educational opportunity. In the Future of Democracy initiative, we applaud the proposal to develop the Democracy Commons, but caution that the de-emphasizing the physical connection between spaces can be disadvantageous to disabled participants who may have accommodations in their individualized home spaces but have more difficulty when moving to outside spaces. This is likely an issue for many cross-cutting proposals, and a consideration the campus should keep in mind in planning these initiatives.

However, with the concern for disabled communities in mind, we commend the campus for its innovation in considering future hiring with these new initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Ahn'.

David Ahn
Chair, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate



May 9, 2019

BARBARA SPACKMAN
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Re: GC Comments on Campus Strategic Plan Signature Initiatives

Dear Chair Spackman:

Graduate Council discussed the draft Signature Initiatives at our May 6, 2019 meeting. Overall we were disappointed that graduate education, a defining feature of UC Berkeley, received so little attention. This low priority ignores the fact that graduate students are often most adept at bridging disciplines and adapting practice – critical challenges noted by all the Initiatives. Yet there were only a few instances where graduate student engagement was described in a meaningful and innovative manner. Our understanding is that the Signature Initiatives represent our vision for the future. Graduate students are a vital part of this future and thus we recommend that a greater emphasis on graduate student education be included during the revisions.

In our review and discussion, two Initiatives stood out for their thoughtful inclusion of opportunities for graduate students: The Future of Democracy (Democracy) and Environmental Change, Sustainability, and Justice (Environment). We briefly note the features we found compelling in an effort to inspire like-minded innovation across the strategic planning process. These programs provide new modes of graduate education that support the goals of the Initiatives.

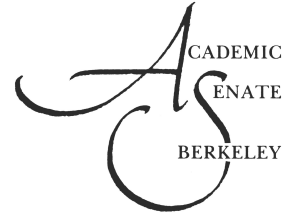
The Democracy Commons (Democracy) outlines a plan to teach engaged graduate students, called the Democracy Scholars Initiative. Importantly it argues for a long-term investment in training the next generation of academics in practice-based research. The emphasis is on providing an education that will empower students to address the problems faced by democratic society. To be successful, it envisions a core curriculum that encourages students to become at least informed consumers of academic knowledge produced by other disciplines. Several features of the Scholars Initiative are worth noting. It recognizes the need for a long-term investment to effect change. It emphasizes the importance of switching from academia's traditional emphasis on training academics to one that provides pathways for PhD students to a broad range of professional opportunities. Finally it makes interdisciplinary learning a fundamental aspect of a PhD education.

The Climate Policy Innovation Lab (Environment) includes three-year graduate student fellowships to support graduate students working on “partnership projects.” Unique features include making these fellowships available to students in professional and academic programs. This blurring of the lines recognizes the enormous value to be gained by mixing applied knowledge with basic scholarship. The partnership projects themselves provide unique learning and exceptional networking opportunities. The projects plan to build communities of academic experts, key stakeholders, experienced professionals, and government officials to address fundamental challenges related to the transition to clean energy. The Innovation Fellows would be full members of the community and wrestle along with this diverse team to develop scientifically sound and politically feasible solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John J. Battles".

John J. Battles
Chair, Graduate Council



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

April 8, 2019

PROFESSOR BARBARA SPACKMAN
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Re: Campus Strategic Plan Signature Initiatives

Dear Chair Spackman,

At its May 8 meeting, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) discussed drafts of five signature initiatives. Each initiative was commented on by a group of 2-3 UGC members, followed by a brief question-and-answer period. Rather than focusing on the nitty gritty comments for each initiative, this memo will point to some of the common themes and recommendations that emerged from the discussion.

At the most general level, while all of the signature initiatives are very interesting, they tend to operate at a high level of abstraction, to be very research-oriented, and to miss opportunities for involving undergraduates. As one UGC member put it, when it comes to undergraduates, the reports seem “more aspirational than operational.” A recurring theme across the groups is the need to have more concrete ways of integrating undergraduates. A number of ways to involve undergraduates emerged from the meeting:

1. Instructional initiatives. Each signature initiative should offer at least one interdisciplinary “big ideas” undergraduate class. The class would appeal to as broad an audience as possible. It would introduce students to both the research topics and the researchers involved in the signature initiative. As one UGC member stated with respect to the Environmental Change, Sustainability, and Justice Initiative, “We need a Data 8 for climate change”; that is, a class like Data 8 that would reach students in multiple disciplines and give them the basic tools to understand both the scientific and policy issues surrounding climate change. Ideally, a big ideas class would also provide a pathway for students to become more involved in the signature initiative or to take more specialized upper-division courses that would allow them to conduct research. Other instructional ideas that emerged from the UGC meeting include: creating minors centered on signature initiatives; offering upper-division seminars that allow undergraduates to engage in research; and supervising capstone/senior honors projects for the most advanced students.

2. More concrete measures to involve undergraduates in research, making use of existing Berkeley programs. The signature initiatives express a desire to involve undergraduates in research, but do not always say how. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, the signature initiatives could take advantage of well-functioning existing programs like URAP and, within the College of Natural Resources, SPUR.

3. International collaborations, making use of undergraduates' international ties and foreign study programs. Many students are engaged in international online collaborations and spend significant time abroad. They could introduce a comparative perspective and help build ties to foreign researchers. For example, students in the second-year French program are already doing mutual learning collaborations with students at the University of Aix/Marseille on sustainable practices and planetary stewardship. Students could build on such collaborations and perhaps undertake capstone research projects during their semester/year abroad.

4. Deploy undergraduates in outreach programs in the community. Students are passionate and energetic. In some instances, they may also be better positioned than faculty to interact with target populations. Undergraduates could serve as “big brother/big sister” mentors to K-12 students in the context of a nutrition program, for example, or work with social justice movements in the community.

5. Extend research initiatives to include undergraduate students. Many of the themes in the signature initiatives could easily apply to college students themselves. Nutritional concerns, for example, do not end when young people graduate from high school. As one UGC member noted, it would make a lot of sense to study “K-16” or “K-20” nutrition, rather than just K-12. Similarly, the theme of “nutritional value of foods served by public institutions” identifies hospitals, schools, and prisons, but UC Berkeley is also a public institution that provides food. A further benefit of adding the undergraduate population is identifying important research topics that are not currently central to the signature initiatives – for example, staying with the case of health, disabilities (the fastest growing population on the Berkeley campus), sexual health/HIV, and mental health. Finally, students are especially keen to study issues that concern them directly and would probably be better than faculty at gaining access and information from their fellow students.

Sincerely,



Jonah Levy
Chair, Undergraduate Council