

The Fortnightly

March 11, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

You have been inundated with messages about the novel coronavirus, and so we will make this issue of the *Fortnightly* brief. Your loyal DIVCO met--partly in person and partly on Zoom--on March 9 for the fourth time this calendar year. Chairs of committees are being asked to set up remote access options for future Senate committee meetings.

We began with an update about **undergraduate admissions** from Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of Undergraduate Admissions Olufemi Ogundele and Deputy Director of Undergraduate Admissions Abby Jones. The news here is excellent: they have made a number of improvements to the admissions process (such as incorporating more information about school and neighborhood context) that improve the ability of the admissions readers to identify excellence across a wider swath of the state. The decisions about freshman admits are mostly done, and the readers are starting to work on transfer admissions. The big questions this year are about yield: given how many forms of uncertainty people are dealing with right now, it is harder than usual to predict what proportion of admitted students will come to Berkeley.

Our second discussion item concerned the ongoing **GSI strike at UC Santa Cruz**, and the potential that GSIs at Berkeley may join that action starting on Monday, March 16. The Graduate Council, chaired by John Battles (ESPM) is working on an FAQ for faculty, which we will post as soon as feasible. DIVCO in general, and Graduate Council in particular, have long advocated for better funding for graduate students. At the same time, a strike risks harm to the undergraduates at an especially vulnerable time for the community. As faculty, we have ethical obligations to both groups of students. Some but not all DIVCO members felt that we should formulate a resolution opposing retaliation against striking students, and we will take up that issue in a future meeting.

Third, DIVCO discussed a report from the **Moffett Field/NASA Ames** Faculty Steering Committee. UC Berkeley has the opportunity to engage in a long-term lease of a site adjacent to the NASA/Ames facility in the South Bay. The Steering Committee report considers some of the scholarly and pedagogical possibilities that such an arrangement could foster, and proposes that Berkeley has the potential to become a leader in aerospace engineering through this project. DIVCO members expressed concern about the opportunity cost of the resources that might be necessary, and also about the risks associated with decontaminating the site and with sea level rise. DIVCO will prepare a formal response to the report to submit to the Chancellor.

Finally, DIVCO returned to the issue of **Academic Finance Reform**. On January 31st, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP) Paul Alivisatos released a letter to the Council of Deans announcing decisions regarding how allocations from central campus to academic units will be reformed. The Academic Senate has commented on several iterations of finance

reform, but not the most recent version. The Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA), chaired by Paul Fine, prepared a statement expressing grave concern about the version of finance reform announced by the EVCP. Several members of DIVCO proposed revisions to CAPRA's statement, and discussion lasted up until the scheduled end of the meeting. We will return to this topic at a subsequent meeting.

In closing, we ask that you take some time to thank the staff on our campus for their tireless work and dedication during these challenging times. We have attended countless number of meetings recently to help the campus respond to the challenges of COVID-19 and we continue to be impressed and inspired by stories of the extraordinary work by staff members at Cal.

We thank you for your engagement and for your help to the Senate and the Campus during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Oliver O'Reilly
Chair of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks
Vice Chair of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Professor of Demography and Sociology