January 17, 2014

Professor Jan Reiff
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

Re: Senate Item for Review: Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP) Policy

Dear Professor Reiff,

The Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) was asked to opine on the Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Policy (SSGPDP). Due to lack of other business, members were asked to provide input by e-mail.

Most of the responding members found the policy to be “very clear and appropriate” and noted “it strikes the right balance of providing a strong framework, but leaving many of the details to the department and program.” There were, however, a couple of concerns raised due to the lack of some detail. In particular, with respect to Faculty Workload (Item C (p11) #2) one concern was that the proposal lacks specifics “about how teaching for an SSGPDFP might affect the department’s teaching. In brief, the Full Professors often tend to go into the professional (more highly paid) program and junior professors or Lecturers are left to teach “regular courses.” It is suggested that a statement be added that limits the amount of time a faculty workload can be SSGPDFP teaching versus “regular” teaching. If the most senior or best professors largely teach and cover their workload in SSGPDFP then this could affect the quality of the university program. More explicit recognition must be given to this potential problem.

Another comment concerned the lack of recognition that the program covers direct costs but fails to consider other “hidden” costs such as land-use or the attention of staff, faculty and administrators to the SSGPDFP. Time and energy spent on a self-supported program, removes time and energy from a state-supported program.

In short, some members feel that diverting resources (e.g. time, energy, teaching), even if covered by other sources of revenue, is a drain on our state-supported programs and one we should recognize. We hope these comments are helpful as we move forward on this policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosina M. Becerra
Chair, Council on Planning and Budget

cc: Joel Aberbach, Vice Chair, Academic Senate
    Linda Sarna, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
    Linda Mohr, Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
    Members of the Council on Planning and Budget
Dear Jan,

At its meeting on December 13, 2013, the Graduate Council reviewed the proposed, revised policy for self-supporting graduate professional degree programs. Following that discussion, a draft of this document was circulated via email for additional comments before finalizing and submitting to you.

As you know, the Graduate Council has been eager to view a draft of the revised policy given its direct role with reviewing new graduate degree proposals and the unique factors that are presented when the program requests self-supporting status. Additionally, the Council has been awaiting guidance with respect to its review of departmental requests to convert existing graduate degree programs to self-supporting status. It is through this lens that I provide you with the membership’s feedback.

First, and in general, members found the new, revised policy to be not descriptive or prescriptive enough. It appears as if much of the language in the current policy was made more vague, which makes the policy less useful for those committees that are expected to conduct thorough and rigorous reviews. As you know, the UCLA Graduate Council has received a number of self-supporting degree program proposals over the last couple of years and has reviewed them under the guidelines provided by the 2009 Policy on Self-Supporting Degree Programs. We recently endorsed a proposed MA in Applied Economics from the Department of Economics, and a proposal from the Department of Statistics for an MS in Applied Statistics is currently under review by the Council’s Committee on Degree Programs. In both cases, however, CDP’s membership considered these proposed programs’ “articulated financial accessibility goals” to be insufficient. The “Financial Accessibility” section of the proposed revised policy remains very vague and members feel that the Administration should tie greater expectations of student financial support and accessibility to all self-supporting degree programs, as it does with return-to-aid for professional degree programs. Members speculated that, without clearly defined expectations, there is the potential for programs to find ways of circumventing this important aspect of graduate education in the UC, as well as incentive for units to deliberately design programs targeted at affluent students, for whom financial aid is not expected to be an issue. Members would have liked to see a fixed amount for return-to-aid written into the new policy.

Second, while the expectation of self-supporting graduate degree programs to maintain exactly the same academic standards and quality as “regular” degree programs is understood, members felt that the policy could provide more in the way of metrics to assist proposal reviewers with making these comparisons, including more detailed guidelines for reviewing – as well as preparing – proposals for self-supporting degree programs. Members were confused about the title of the new policy: “Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs Policy” and the inclusion of academic master’s degree programs (MA/MS) within that framework, since historically MA and MS programs have always been considered “academic” programs. Members acknowledge that the 2009 policy on self-supporting degree programs was the first to permit programs to propose self-supporting status for MA and MS programs, which, if this will remain the case, we would propose eliminating “professional” from the title of the policy.
Third, members felt that the section about the “Review of SSGPDPs” could provide greater clarity and enforce a tighter timeline for divisional review of new SSGPDPs. Rather than include the review of SSGPDP as “part of regularly-scheduled campus program reviews on the same basis as state-supported academic programs,” members felt that each new SSGPDP should be reviewed three years after admission of the program’s first cohort. Given that the UCLA Academic Senate conducts reviews on an 8-year cycle, the notion of reviewing new programs several years into their operation does not seem wise. Such a review should also entail more than the financial viability of the new self-supporting degree program; it should also assess the quality of instruction, students, and commitments from participating faculty. A member also argued that self-supporting programs should have to bear the full share of University resources from the program’s inception, including a full pro rata share of faculty salary benefits. So, if a program is, for example, paying ten percent of a faculty member’s salary, it should also contribute ten percent of her benefits. In other words, the accounting should not assume that the benefits have somehow "already been covered" by state-supported programs, thereby allowing the self-supported degree program to buy the faculty member’s time at a lower rate than the state-supported programs pay. This principle is independent of whether a buy-out of the faculty member’s time is involved or additional compensation for an extra course is involved. Another member suggested establishing a common, centrally-administered pool of funding for self-supporting degree programs, funded by the self-supporting degree programs themselves, to help offset initial operating costs without requiring subsidization from other University resources.

Given the time constraints of your response deadline – and other competing proposals and items on our December 13th agenda – I’m afraid that this response represents only a sampling of council members’ concerns. It bears noting that the Graduate Council still awaits the report of the self-supporting degree program task force, convened by EVC Waugh last year, which may also help to inform a divisional response to this system-wide policy. Although important to update and implement a new policy, the Graduate Council recommends extending the opportunity for all campuses to opine on this extremely important issue and sincerely hopes that, following collection of all campuses’ responses, the Academic Planning Council will consider additional revisions to the revised policy before it is officially implemented. Given the multiple iterations of this policy over the years, providing sufficient time for thoughtful feedback and review will be critical to ensuring implementation of a policy that can stand, and not be subject to further revisions a few years from now.

We appreciate the opportunity to opine on the document and we look forward to more fruitful discussions on this matter. If you have any questions related to our response, or specific requests for Graduate Council’s opinion on an issue that is not included in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

cc: Linda Mohr, Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
Kyle Cunningham, Policy Analyst, Graduate Council
Serge Chenkerian, MSO/Executive Assistant, Academic Senate
To: Jan Reiff, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
Fr: Christina Palmer, Chair, College Faculty Executive Committee
Date: December 19, 2013
Re: College FEC response to the proposed Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP) Policy

The College FEC appreciates the opportunity to review the proposed Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP) Policy, which if approved, would allow the creation, and in some cases, conversion, of select master’s degree programs on UC campuses. The FEC discussed this proposal at our December 6, 2013 meeting and voted to endorse the proposed policy if the section on course-buyouts is deleted (8 approve, 2 oppose, 1 abstain). In order to capture the range of comments, I recount here a brief summary of the points that were made during our discussion.

1. The committee observed two important changes from the previous self-supporting degree program policy. First, the new proposed policy has narrowed the scope of SSPs to encompass only ‘professional’ degree programs, and this is now reflected in the name of the policy. While the policy makes clear that undergraduate academic programs, master’s programs intended to lead to a PhD, and PhD programs are ineligible for self-supporting status, the revised policy does not define ‘professional’. This left some members wondering whether any terminal degree might be considered appropriate for self-supporting status. Indeed, any degree that has career relevance could be considered ‘professional’. Our members recommend the policy include a definition of professional in Section II of the policy.

2. Second, the proposed policy allows ladder faculty to be bought out of regular course teaching in order to permit teaching in the self-supporting program. Many committee members were concerned that undergraduate and graduate teaching will suffer if ladder faculty’s teaching loads are shifted to the graduate self-supporting programs. The buyout provision also has ramifications in terms of personnel actions and may ultimately affect UCLA’s ability to attract students into its regular academic programs, particularly if faculty are unavailable to provide instruction, advising and mentoring. Our members recommend adopting some provision in the policy that can monitor how faculty resources are deployed in service of an SSGPDP and the effects such programs have on the undergraduate and graduate programs.

3. Some members also expressed concerns that units and programs that fund themselves “can go their own way,” and felt that Senate and administrative oversight will be critical to ensuring that self-supporting programs are meeting their goals without cannibalizing the regular state-supported programs. Although the majority of the members have reservations about the appropriateness of self-supporting programs, at least one member, whose department has plans for a self-supporting program, pointed out the potential for such programs to enrich the intellectual and learning environments of departments.
After some discussion, a motion was made to endorse the proposed policy if the section on course-buyouts is deleted. It was felt that deleting the course buyout provision would ameliorate several of the issues of concern. This motion was put to a formal vote and approved by a majority of the committee as described in the introductory paragraph.

As always, our membership appreciates the consultative process and welcomes the opportunity to opine on important matters like this. You are welcome to contact me at cpalmer@mednet.ucla.edu with questions. Kyle Stewart McJunkin, Academic Administrator, is also available to assist you and he can be reached at (310) 825-3223 or kmcjunkin@college.ucla.edu.

cc: Lucy Blackmar, Associate College Dean, College of Letters and Science
    Linda Mohr, Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
Los Angeles, January 15, 2013

Dear Senate Chair Reiff,

This letter responds to your request for review of the proposed policies on Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP). Given the tight deadlines for responding, the GSE&IS FEC was unable to discuss the policy at its regularly scheduled meetings. Instead, each department independently discussed the policy at its faculty meeting, the Information Studies department on December 12 and the Education Department on January 8, 2014. The GSE&IS faculty raised the following issues:

— The very short turnaround time allotted to review the policy is mismatched with the important changes it addresses in the structure of the UC system. It made it impossible for the GSE&IS FEC to review the policy at its monthly meeting and to fully explore its long-term implications;

— The policy leaves unclear how certain resources will be accounted for and compensated, including faculty time spent on planning for the development and implementation of SSGPDPs, faculty time spent on service related to SSGPDPs, classroom teaching and administrative space, and advising of students enrolled of SSGPDPs.

— Most importantly, the overriding concern of the GSE&IS faculty was that growth in SSGPDPs should not be used as the rationale for limiting state support for non-revenue generating academic degrees. In its current formulation, the policy resolves this issue by excluding from its purview non-professional master’s degrees that lead to the PhD. One approach would be to altogether exclude all academic master’s degrees (e.g., M.A., M.S. and similar degrees), rather than just those that explicitly lead to the PhD. This would help make clear that the policy does not imply expectations that all existing professional graduate degree programs eventually become self-supporting. It may well be the case however that distinctions between strictly ‘academic’ and ‘professional’ master’s degrees do not provide a sufficiently firm basis on which to articulate this aspect of the policy and that another approach is required.
— Finally, faculty also expressed support for section III.O, “Financial Accessibility” of the proposed policy, so as to ensure that SSGPDPs do not depart from the UC’s mission of providing access to affordable higher education to the people of California.

Sincerely,

Jean-François Blanchette
Associate Professor, Department of Information Studies,
GSE&IS FEC Chair, 2013-2014
The Faculty Executive Committee in the Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science discussed the proposed revisions to policies on Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP) during our December 6th meeting. HSSEAS offers a SSGPDP in the form of our MS online (MSOL) program. We have some concerns about the proposed revisions for reasons that relate specifically to our MSOL program, and we also have concerns that are more general.

Regarding our MSOL program, item III.C states that programs ineligible for self-supporting status include all academic master’s degree programs primarily leading to a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. The phrase “primarily leading” is ambiguous and raises the following important question: "Is a program ineligible to be a SSGPDP if some fraction of the students in the program go on to earn a PhD?"

Our current MSOL program requirements parallel quite closely our state-supported MS degree requirements for various engineering fields, by design. The fundamental difference is that the MSOL primarily serves a “non-traditional population” (working engineers) and is offered in an “alternative mode of delivery” (online), in contrast to our state-supported program. These criteria are part of the current requirements for Self-Supporting graduate degree programs in the UC (http://www.ucop.edu/academic-planning-programs-coordination/academic-planning/planning-policies-and-other-activities/self-supporting-programs.html).

We wish to reserve the right to recruit high performing MSOL students into our PhD programs, and are concerned that the proposed revisions may have adverse impact in this regard. The wording also suggests that our UCLA engineering MSOL program as currently crafted would have possibly not been approved as an SSGPDP under the proposed wording, and that future MSOL programs in engineering that might be proposed at other UCs could have problems with approval.

Regarding our more general concerns, specific criteria for establishing a SSGPDP are not provided in the revision. Soft language defines what many current SSGPDP’s are, but falls short of specifying what future SSGPDP’s should be. In fact, there is no clear definition of “professional degree program”. Our concern is that the proposed
revisions would permit establishment of a new SSGPDP based purely on financial considerations, without consideration of the educational objectives of the SSGPDP. Section III.A states "Given the decline in State support, the Policy now recognizes that self-supporting graduate professional degree programs are also a necessary educational strategy to allow the University of serve a greater number of students above and beyond that which State resources will support." This statement is focused purely on financial motivation for SSGPDP to address declines in state funding, but we feel that SSGPDPs should not be established for purely financial reasons. Rather, SSGPDP's should fill an educational need that is not currently provided by the State-supported programs. The four criteria outlined in the UC's current (2011) self-supporting degree policy at http://www.ucop.edu/academic-planning-programs-coordination/academic-planning/planning-policies-and-other-activities/self-supporting-programs.html are appropriate descriptions of these sorts of unmet educational needs. In this document the Self-Supporting graduate degree program should satisfy at least one of the four criteria:

1. primarily serve a non-traditional population, such as full-time employees, mid-career professionals, international students, and/or students supported by their employers;
2. be offered through an alternative mode of delivery, such as online instruction or a hybrid model;
3. be alternatively scheduled, such as during evenings, weekends, and summers; and/or
4. be offered in an alternative location (e.g., off-campus centers).

We recommend that these criteria be retained in the revised SSGPDP policy.
MEMO

Date January 17, 2014

From Rodney McMillian, Chair, Faculty Executive Committee
School of the Arts and Architecture

To Jan Reiff, UCLA Academic Senate Chair

RE Self-Supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs (SSGPDP)

The Faculty Executive Committee of the School of the Arts and Architecture received this request in late November, after our November FEC meeting had already taken place. Since we don't meet in December, there has been no opportunity to discuss this request at a formal FEC meeting. Thus the only way our FEC could possibly issue a response in time was to discuss the proposed revisions over email and then draft a response for the Friday, January 17, 2014 deadline.

Through this process a few concerns were raised. The policy as written in Section III, J—Failure to become or remain self-supporting, does not specify which funds or entities are designated or responsible for all costs of continuing or phasing out a failed program.

In Section III, O—Financial accessibility, the policy does not inspire confidence that the diversity we as a university aspires to have, will be achieved. There are no structures in place that requires a percentage of raised funds to assist financially disadvantaged students. Also, there is no incentive to admit students who need financial support. This could and would likely exclude students based on class, race, nationality and ethnicity.

The SOAA FEC discussed the need that any outside funding/donations (like support from a corporation) comes with no strings attached. Corporate gifts or other gifts should not dictate the type of research by a SSGPDP. Additionally, are guidelines in place to protect faculty and student intellectual property?