I write in enthusiastic support of an undergraduate diversity course requirement in the College of Letters and Sciences. I enthusiastically voted in support of this in the College-wide vote and I urge others to vote in the Campus-wide vote. My reasons are as follows.

First, our students WANT an undergraduate diversity requirement. If there’s anything I’ve learned while working with our talented undergraduates is that we should listen to them. They’ve been telling us for years that they believe we need an undergraduate diversity requirement. The need for this, and indeed the need for them to tell us this, became even more clear after the publication of the Moreno report.

So, second, I believe that UCLA NEEDS an undergraduate diversity requirement because I believe that this sort of curriculum could favorably improve climate issues on campus. This diversity requirement need not be onerous or increase time to completion. Indeed, detailed analyses have shown that existing courses can fulfill the requirement. Of course, once initiated, additional courses will be developed. Since College students are expected to take GE courses from different divisions, such a requirement need not increase time to completion.

Third, I believe that it is a mark against UCLA that all other UC campuses (excluding Merced) have a diversity requirement. At UCLA, the School of Arts and Architecture has a diversity requirement. Thus, the UCLA College—the unit that trains the vast majority of our undergraduates—stands pretty much alone in the UC system in not having one. This is, frankly, embarrassing. It gets even worse when one compares UCLA to other 4-year colleges in the United States, the majority of which have diversity requirements. In a time when we realize the value and economic benefits of diverse workplaces, by not having a diversity requirement, UCLA is failing to prepare our students to thrive in the workforce. A diversity requirement is a first step towards addressing this serious lacunae and preparing our students to thrive.

Finally, I believe that the process by which this positive College vote was taken to the entire campus for a re-vote is flawed. The University should not be able to reverse a College decision. UCLA units, all of them, must have the autonomy to make curricular decisions relevant to their units. The role of other academic units should be advisory not regulatory. Thus, by bringing this to a full university vote, I believe that the spirit of self-governance is violated.

In conclusion, I support the College Diversity Requirement because it is wanted, needed, and it will not be onerous. UCLA stands alone in not having one. Reversing a positive College vote would send a clear and chilling message to our campus community, and indeed world, that UCLA doesn’t care about diversity and is failing to address climate issues that were raised in the Moreno report. And, it would send an equally chilling message about curricular autonomy (or the lack of it) that our units have. Voting no on this would be a sign of disrespect to College faculty and students. Voting yes on this would be a sign of support and respect of College faculty and students. I urge all to join me and vote yes on this important issue.