May 11, 2015

Joel D. Aberbach, Chair
Academic Senate

Dear Joel,

I am writing in response to your request for the Graduate Council’s coordination of the Appendix V actions to establish a new School (UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music) and to redefine an existing School (UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture) at UCLA. Following review of the proposals and associated responses at its meeting on May 1, 2015, the Graduate Council voted to support the proposed actions (9 in favor, 0 abstentions, 1 opposed, 1 recused; GSA Reps: 2 in favor).

In your memo dated February 27, 2015, you note that the Executive Board recommended that the proposal be considered a “friendly” action and, if we concur, that the alternate dispute resolution process be invoked. The Board noted some opposition votes and asked that the council consider whether negative votes within a department should result in an unfriendly action.

As you know, the pre-proposal for these actions was submitted to the Academic Senate in Fall 2014, at which time, the Graduate Council (among many other Senate committees) provided its initial comments. Subsequent to these reviews, the proposals were finalized and resubmitted to all relevant parties, who were provided another opportunity to provide feedback. Before reviewing the proposal with the Graduate Council, which was assigned the designated committee to coordinate the actions, we forwarded it to the Undergraduate Council and Council on Planning and Budget, both of which responded affirmatively to the proposed actions. The Undergraduate Council, in particular, provided us with its assessment of the proposed actions (i.e., friendly or unfriendly) and reaffirmed the Council’s position that, despite the lack of unanimity in the votes, there was an overwhelmingly positive vote that supports expediting these actions via the alternate dispute resolution process.

Furthermore, given the significant work and consultation done by Vice Provost Emerita Judith Smith with preparing the proposals and considering the perspectives of all faculty in the impacted departments, the notion of conducting additional interviews to complete our investigation would seem duplicative and unnecessary. Additionally, via the Academic Senate’s 8-year review process, as noted by the Undergraduate Council, the proposed actions have been long supported by both Councils for a number of reasons (both curricular and administrative) that expressly support consolidating the various “music” disciplines under one School, which is already recognized – albeit virtually – as the Herb Alpert School of Music. As such, the Graduate Council again supports expediting the actions via the alternate dispute resolution process and believes that they will result in a logical organizational structure that encompasses and celebrates arts education at UCLA. After reviewing departmental responses to the proposed actions and assessing the extent to which the opposition is truly opposed to the establishment and redefinition, members note that, especially in the case of the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, the expressed concerns were more about the Department’s future role in the redefined school, than opposition to the action. In recognition of the minority opposition however, the Graduate Council (in coordination with the Undergraduate Council) is committed to ensuring that its concerns are monitored and addressed via the regular 8-year program review process.
We also recognize that the timing of these actions – corresponding with the appointment of two new deans – will require their keen oversight and informed judgment when making academic and management decisions. The holders of these appointments should be effective mediators, who possess a great degree of sensitivity to ensure inclusivity and collaboration in governing the schools. We therefore strongly recommend that the Administration support quarterly School-wide town hall meetings so that all parties are privy – and may contribute to – future planning in both Schools. It will be imperative for the Administration to actively foster a sense of community within the new academic structure, and to ensure transparency in the decisions moving forward. It may even be appropriate that rather than wait for the new decanal appointments, that current Administration initiate open forums for discussion about moving forward with the new School, addressing the identified concerns of some faculty.

By copy of this letter, the Graduate Council requests the Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction’s confirmation of the Council’s appropriate handling of the process and, upon receipt of its response, recommends divisional approval by the Legislative Assembly. I am also copying this letter to the Chair of the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs, Jutta Heckhausen, to inform CCGA of the pending action.

The Council wishes to recognize the tremendous effort by Vice Provost Emerita Smith with facilitating preparation of these proposals, the Undergraduate Council for its thoughtful and helpful analysis, and the faculty of both schools for their anticipated cooperation and support with maintaining the excellence of arts education that is so critical to the University.

If have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me via the Graduate Council’s committee analyst, Kyle Cunningham, at kcunningham@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Alex Bui, Chair
Graduate Council

cc: Linda Bourque, Chair, Committee on Rules & Jurisdiction
    Serge Chenkerian, MSO/Executive Assistant, Academic Senate
    Kyle Cunningham, Committee Analyst, Graduate Council
    Glyn Davies, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Planning and Budget
    April de Stefano, Director of Academic Services, Graduate Division
    Leo Estrada, Vice Chair, Academic Senate
    Robin L. Garrell, Dean, Graduate Division
    Fredye Harms, Principal Policy Analyst, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs
    Jutta Heckhausen, Chair, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs
    Linda Mohr, Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
    Marian McKenna Olivas, Committee Analyst, Rules & Jurisdiction
    Jan Reiff, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
    David Schaberg, Dean, Division of Humanities
    Judith Smith, Vice Provost Emerita, Chancellor’s Office
    Christopher Waterman, Dean, School of Arts and Architecture