Professor Neal Garrett  
Secretary of the Division

I write to you to express my support of the establishment of the Undergraduate Diversity Requirement in the College. For 25 of the past 30 years I have served as Chair of the American Indian Studies program and I have seen the effect of our GE courses on students who take our introductory courses and have their eyes opened in a positive way. Regarding diversity there is no substitute for knowledge and understanding. Respecting and understanding diversity needs to come not merely from an intention to "do no harm" to others but rather from understanding the complex histories of different yet intertwined people throughout US History and continuing in today’s context of super diversity.

UCLA needs a diversity requirement. The knowledge is a skill as palpable and as important as in other course that we currently require. These courses promote a kind of understanding that will work to both improve the campus climate as well as the workplace environments that our graduates will enter as they join the work force. As you know, diversity requirements exist on every other UC campus. It is for me the deepest of embarrassments that the campus with the very finest selection of Ethnic Studies Departments and Programs—does not have such a requirement. We have an outstanding faculty that regularly teaches relevant courses and that can open minds and provide useful resources for understanding racial, social, cultural, economic, and sexual difference.

I hear that the opposition to the diversity requirement talks about the onerous burden of offering diversity courses or the cost in time and money for students to take them. But this objection seems to ignore the fact that we already offer many courses that could satisfy such a requirement and that students could easily take these courses without adding to their time to degree. The plan to implement will thus spread the need across a rather large network of courses that are currently offered thereby making the requirement especially available and practicable.

I look forward to a time when I can be proud of UCLA as an institution that is prepared to do the right thing with diversity education. 50 years ago then Chancellor Young showed both bravery and wisdom when he created the ethnic studies centers that later became the research centers, departments, and programs dedicated to Chicano/a, Asian American, African American, and Native American studies. UCLA made a commitment to diversity research and teaching that has been influential nationwide. But we are long overdue in creating a diversity requirement that better encourages our undergraduates to utilize these amazing resources and to better understand the diverse world they inhabit.

Respectfully submitted,

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