To: Professor Neal Garrett, Secretary of the Division  
From: Professor William I. Newman  
Re: Pro-statement Favoring the Diversity Amendment

March 8, 2015

I am writing as an elected member of the current and former Faculty College Executive Committee (Group VII: Chemistry and Biochemistry; Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences, and Institute of the Environment and Sustainability) that approved the current and former diversity requirement proposals.

Over time, I came to appreciate the underlying problem motivating our students to ask for this diversity requirement: it is one of human rights and a spectrum of antisocial behaviors that present themselves on our campus. Although a diversity requirement may not completely eliminate this problem, it could help present our students with an increased awareness and sensitivity to living in a highly heterogeneous society.

The October 15, 2013 Moreno Report on “Acts of Bias and Discrimination Involving Faculty…” describes only the faculty-related facet of the problem. Our students represent a much broader demographic and we must expect that this class of issues is no less important and in need of remediation than that experienced among our faculty.

I encourage my colleagues to review the statistics widely available on the web from these agencies which make clear the gravity of the situation that we face. Our campus police department provides an annual statement disclosing criminal acts ranging from sexual violence to hate crimes that take place at UCLA. The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act [20 USC § 1092(f)] is the landmark federal law that requires colleges and universities across the United States to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses.

The assumption held by many that our students are immune from such behaviors is naïve at best and are readily contradicted by prevailing statistics. For example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Sexual Violence Data Sheet for 2012, in a study of undergraduate women, reports that 19% experienced attempted or completed sexual assaults since entering college. These numbers are widely recognized as being underreported, inasmuch as many students are intimidated by the burden of proof required in seeking criminal conviction, and the added humiliation and shame that they experience. Moreover, Family Education Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) rules also minimize the disclosure of such events. We see indications of this in the UCLA Daily Bruin where accounts are often published of plea bargain deals where individuals accused of multiple sexual assaults (including rape) have their wrists slapped with no permanent record, while the abused women are scarred for life. Hate crimes have occurred and primarily impact individuals with different gender orientations, or reflect religious intolerance, or racial bigotry. Their occurrence on campus is reported routinely by the FBI and the Department of Justice.

A diversity requirement is an affirmation of the civil rights of all of our students, and will ultimately aid in crime prevention. It is time that the our faculty take a stand and make clear to our students through this new requirement that such activity is neither acceptable nor will be tolerated, whether we are talking about micro-aggressions stemming from bullying and intimidation or to various forms of religious, racial, and other slurs, or to acts of violence and extreme manifestations of hate. Please vote “YES” to reaffirm this requirement.