PRO STATEMENT

Vote YES for the College of Letters and Science Undergraduate Diversity Requirement

The College undergraduate diversity requirement is a response to a deeply felt need that it is hugely beneficial for our students to have exposure to experiences and perspectives of others as part of their curriculum. Climate surveys show 24% of faculty, staff, and students have experienced exclusionary, offensive or hostile conduct based on race, gender or sexual orientation. Recent news reports show that our undergraduates have challenges communicating with peers of different backgrounds. There is a strong empirical research base demonstrating that a curriculum that addresses diversity can reduce prejudice and increase civic behaviors and help to prepare students for a world in which diversity affects so many areas of their lives, especially their working lives. Adding an undergraduate diversity course requirement is a critically important step in helping UCLA improve campus climate, particularly at the undergraduate level. Moreover, undergraduates want a diversity requirement, with 63% of UCLA undergraduates voting in favor of a diversity course requirement in a student government poll. The time has come for UCLA to implement a College undergraduate diversity requirement and join the UCLA School of Arts and Architecture, 7 other UC campuses, and many other universities and colleges.

In a large institution it can oftentimes be challenging to create something new, and the creation of a College diversity requirement has been no stranger to challenges. Yet, because a diversity requirement is of such importance for our students, faculty, students, and administration have faced these challenges with dedication, hard work, and positive attitudes. Adhering to UCLA’s valued principle of shared governance, they have worked together over the past year to create and support this College diversity requirement. They consulted with faculty and students and fashioned the requirement in a way to reflect UCLA faculty and student interest in a broad definition of diversity, to provide flexibility in course offerings and timing of courses, and to embed it in an infrastructure with resources to ensure its success. They have done such an excellent job designing this requirement that the Director of Academic Advising indicates that the College diversity requirement will have no impact on time to degree, and the Director of Enrollment Planning and Academic Performance Analysis indicates that even with the initial set of course offerings (which will undoubtedly grow) there will be more than sufficient seat capacity to launch the requirement beginning with the 2015 freshman class. Importantly, EVC Waugh indicates that funds for the diversity requirement will have no impact on the funding or any other resources that support existing general educational requirements across the Arts, Humanities or Sciences. All the critical pieces are in place.

The strength and feasibility of the College diversity requirement is clear, and it has been approved through an open, democratic process at every level of faculty governance for a curriculum change such as this (faculty, undergraduate council, legislative assembly). The support for this diversity requirement is also clear, and has come not only from within the College but also from many areas of our campus, as indicated by the range of diversity course
submissions and the resoundingly positive vote of the Legislative Assembly in November 2014 and subsequent resoundingly positive symbolic vote in February 2015. But instead of spending our valuable time implementing this requirement, the College diversity requirement is instead faced with a new challenge -- an unprecedented divisionwide vote invoked by a petition using a Senate Bylaw never before applied to curricular matters and threatening the sacrosanct principle of curricular autonomy.

This vote will send an important message to our students, colleagues, and the LA community about our values at UCLA. Vote YES to support the College undergraduates. Vote YES to support curricular autonomy. Vote YES to uphold the faculty, undergraduate council, and legislative assembly votes. Vote YES to support shared governance and the dedication of your colleagues to enhance the undergraduate curriculum. Vote YES to send a message that UCLA is a school where diversity matters.

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