March 2, 2015

Academic Senate Faculty

Re: Proposed Diversity Requirement Letter of Support

Dear colleagues,

CODEO categorically supports the proposed College of Letters and Science undergraduate diversity requirement known as “Amendment to Divisional Regulation A-458 (C).” We are extremely troubled by the hostility and vehement obstruction with which the diversity requirement has been met, and we strongly encourage you, our colleagues, to ratify the proposed requirement in the upcoming vote. Your support is critical not only for our students and the broader UCLA community, but also for the future of faculty governance.

Your support of the diversity requirement also offers critical support to the spirit of education that can, as César Chavez put it, “help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community - and this nation.” UCLA's proposed diversity requirement does exactly this, and thus we were proud to be Bruins in October 2014 when the faculty of the UCLA College of Letters and Science passed “Amendment to Divisional Regulation A-458 (C).” After the publication of the Moreno Report, which detailed the deteriorating racial climate and lack of leadership on issues of discrimination and bias at UCLA, it seemed UCLA was on its way to embracing Chavez's message.

Our pride dissipated in December 2014, when 59 faculty successfully petitioned to put the requirement to a campus-wide vote. More egregious is a Daily Bruin submission and public email circulating among faculty that is riddled with inaccuracies about this initiative. The critical, groundbreaking nature of the diversity requirement for UCLA compels us to unpack the letter and article’s fallacious claims:

1. The first issue claims that the diversity requirement: “forces students to take a course on top of their already rigorous academic schedule in order to graduate.”
   a. This initiative is explicitly designed to not disrupt the student's progress towards degree. A directive of the ad hoc Faculty Committee is to ensure that this requirement will not force students to take additional units to graduate.

2. A second claim: “The diversity requirement institutionalizes racial, ethnic, and religious divides within the community.”
   a. Awareness fosters inclusion, not division. These classes will provide students with a safe environment to develop a new understanding of their own culture and an opportunity to explore cultures to which they have not previously been exposed.

3. A third inaccuracy: “University administration has presented no plan to deal with the capacity issues that will be imposed on the classes that would become required”.
   a. The University has outlined a plan for ensuring that the requirement will not produce over-crowding. The ad hoc faculty committee produced an
Implementation Report noting 110 courses currently on the books that fulfill the requirement and have sufficient capacity to handle additional enrollees. Moreover, the chancellor and EVC have already committed funds for course development and instructor training.

4. A fourth unsubstantiated claim: “The diversity requirement forces students to take a class where you could be subject to ridicule for your religious beliefs, ethnic background, or sexual orientation.”
   a. A recent campus climate survey revealed that 24% of respondents had personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive and/or hostile conduct. The diversity requirement can help change this by creating a culture of awareness and inclusion

5. One final misguided claim: “The diversity requirement requires more of your tuition dollars to be spent irresponsibly.”
   a. The UCLA College of Letters and Science is a liberal arts institution with an obvious gap in the area of cultural awareness and diversity. The classes that would satisfy the diversity requirement embody exactly what a true liberal arts education is all about: broad, thoughtful, and encompassing knowledge.

Diversity is an issue we all must take seriously. We can never truly walk in another's shoes, but we can learn to imagine another's journey. In doing so, we grow and become ever more effective leaders of our intellectual communities and ever more effective mentors to tomorrow's leaders. No one can lead without understanding and empathizing with the cultural and societal differences that exist in this world, and CODEO believes that “Amendment to Divisional Regulation A-458 (C)” is a crucial step towards this goal.

CODEO implores the faculty of UCLA to vote in favor of passing “Amendment to Divisional Regulation A-458 (C),” the diversity requirement, beginning March 30.

Sincerely,

Marissa Lopez, Chair
Committee on Diversity and Equal Opportunity

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