February 27, 2015

Vice Chancellor Carole Goldberg, Academic Personnel
Co-Chair, Self-Supporting Degree Programs Taskforce

Professor Neal Garrett, Dentistry
Co-Chair, Self-Supporting Degree Programs Taskforce

RE: UCLA Self-Supporting Degree Programs: A Report of the Joint Academic Senate – Administration Task Force

Dear Vice Chancellor Goldberg:

The Executive Board of the UCLA Academic Senate discussed the Report of the Joint Academic Senate – Administration Task Force on Self-Supporting Degree Programs at its meeting on January 8, 2015. The individual committee responses are available online. The Report was also discussed at the Council of Faculty Chairs/Senate Committee Chairs meeting on February 26, 2015.

Members of the Executive Board and the Council of Faculty Chairs expressed several concerns. The following issues were most significant: 1) the safe harbor concept, 2) the taxing of profits from the created enterprises, 3) the financial aid formulation; 4) the teaching load cap, and 5) plans for dealing with unsuccessful programs.

1) Safe Harbor. The safe harbor concept was not considered appropriate; members expressed the view that all degree programs are under the purview of the Academic Senate and that this concept should not be used.

2) Funding and the Taxing of Profits. To the extent that there is support initially required for the unit, what resources will be directed to assist the SSDPs and from whom will the resources come? Members suggested that those who benefit from SSDPs pay a tax to the campus to help support and supplement the funds available to predominantly state-funded units.

3) Financial Aid Formulation. There was general agreement that a 5% return to aid is far too low, especially given the standard 33% and UCLA’s commitment to accessibility and affordability.

4) Teaching Load Cap. Members expressed concern that there would be insufficient oversight of the programs and consequently the possibility for manipulation of teaching loads to exceed the 120% cap. There is currently, at least as far as we know, no means to regulate this, and it is unclear if the teaching load calculation will be done. Moreover, members felt that there may be implications for the quality of teaching for state supported programs as a result of teaching in SSDPs and that this issue should be carefully examined. Members also recommended that the
20% limit on outside teaching activities be emphasized, and that 20% be the cap and not the norm.

5) Unsuccessful programs. What is the plan if a self-supporting program becomes unsustainable at some point? Members questioned approving a large number of these programs on the assumption that, like start-ups in the private sector, many may fail. There was concern about the need for a rigorous review process in order to avoid excessive costs in bailing out unsuccessful programs, and most especially that the costs associated with keeping commitments to students in programs that may have to be terminated be considered in plans for any SSDP.

We strongly urge you to review the written comments that came from the various Senate bodies. They express a variety of other concerns that should be considered in designing and implementing Self Supporting Degree Programs.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Aberbach
Chair, Academic Senate

cc: Leo Estrada, Vice Chair, Academic Senate
Jan Reiff, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
Linda Mohr, Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate