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May 2, 2008

Michael Brown
Chair, Academic Council

In Re: Systemwide Review of the ITGC Report

Dear Michael,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and opine upon the Information Technology Guidance Committee (ITGC) report, "Creating a UC Cyberinfrastructure." Upon receipt, I asked the Graduate Council (GC), the Undergraduate Council (UgC), the Council on Planning and Budget (CPB), the Information Technology Planning Board (ITPB), and the Executive Board to opine; I received responses from the UgC, CPB, and Executive Board. The UCLA Academic Senate raises no objections to the report or its recommendations.

However, it is worth highlighting concerns raised by the UgC and CPB, respectively, which the Executive Board endorsed. There is a consensus that the report engages a critical issue for the University of California, but that further examination and study is critical. I am attaching both responses to this letter, for your information. CPB noted and the Executive Board concurred that, while specific disagreements with the report were not found, there are three lacunae which, if addressed, would greatly augment the utility of the report. Specifically, and by way of summary, those are: (1) Insufficient attention to the needs/desires of end users; (2) Few mechanisms for ongoing consultation with faculty and students; and (3) Virtually no discussion of costs.

The UgC stated, and the Executive Board concurred, that there would be support for "further examination of technology-based advances in education by the ITGC, with input from the Divisions."

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Elizabeth Ligon Bjork".

Elizabeth Ligon Bjork
Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

Cc: María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director, Chief of Staff, UC Academic Senate
Jaime R. Balboa, Ph.D., CAO, UCLA Academic Senate

April 14, 2008

Elizabeth Bjork
Academic Senate Chair

In Re: UC Information Technology Guidance Committee (ITGC) report, “Creating a UC Cyber infrastructure”

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for the opportunity to opine upon the UC Information Technology Guidance Committee (ITGC) report, “Creating a UC Cyber infrastructure”, dated December 2007. The ITGC was commissioned in 2006 and charged with identifying ways in which a centralized approach to technology issues could enhance UCs mission of research and education. A set of nine recommendations were discussed categorized as follows: Governance, Funding and Collaboration; Infrastructure; and Services.

The Undergraduate Council reviewed the report at its meeting on April 4, 2008 engaging in discussion focused on the framework of undergraduate education. We invited Jim Davis, Associate Vice Chancellor of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, to brief us on the report. As a member of the Leadership Council and ITGC, Associate Vice Chancellor Davis provided us a context to understand the report and process of the committee’s formation. He explained the recommendations categorically in the framework of Undergraduate education. Specifically, workgroups were formed to assess the following areas of information technology: research, education, administration, and infrastructure. Education was examined through a review of structural technology, stewardship of digital assets, and IT in the student experience. The ITGC co-conveners, Vice Provost of Academic Information & Strategic Services Dan Greenstein and Associate Vice President & Chief Information Officer Kristine Hafner visited campuses to gather feedback and input from constituencies.

Included in the report are recommendations pertaining to the research mission of UC that are quite detailed and for which there is ample justification. For instance, Council members recognized the advantages of centralized planning with regard to projects like the UC Grid and the Data Center. But notably, the recommendations corresponding to education and student life were stated merely as a set of principles. Specific educational initiatives, introduced previously to the ITGC by its Instructional Technology and Student Experience Work Groups, were dropped from the recommendations after campus visits, partly because system wide approaches brought no clear advantages.

Consequently, the Council chose not to vote on endorsing the report as a whole. However, we are in support of further examination of technology-based advances in education by the ITGC, with input solicited from the Divisions.

Other concerns raised by Council membership include:


The Undergraduate Council is concerned about the fiscal impact of projects outlined in the report, at a time when the UC is facing daunting financial challenges. For instance, no specific figures for the UC Grid or the data center are presented, nor are funding plans and sources.

Council members noted the importance of balancing Divisional priorities with centralized planning in general, and particularly so for educational initiatives, as the ITGC moves forward.

In conclusion, we recognize the importance of information technology and acknowledge the efforts of the committee including the workgroups and campus visits. Although the Undergraduate Council felt that much of the content of the report lay outside the Council's purview, we felt this is a very important issue requiring further examination and study. Soliciting faculty input and involvement throughout the process is integral for its success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to opine. Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Brown", written in a cursive style.

Stuart Brown
Chair, Undergraduate Council

Cc: Jaime Balboa, CAO Academic Senate
Dayna Baker, Senior Policy Analyst
Linda Mohr, Assistant CAO Academic Senate



MEMORANDUM

Academic Senate Executive Office
Los Angeles Division
3125 Murphy Hall
140801

April 16, 2008

TO: Elizabeth Bjork
Chair, Academic Senate

FR: Robert G. Frank, Jr.
Chair, Academic Senate Council on Planning and Budget

RE: Report of the UC Information Technology Guidance Committee (ITGC)

Dear Elizabeth,

We distributed to our members the report on UC Cyber Infrastructure that was written by the Information Technology Guidance Committee, and discussed it at the Council's meeting of 14 April 2008. We were fortunate in having as our basis an analysis composed by one of our members who has extensive experience in computing systems; that analysis is attached. We recommend that the Executive Board consider carefully the many good points made in that analysis

Overall, I think Council members agreed with the broad vision of an improved cyber infrastructure. However, as we worked our way through the major recommendations, it became clear that there were themes that recurred again and again in our discussions. These represented not so much disagreements with what was said, but rather a perception of what was not covered in the report.

- Insufficient attention to the needs/desires of end users. The report was clearly generated by a very high-level and knowledgeable group, but there is little evidence that its broad policy recommendations were based on an extensive survey of perceived student and faculty needs, as opposed to the concerns of those who would oversee the structures.
- Few mechanisms for ongoing consultation with faculty and students. There are constant references to "working with" leadership on the campuses, but no structures that would guarantee that, as this new infrastructure is built, its features and costs aligned with the developing needs of the user community. The model for implementation is always a top-down one.
- Virtually no discussion of costs. As a Senate body concerned with resource allocation, it's distressing to work through a glossy document, the object of a great deal of attention and expense, and find very little about the costs of such an infrastructure—even in very general terms. Council had just done a review of the bleak budget situation for 2008-09 and beyond, and we felt acutely the disconnect between the resources likely to be available, and the grand vision of the ITGC Report.

The Council certainly found nothing to which it objected. We were, however, disquieted by the way in which an admirable planning opportunity failed to deal with some major issues that are very important to students and faculty.

cc: Jaime Balboa, Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
Michael Goldstein, Vice Chair, Academic Senate
Linda Mohr, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Academic Senate
Members of the Council on Planning and Budget