TOWARDS MEDIOCRITY:

Administrative Mismanagement and the Decline of UC Education

What Can be Done to Address our Public Education Crisis?

UC Student Worker's Union - UAW 2865

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Summary of Findings

• The quality of education in the UCs is in decline. Weaker graduate programs harm faculty research and undergraduate educational quality and access. Revitalized graduate programs are central to the revitalization of UC education.

• Increased class sizes and student faculty ratios means decreased access for underrepresented minority students and student-families. The core of UC's public service remains high-quality education for California's disadvantaged students. Weaker graduate programs threaten educational quality for those students.

• Graduate student programs play a pivotal role in quality research, front-line education, and undergraduate engagement, but the UCs lag behind comparable institutions in the support they provide graduate students by $2,697-$4,978/year.

• Lessened support and decreased access have top applicants heading to competitor institutions. That more than 50% of graduate students accepted now go elsewhere contributes to further decline in quality.

• These problems can be significantly ameliorated within current fiscal constraints. The UC-Student-Workers Union UAW 2865 is currently negotiating to reverse the trend towards mediocre educational quality.

Introduction

It is commonplace to acknowledge that the University of California faces economic challenges, yet the extent to which higher education in California is in crisis has not been fully recognized. Survey data shows continued faith in

UC's prestige.[1] But the teachers and researchers on the ground tell a different story. In a research institution like the UC, a primary factor in undergraduate engagement is the undergrad-graduate ratio. Thus, graduate support is key to the quality of all UC education, and yet we watch as our graduate programs decline. Lack of quality education hits students of color the hardest. In other words, class size and quality of education are questions of access for underrepresented minorities. The problem sits with both state funding and UC priorities. It is only a matter of time before common sense perceptions of UC prestige catches up to this reality.[2]

The UC Student-Workers Union, UAW 2865, is made up of 12,000 teaching assistants, readers, and graders across the UC system's 10 universities. We are the front line teachers and researchers in the UC system; we sit with students one on one; we do the grading, and the vast majority of the instruction; we hold the microscopes, and watch the mice. As teachers and researchers, we have observed a decline in educational quality and accessibility at the UCs. Classes are growing. Undergraduates are increasingly leading sections and discussions instead of graduates. Further, although the undergraduates accepted into the UCs are less prepared for college, the support they receive on campus is shrinking.[3] Finally, the "deterioration in competitiveness"[4] with respect to the support UC offers its graduate students means that for the first time, a majority of those applying to the UCs for graduate school are choosing our competitor schools because they offer better support.[5] Taken as a whole, this decline in quality hits

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[1] i.e. The annual ARWU global rankings of universities released August 15, 2013 places UC Berkeley 3rd. There is tremendous debate over the criteria and transparency involved in rating universities but a clear bias towards measuring prestige rather than educational quality. Studies of student engagement were discontinued in the UCs after initial results showed decline.

[2] Findings From the Graduate Student Support Survey: Trends in the Comparability of Graduate Student Stipends, UC Office of the Vice President, Student Affairs, Student Financial Support, December 2010, p. 2 Among prospective graduate students, UC rates highly and comparably to competing institutions with respect to academic reputation and diversity, but rates lower in terms of financial support and cost of living.

[3] The Implementation Report July 2011, Submitted by the Implementation Task Force, Academic Council, University of California Academic Senate, p 27 The steady increase in the student-faculty ratio over the last three decades can only continue in the near future, as campuses lack resources to increase the number of ladder rank faculty.

[4] Findings From the Graduate Student Support Survey 2010, p1

[5] The Implementation Report, p. 19 Indeed, it is already the case that many students who are admitted with offers of funding accept more generous packages from other institutions. There is a great deal of competition for the most promising Ph.D. students, and because their

underrepresented minority students the hardest – quality is a question of access. We in the UAW 2865 - our union of front line educators in the UCs - are taking quality and access to heart and looking to bargain to make real progress for the UCs.

When an introductory class in the sciences has 300 students and one Teaching Assistant, students struggle. So does the TA. Even heroics on the part of the teacher can't keep ¼ of the class from failing out. The students that fail are the ones from the most underfunded high schools and those with limited support systems. In this way, class size is about access for underrepresented students of color. In parallel, teaching assistants are offered support vastly lower than at competitor institutions, resulting in lowered minority graduate student enrollment and retention.

The long-term fix will involve more state support as well as severely shifted priorities within the UCs. But many of these problems can be ameliorated now. The cost overruns for building projects would easily cover our immediate needs ten times over. It is easy to see that redirecting the unencumbered carry-over can solve this problem, or that simply freezing elite administrative salary growth or bonuses in the next year would be enough. But, even without any of these specific solutions, these issues can be addressed with resources and effort easily found within the current fiscal situation. The UCs must prioritize the pubic good over private profit and do the work they were designed for. If the University doesn't, we can expect the reputation of the UCs to rapidly come into line with the reality of increasing mediocrity.

I. Decline Coming: Graduate and Undergraduate Education Linked

While the University of California used to be the best public university in the world, the quality and accessibility of graduate and undergraduate education at the UCs have jointly been declining. As the Regents reported at their 2012 retreat, Over 180 academic and administrative programs have been eliminated or consolidated and undergraduate satisfaction indicators are declining. Regent Hari Makarechian described it to other Regents: "Boy, this

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numbers are fewer and their importance to the University's mission is so great, the quality and reputation of a Ph.D. program and a department's research enterprise depend critically on the successful recruitment of high-quality students.

has been a depressing afternoon… We have aging faculty, we have no money to pay for mandated costs… high student-faculty ratio… " [6] This decline in educational quality is unsurprising to those of us close to the ground.

Graduate Programs in Decline

Graduate Education is being undermined. As the 2012 Task Force on Competitiveness Report from the Faculty Senate describes, "While many of the University's graduate programs are currently rated among the best in the world, rising tuition and uncompetitive stipends threaten to seriously undermine program quality."[7] In conversations with graduate students this is considered an optimistic assessment.

We know graduate education affects California in significant ways. As the UCs Office of the President report, Innovation and Prosperity at Risk points out, California has underinvested in graduate education, "failing to meet the state's workforce needs for managerial and professional workers, and not adequately preparing to meet the scientific, educational, or cultural needs of the decade ahead." The UCs are part of the problem since graduate enrollment from 1970-2000 grew at less than 1/10 the rate of undergraduate enrollment. In relation to their counterparts at comparable schools, graduate enrollees at the UCs now constitute a significantly smaller percentage of total enrollees.[8] Student financial support is a key determinant of an institution's ability to attract the best graduate students.

UC graduate students receive far lower stipends than students at the institutions the UC compares itself to. Based on 2010 survey results, the gap between the UCs and its nearest competitor schools is $2,697. The average cost of living at UC was $2,281 higher than at non-UC locations, creating an

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[6] Q&A after Presentation by UC Provost Dorr on "The Financial Crisis Requires Hard Choices in Order to Protect Quality" at UC Regents Retreat, September 12, 2012

[7] Report of the Task Force on Competitiveness in Academic Graduate Student Support, Adopted by the UC Academic Council June 2012, p.1

[8] Innovation and Prosperity at Risk: Investing in Graduate Education to Sustain California's Future, Office of the President, Division of Academic Affairs, 2001. This paper can be summarized as such: California has been underinvesting in graduate education, the key training ground for the people who create discoveries. California is already seriously falling behind—failing to meet the state's workforce needs for managerial and professional workers, and not adequately preparing to meet the scientific, educational, or cultural needs of the decade ahead. 1970 -2000 grad enrollment grew 7%, undergrad enrollment by 100%. Comparable schools have graduate enrollment at 25-50% of overall enrollees, UC at ~17%.

overall disadvantage of $4,978 in UC's average stipend offer.[9] Graduate students accepted to the UCs indicate that these financial factors make the institution less attractive than its competitors. This may explain why for the first time more than half of the students surveyed after acceptance chose to enroll elsewhere.[10]

UC's graduate student support has been falling behind that of its comparator universities for a number of years, and has dropped to uncompetitive levels. In order to continue to attract the very best students, UC must improve the competitiveness of its graduate student support. Doing so is not a discretionary action, cannot be delayed indefinitely, and is a vital investment to protect and enhance the core of the University and the future of the State.[11]

This urgent need to refund UC's graduate programs is entangled with the question of access for underrepresented students of color. The UC was somewhat ahead of its competition for under-represented minority graduate students in 2004 and 2007, but fell behind in 2010.[12] Further, while black and Latina/o populations in California have grown, the UCs enrollment rates for black and Latina/o graduate students did not, and have not kept pace with the broader society. From 2006-2010, black and Latina/o doctoral enrollment averaged 10.1% with a small increase in Latina/o enrollment. Black graduate students averaged only 2.5% of UC's academic doctoral enrollment and are represented at proportions lower than those at comparable competitor institutions.[13]

Undergraduate Programs in Decline

Positioned at the pivot between research and teaching, as the front line workers in both these projects, graduate students, and the quality of the support they receive, impact undergrads as well. It has long been recognized that faculty-student ratios affect student engagement, but only recently have scholars seen that in large research universities, the people with the most

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[9] Findings From the Graduate Student Support Survey 2010
[10] Findings From the Graduate Student Support Survey 2010, p. 19
[11] Report of the Task Force on Competitiveness in Academic Graduate Student Support p. 4
[12] Report of the Administrative/Senate Workgroup on Academic Graduate Student Issues 7/31/2012 Final, p.7
[13] Report of the Administrative/Senate Workgroup on Academic Graduate Student Issues, p. 19

face-to-face contact in research and teaching with undergraduates are graduate students. As it says in the Implementation Task Force Report of University of California Academic Senate,

> Strong graduate programs are fundamental to providing undergraduates with a quality education, because graduate students help provide undergraduates with access to research and instruction that is grounded in that research. It is in the training of the next generation of researchers that much new knowledge is produced. The research experience is shared in the interactions between graduate and undergraduate students—notably in the former group's role as teaching assistants, but also in the many interactions between graduate and undergraduate students in non-classroom learning environments, such as research laboratories. Investing in high quality graduate education therefore has large spillover benefits for undergraduate education, and vice-versa.[14]

This report continues in the same vein: "we stress that the interaction between Ph.D. students and undergraduates is one of the defining characteristics of a research university. Every aspect of UC's mission is enhanced by expanding and improving the University's Ph.D. programs."[15]

In particular, the low ratio of grads to undergrads combines with a shrinking faculty to result in growing classes, and inadequate support, often realized when undergraduates are assigned tasks formerly held by graduates. With a 10.5 percent increase in the number of student credit hours per ladder faculty from 2006 to 2011 across the UCs, students are increasingly

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[14] The Implementation Report, p. 4 Fostering a strong link between undergraduate and graduate education is vital to a research university. Report of the Task Force on Competitiveness in Academic Graduate Student Support, p. 4 "Graduate education is an essential part of UC's mission as a research university. As part of their own education, graduate students conduct original research, as well as assisting faculty members with research. They enrich the learning experience of undergraduates through their teaching, as well as through their collaborative work in laboratories and other research settings. Doctoral students, in particular, are trained to become creators of new knowledge; they are thus vital for maintaining the quality of life in California in the highly competitive world of the twenty-first century. Indeed, after completing their degrees, many of UC's graduate students become key contributors to California's economy, serving as managers and professionals in private industry, government, and the non-profit sector. It is estimated that UC doctoral programs have produced up to 25% of the faculty in the UC and California State University (CSU) systems."

[15] The Implementation Report, p 18. Report of the Administrative/Senate Workgroup on Academic Graduate Student Issues, p. 1

pinched.[16] A lack of funding for graduate students results in failed experiments like the 400 person UCSB literature class with no sections. Or more ominously, on some campuses 100+ person classes with no or few sections simply become the norm. In response, several of the UCs hope to increase their graduate student numbers by many hundreds, yet they are struggling to develop enticing support packages.

We know that larger class sizes result in decreased learning and engagement.[17] Several of the newer UCs were explicitly designed to balance the inexperience of their faculty with intensive learning atmospheres built on small learning communities. Now, however, it turns out that decreased attention to teaching in these same universities adversely affects underrepresented students, graduate and undergraduate.

Underrepresented Students

These changes in quality of education contribute to a growing problem with access to the UCs for underrepresented undergraduate students of color. The pressures of declining quality hit students with less support harder.[18] Since the passage of Proposition 209 and the Regents' resolution to remove gender, ethnicity, religion, and race from its admissions criteria in 1995, the percentage of underrepresented students of color enrolled at the UC has dropped significantly. By 2009, the gap between black and Latina/o students

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[16] Letter From the Office of the President, To Members of the Committee on Educational Policy: Discussion item for meeting of may 15, 2013, Academic performance indicators at the university of California, Executive Summary, p 2-3 "The number of student credit hours (SCH) per ladder faculty member have increased from 693 in 1990-91 to 782 in 2010-11 (12.8 percent increase), with a 10.5 percent increase in SCH from 2005-06 to 2010-11. SCH is a better measure of faculty workload than is number of courses taught because it is a nationally recognized measure that simultaneously considers both unit-value of the course and the number of students enrolled… the student-faculty ratio, which has increased by 17.5 percent, from 20.0 to 23.5, over the last 20 years, but mostly over the last five, because of decreased funds to hire faculty and UC's choice to continue to meet Master Plan commitments to undergraduate enrollment. If the recent trend continued over the next five years, the 20-year high student-faculty ratio would increase another 7.7 percent, to 25.4. Depending on UC's financial circumstances, there could be tough choices to make about how best to sustain UC's excellence as a public research university."

[17] Alice Horning. The Definitive Article on Class Size. WPA: Writing Program Administration Volume 31, Numbers 1-2, Fall/Winter 2007

[18] Peter Blatchford, Paul Bassett, Penelope Brown. Examining the effect of class size on classroom engagement and teacher pupil interaction: Differences in relation to pupil prior attainment and primary vs. secondary schools. Learning and Instruction 21 (2011)

graduating from California State high schools and those enrolling in the UC was 23.3%.[19]

The issue of low admissions and enrollment of underrepresented minorities manifests especially clearly in graduation rates where a 2007 study by The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education found the gaps between students of color and white students at UCLA and UCB were 15-14%. While graduation rates have risen since then, the number of underrepresented minority students has fallen. For example, while UC San Diego had an 85.5% graduation rate for Black students in 2011-2012, its enrollment rate was 1.1%. Similarly, while UC Berkeley held a 90.5% graduation rate for Hispanic students in the same year, their enrollment rate was at 13.8%.[20] At the UCs a higher graduation rate of underrepresented minority students correlates with a low enrollment rate.

Many reports on the shrinking diversity and accessibility of the UCs point to campus climate. UC San Diego, known for its low rate of enrollment for Black students, also received attention its cold or even hostile campus climate for students of color.[21] Remember the "Compton Cookout" in 2010 when a fraternity held a party to mock Black History Month.[22] Likewise, at UC Irvine in 2013, a fraternity posted a promotional video of members wearing blackface.[23] These acts cannot be isolated from the decreasing number of underrepresented minorities at the UC. Further, as class sizes grow, already marginalized students find an increasingly isolating learning environment less equipped for mentorship and retention.

The budget cuts that result in increased class size disproportionately affect programs and departments that focus on minority discourse, coursework that empowers marginalized students and encourages a campus climate more attuned to diversity. For example, at UC Irvine in 2012 the Office of the

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[19] (from Perez, Erica. "Despite diversity efforts, UC minority enrollment down since Prop. 209. California Watch)" "http://californiawatch.org/dailyreport/despite-diversity-efforts-uc-minority-enrollment-down-prop-209-15031)

[20] "At Top Colleges, an Admissions Gap for Minorities." The New York Times. 7 May 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/05/07/education/college-admissions-gap.html?_r=0

[21] Alpert, Emily. "Why Black Students Are So Scarce at UCSD." Voice of San Diego. 10 March 2010. http://voiceofsandiego.org/2010/03/10/why-black-students-are-so-scarce-at-ucsd/

[22] "Ethnic Studies Faculty and Student Response to UCSD Campus Crisis Precipitated by the Event Dubbed the 'Compton Cookout.'" http://complex-systems.ucsd.edu/antiracism/node/2

[23] "The Official Black Student Union Statement," http://thespeakingspook.tumblr.com/post/48941617005

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost released a memo threatening cuts to African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Comparative Literature, Women's Studies, and East Asian Languages and Literatures based on their presumably low faculty to student ratios.[24] Budget cuts like these have prompted student action statewide. The Student of Color Collective in 2009 at UC Santa Cruz went on hunger strike to protest the effects of budget cuts on students of color and ethnic studies programs,[25] while in 2011 a group of students at UC Berkeley also went on hunger strike against cuts made to the Ethnic Studies Department.[26] At UC Irvine, a coalition called Needs Attention formed in 2012 to combat threats to minority discourse in the humanities. Across the UC, students and teachers are becoming increasingly alarmed at how targeted budget cuts and subsequent increases in class size are affecting marginalized students.

Online education, in the form of MOOCs, may be the final realization of this trend toward larger classes, which has the effect of further excluding already marginalized students. As studies have already shown, online education may have disproportionately negative effects on the learning outcomes of low income Latina/o students,[27] and likely skews educational outcomes toward the already well prepared even more so than our current system. At San Jose State University, the failure rate was 12-51% in its now cancelled experimental program.[28] Online education's hyper emphasis on classroom monitoring is highly effective at generating online clicks that can be sold in the data market, but there is little evidence that without significantly more forethought, online education will solve our current educational crisis rather than exacerbate it.

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[24] "Reading Guide for the Needs Attention Memo." Needs Attention. 31 Jan. 2012. http://ucineedsattention.blogspot.com/2012/01/reading-guide-for-needs-attention-memo.html

[25] Gutierrez, Patricia. "UC Santa Cruz students launch hunger strike to protest discriminatory budget cuts, 2009." Global Nonviolent Action Database. 14 Oct. 2012. http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/uc-santa-cruz-students-launch-hunger-strike-protest-discriminatory-budget-cuts-2009

[26] Schnerr, Judith. "Hunger Strike for Ethnic Studies." East Bay Express. 11 May 2011. http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/hunger-strike-for-ethnic-studies/Content?oid=2630287

[27] Kaup, R. (2012). Online penalty: The impact of online instruction on latino-white achievement gap.

[28] http://chronicle.com/article/San-Jose-State-U-Puts-MOOC/140459/

Student-Families

Weak support for graduate programs also means decreasing access for students with families. It is a well-established matter of public policy, that by providing a more "family-friendly" workplace, employers both promote gender equality at work and accommodate real-world needs of their employees. Yet, as UC Berkeley Professor and former Graduate Dean Mary Ann Mason recently reported in her research findings on Slate.com:

> Female graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who have babies while students or fellows are more than twice as likely as new fathers or than childless women to turn away from an academic research career. They receive little or no childbirth support from the university and often a great deal of discouragement from their mentors. As one Berkeley graduate student who participated in our study put it, "There is a pervasive attitude that the female graduate student in question must now prove to the faculty that she is capable of completing her degree, even when prior to the pregnancy there were absolutely no doubts about her capabilities and ambition."

Currently student parents face several obstacles in making graduate school economically feasible while they are employed as ASEs. Child care subsidies are only offered for children under the age of 5, making students pay for expensive after school care while they teach sections, grade papers, and perform ASE duties at any time outside of K12 school hours. Dependent insurance through the USHIP plan is prohibitively expensive at $1200-$1600 per quarter of enrollment. Rent has been steadily increasing at all family housing units on UC campuses while wages have not increased relative to inflation. While working in the UC systems a single parent with one child makes close to $19,000 per year. Yet a living wage in California would require over $50,000.[29] This leaves many student-families dependent on state subsidy programs, student loans, and credit card debt in order to pursue their education. Unsurprisingly, campuses provide Medical and WIC benefit enrollment forms directly to ASEs when they enroll for campus child care programs. With such barriers to access already in place, it makes sense that students with families would choose other academic options.

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[29] MIT Living Wage Calculator, http://livingwage.mit.edu/

We Can Fix This – Finding the Money.

A long term solution to the problems of UC's increasing mediocrity requires an infusion of state funding, however, much can be done with what we have. There are enough excess and misplaced funds that if priorities shifted, we could easily cover the cost of high quality graduate and undergraduate education at the UCs. Simply put – this is a drop in the bucket. If there is a will on the part of the UC management, they will find the funding.

The money is in executive compensation. If the top 225 administrators in 2011 gave up their extra compensation and stuck to their salaries (averaging at $335,500), we would save roughly 20 million dollars, easily enough for massive amelioration.[30] Likewise, one could ask why the UC's upper-level administrative strata has grown 251% -- resulting in roughly 1 billion in extra costs -- while other sectors have grown 51% over 21 years.[31] Or why from 2008 to 2011, the number of individuals receiving more than $200,000 in base pay grew by 44 percent. Employees grossing more than $200,000, while only 2.6 percent of the total workforce, now account for 13.8 percent of 10+ billion in payroll payments. This excessive executive compensation cost the University nearly $1.5 billion in 2011. More specifically, one might ask why UCI CEO Terry Belmont took home $775,000 in pay and bonuses in 2011, a 40% increase from what his predecessor Maureen Zehntner received three years earlier? Why in 2011, did David Feinberg, UCLA Hospital CEO, receive nearly $500,000 in bonus pay on top of his $900,000 salary. Or why did UCSF Medical Center CEO Mark Laret receive over $300,000 in bonus payments, bringing his total to nearly $1.2 million. Or on an even more mundane level, why does the UCI chief medical officer Michael Barron require $73,000 dollars for moving expenses? These are all real costs and real excesses, and they show that a plan to fix the UCs ought to include caps on executive compensation.

The money is also in excessive building projects. Berkeley's Stadium has lost tens of millions of dollars, the wasteful UCLA hotel complex has cost $150 million, and UCSC's Silicon Valley project has run a 5 million dollar yearly deficit: voiding any of these or similar excessively costly projects would easily buffer our immediate needs. Management's emphasis on consolidating UC's

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[30] UAW 2865 analysis of 2011 UC Executive Compensation Report.
[31] UC's upper-level administrative strata involves Senior Management Group and Management & Senior Professionals. See http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~schwrtz/ and http://utotherescue.blogspot.com/2009/12/growth-trends-in-uc-administration.html

loan ratings has come at the expense of educational quality. But, their real estate fiascos show two things. First, we need better oversight. Second, when there is a will on the part of the Regents, tens of millions of dollars are easily found.

Overall then, the task of addressing the declining quality of graduate education, which would have such a large impact on undergraduate engagement, is small potatoes. To get a sense of the scale: $20-30 million would bring graduate compensation within range. If there is a will to find it, it will be found. As the taskforce on competitiveness suggests, we must "Elevate the need to improve graduate student support to be a very high priority for the Regents."

Conclusion

Janet Napolitano's hiring is a further example of prioritizing politics and finances over the core UC mission of education. If, as it seems to prefigure, her hiring means more interest in financialization than teaching and a serious lack of concern for people of color, it can only mean continued decline in quality and access in the UCs. Yet, how she responds to the decline in UC quality and access is yet to be seen.

The UCs have fallen behind competitor institutions and it is only a matter of time before the rest of the world catches on. In a research institution like the UC, a primary factor in undergraduate engagement is the undergrad-graduate ratio and the quality of graduate programs more generally. Thus, graduate support is key to the quality of all UC education, and yet we watch as our graduate programs decline. Lack of quality education hits underrepresented students the hardest. In other words, class size and quality of education are questions of access for underrepresented minorities. The problem sits with both state funding and UC priorities. However, there are crucial solutions within close reach and increased graduate support is a key element to the solution.