

The Regents of the University of California

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

September 19, 2002

The Committee on Educational Policy met on the above date at UCSF-Laurel Heights, San Francisco.

Members present: Regents Atkinson, Bustamante, Connerly, Johnson, Kozberg, Lansing, Lozano, Marcus, Moores, Pattiz, Sainick, and Terrazas; Advisory member Seigler

In attendance: Regents Blum, Davies, Lee, Ligot-Gordon, Montoya, and Preuss, Regent-designate Murray, Faculty Representatives Binion and Pitts, Secretary Trivette, General Counsel Holst, Treasurer Russ, Provost King, Senior Vice Presidents Darling and Mullinix, Vice Presidents Broome and Hershman, Chancellors Berdahl, Bishop, Greenwood, Tomlinson-Keasey, Vanderhoef, and Yang, and Recording Secretary Nietfeld

The meeting convened at 12:40 p.m. with Committee Chair Kozberg presiding. Regent Kozberg explained that item RE-32, *Procedures for Review of Course Descriptions and Related Issues*, would be taken up first from the Committee's agenda.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meetings of May 15, July 17, and July 18, 2002 were approved.

2. **PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF COURSE DESCRIPTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES**

President Atkinson presented the following statement:

Over the last several months, a great deal of discussion has been generated in the University community over the course description for one of the sections of the English R1A writing course at UC Berkeley. The course section in question is titled "The Politics and Poetics of Palestinian Resistance." The description has been amended several times in response to a variety of concerns that have been raised, but I know that some Regents and others continue to have serious concerns about the course description.

I wrote to the Regents on this subject a few weeks ago, describing my personal displeasure with the course description but also my firm belief that the faculty's authority over courses and course descriptions must be fully honored, consistent with the tenets of shared governance and with Standing Order 105.2 of The Regents. I also noted the significant steps being taken by Chancellor Berdahl and the Berkeley

faculty to ensure that the course itself is conducted in an appropriate manner. In addition, I stated in my letter that it would be productive to begin a thoughtful review and discussion of our standards for course descriptions, for the benefit of broader understanding throughout the University community.

I have now requested, through Academic Council Chair Gayle Binion, that the Academic Senate review the facts of this case and conduct an assessment of the procedures by which course descriptions are created and reviewed at the University of California. I have specifically suggested that this assessment include a clear delineation of faculty responsibility with respect to course descriptions - again, with the idea that greater clarity on this subject throughout the University community is a desirable outcome.

In addition, Regent Pattiz has requested the creation of a task force made up of Regents, faculty, and administrators to, first, review the Senate's report upon its completion; and second, review the University's policies governing academic freedom and academic responsibility with respect to course descriptions. My understanding is that the goal of this inquiry is to improve The Regents' confidence in the process while respecting the rights and responsibilities of the faculty under shared governance.

I believe Regent Pattiz's proposal is a sound one, and I want to inform The Regents that I intend to appoint such a task force. I hope these two efforts - the Senate's review of the guidelines for course descriptions and the task force just described - will allow us to move forward on these issues in a constructive way.

Regent Lansing commended the President for his handling of a sensitive issue and for the actions that he had taken.

3. **COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY**

Regent Connerly observed that the morning's presentation had drawn attention to the importance of the University's role in the state. He commented on the numerous areas where the University has an effect on peoples' lives, including health, food, and transportation. It was his experience, however, that people tend to think of the University only when they visit a UC hospital or when someone they know is denied admission to a particular University campus. Regent Connerly suggested that, as the University had amended its admissions policies over the past few years, the issue of public credibility may not have received sufficient attention. He stressed that the public must believe that the University's process for selecting who is admitted to which campus is a fair one. Regent Connerly recalled that he had voted in favor of each reform to the admissions process that had been presented to The Regents, including the motion to rescind SP-1. In each instance, he had believed that the decision would improve the admissions process. While not regretting his vote in favor

of comprehensive review, Regent Connerly drew attention to the fact that several newspaper articles had called into question whether the process is being administered fairly. He agreed that each applicant should receive the benefit of a comprehensive review, but he stressed the crucial nature of fairness in that review. In light of these remarks, Regent Connerly suggested that the University should undertake an independent outside audit of the comprehensive review admissions process. He noted that there were three concerns that had been raised in connection with comprehensive review. The first is the question of whether the process provides applicants with the opportunity to embellish upon the obstacles they have faced. Second, he asked whether the aggregation of obstacles could exceed the actual academic accomplishments. Finally, he questioned whether comprehensive review represented a way in which to circumvent the California constitution by reinserting race and ethnicity into the equation. He felt assured that answers that most people would accept could be provided to these questions. He anticipated, however, that the time may come when each of the University's campuses is unable to admit all qualified students who apply. Regent Connerly believed that SP-1 had caused students to consider campuses other than Berkeley or UCLA as viable alternatives. He urged the University to give consideration to an independent audit of comprehensive review.

Committee Chair Kozberg observed that a report on comprehensive review would be presented by the Academic Council at the November meeting. She urged the Regents to share issues of concern with the faculty.

President Atkinson commented on his view that the comprehensive review process is a fair policy. He stressed that, because the University is a public institution, all of its activities are examined in detail by its constituents. He added that every major university in the country uses some type of comprehensive review, and he could point to no evidence that would suggest that the University does not have an entirely fair admissions process.

Regent Terrazas stated that he would welcome any efforts to put comprehensive review in the public arena because demographic data suggest that by 2010 nearly two-thirds of California's high school graduates will be Hispanic. He did not want anyone to suggest that their admittance to the University of California had been the result of a flawed process.

Regent Bustamante posed a series of questions to President Atkinson about the University's admissions process. The President confirmed that academic achievement is the primary criterion for determining admission. He noted that, in adopting the comprehensive review policy, the commitment was made to review outcome and that the first such report will be presented in November.

Regent Bustamante pointed out that, if the comprehensive review process is fair and is working well, it should not be necessary to conduct an outside audit, particularly in light of the fact that such a process is used by the most prestigious universities in the country.

Regent Moores pointed out that each general campus has its own system of comprehensive review. His hope was that an outside consultant could assist the University in improving a system that already works well. A further intention would be to share information among the campuses as experience in using comprehensive review is gained and students admitted under this process have enrolled. Regent Moores noted the mistaken perception that comprehensive review favors disadvantaged students. The University should be able to disprove this belief as the process becomes more transparent. He believed that the best way to increase this transparency would be for an outside consultant to assist the Regents and the faculty in improving the comprehensive admissions policy.

Regent Connerly stressed that his intention in seeking an outside review of the admissions process would be to strengthen it. He hoped that all of the Regents would support this approach.

President Atkinson agreed with the need for the faculty to monitor the process and seek ways for improvement, but he did not join with Regent Connerly in supporting the need for an outside review.

Regent Kozberg noted that the University Auditor might be called upon for assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Attest:

Secretary