

The Regents of the University of California

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASIC NEEDS

March 17, 2020

The Special Committee on Basic Needs met on the above date by teleconference meeting conducted in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20.

Members Present: Regents Butler, Cohen, Leib, Park, Simmons, Um, and Weddle; Chancellor May; Advisory members Bhavnani, Muwwakkil, and Stegura

In attendance: Regents Reilly and Zettel, Faculty Representative Gauvain, Staff Advisor Klimow, Secretary and Chief of Staff Shaw, Managing Counsel Shanle, Vice President Brown, Interim Vice President Gullatt, Chancellor Larive, and Recording Secretary Li

The meeting convened at 3:35 p.m. with Special Committee Chair Weddle presiding.

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Committee Chair Weddle explained that the public comment period permitted members of the public an opportunity to address University-related matters. The following persons addressed the Committee concerning the items noted.

- A. Aidan Arasasingham, UCLA student and UC Student Association (UCSA) member, thanked the Regents for the opportunity to participate in the public comment period by telephone. Students' basic needs challenges would likely worsen during the coronavirus crisis. UCSA has issued a call to action and urged the University to commit to interventions such as paid administrative leave for on-campus student workers whose jobs cannot be done remotely; emergency loans and cost of attendance adjustments for students whose off-campus jobs are cut; pro bono legal support to negotiate off-campus housing contracts; continued access to health care for students who are not on campus; online mental health services; providing hardware, software, internet subsidies, and equipment for students not on campus; and leniency for late payment of tuition. Mr. Arasasingham urged UC to collaborate with UCSA on these requests and expressed his hope that they would be discussed during the Committee meeting.
- B. Laulani Teale, Hawaii resident, spoke in opposition to the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project, which she stated would create one of the greatest indigenous human rights crises. Thirty-three Hawaiian elders were arrested, and many have continued to protest despite health and safety risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Protesters asked the University to divest from the project immediately and strongly urged the Regents to hold a special session to discuss Mauna Kea as was previously announced. Protesters asked that UC demand a moratorium on enforcement action from the State of Hawaii until the matter has been discussed by the Regents, divert

TMT funds to meet student needs, and harmonize scientific knowledge and indigenous wisdom.

- C. Narges Zagub, UCLA student, spoke in opposition to the TMT project and called on the Regents to protect indigenous rights and land. The project would negatively affect many indigenous people and continue a cycle of colonialism. UC has a big role in the project and could make a big difference.
- D. Mikilani Young spoke in opposition to the TMT project. Mauna Kea has been a sacred place of worship for indigenous Hawaiian people. She thanked members of the Tongva tribe for their support of the protest and for the opportunity to speak at UCLA, which is located on former Tongva land.

Regent Leib asked whether the TMT project would be discussed at a future meeting. Secretary and Chief of Staff Shaw answered in affirmative, citing current circumstances for the delay. Ms. Shaw added that the discussion would be before the full Board.

Regent Simmons asked whether the UCSA suggestions that Mr. Arasasingham mentioned during the public comment period would be documented. Ms. Shaw replied that meeting minutes and a video recording of the meeting would be available. Committee Chair Weddle added that she would share the UCSA letter once it became available.

Committee Chair Weddle introduced Student Observer Senuri Boralessa, UC San Diego undergraduate student and basic needs advocate. Ms. Boralessa stated that students with basic needs insecurities would undergo the hardest, most abrupt transition during the COVID-19 pandemic and that this population would grow as more students lose housing or become unable to pay for utilities or access food. This has also had an effect on students' mental health. Ms. Boralessa remarked on the agenda items of the meeting. She stated that results from the 2016 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey and Graduate Student Well-Being Survey correlate with data from Institutional Research and Academic Planning on student outcomes. Students who were food insecure or homeless experienced depression or had poor study habits. Such students were not confident about timely degree completion or postgraduate career opportunities. Among UC Santa Cruz graduate students, 11 percent were houseless and 41 percent were food insecure; these data provided a better understanding of graduate students' request for a cost of living adjustment. Many graduate students relied on teaching assistant positions to reduce tuition costs. Ms. Boralessa hoped that campus basic needs teams were reaching out to graduate students to ensure that they felt supported. She also looked forward to using the final report from the Committee as a resource alongside other reports, such as that of the Global Food Initiative. She asked that the definition of basic needs include personal hygiene and clothing, both of which can have an effect on students' confidence and employment opportunities. Campus basic needs coordinators should be involved with the creation of this report as well. Ms. Boralessa expressed her appreciation to the University for not forcing students to move from campus in response to the COVID-19 crisis, citing the hardships of international students as an example. Like other basic needs centers at UC, the Hub at UCSD was still providing crisis

management, CalFresh assistance, and other services. She underscored the importance of basic needs messaging from campus leadership. She thanked the Regents for their efforts.

Committee Chair Weddle echoed Ms. Boralessa's concerns about basic needs in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. She clarified that the agenda items had been chosen several weeks prior to present circumstances and welcomed Regents' questions and comments about the basic needs implications of COVID-19.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of January 21, 2020 were approved, Regents Butler, Cohen, Leib, Park, Um, and Weddle voting "aye" and Regent Simmons abstaining.¹

3. EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Vice President Brown provided a presentation about the UC Information Center's basic needs dashboard using data from the 2016 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) and Graduate Student Well-Being (GSWB) survey. Data could be viewed by campus or undergraduate and graduate student demographics. Spring 2016 survey data was selected because it could be tied to engagement and student outcome data and could be provided for campus use quickly. The 2015 survey data was anonymous and could not be tied to other data, and completion rates were not yet available to tie to 2018 survey data. The dashboard would be improved as new data is collected. Based on the available data, competing family responsibilities, feeling depressed, stressed, or upset, and an inability to concentrate on work were more likely to be obstacles for students who reported food or housing insecurity than those who reported food or housing security. Levels of engagement in academic activities among food or housing insecure students did not differ much from those of students who were food or housing secure. A higher proportion of food and housing insecure students reported working more than 20 hours a week. Research has shown that students who work more than 20 hours a week saw a decline in grade point average. Food insecurity contributed to a two-point gap in persistence rates and a ten-point gap in four-year graduation rates among freshman students. Housing insecurity accounted for an over 12-point gap in two-year graduation rates among transfer students.

Committee Chair Weddle emphasized the importance of the accessibility of the survey data and use of the data to drive programs and services.

Regent-designate Stegura predicted that the statistics presented in the dashboard would worsen, especially for already vulnerable students with basic needs insecurities who were

¹ Roll call vote required by the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act [Government Code § 11123(b)(1)(D)] for all meetings held by teleconference.

on campuses that might close. She hoped that the UC Student Association would present its list of suggested interventions to campus leadership. She was also glad that the dashboard was available. A recent *Inside Higher Ed* article reported that college students across the country were finding ways to help each other during the COVID-19 pandemic. These data tools that UC was implementing and updating would be useful in the future.

Committee Chair Weddle emphasized that students with basic needs insecurities reported that they were more likely to feel stressed and depressed. She asked what efforts have been made to give these students access to health care and mental health services. Interim Vice President Gullatt replied that the University regarded those as essential services which were still being provided on campus. Student health centers and psychological and counseling services were available in person and remotely. Basic needs centers were also designated as essential services. Residence halls, which served as a permanent home to some students, remained open. Financial aid directors, chancellors, and other campus leadership have prioritized students' well-being as they make arrangements. Designating basic needs services as essential ensured that students have housing, meals, and transportation support while completing examinations and determining their next steps. Students receiving work study have been able to work remotely and receive support from campus offices when taking leave from work. Although the \$15 million in basic needs funding was never envisioned for this scenario, campuses and their basic needs centers were working to ensure seamless support for students. Committee Chair Weddle stated that basic needs centers should be regarded as essential services systemwide and that basic needs services needed to be included in campus COVID-19 messaging to students. She also called for remote work assignments and loans for students who lose their employment.

Regent Um suggested discussing campuses' basic needs best practices, such as continuing the operation of food pantries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hours of operation might be an issue because food pantries were often staffed by student volunteers. Regent Um suggested a mobile food pantry that could reach students who were not on campus. He also suggested coordination among UC campuses, as well with the California State University and California Community Colleges, so that UC students who have moved home could access food pantries at the college campuses closest to them. He acknowledged that some campuses might have greater demand than others. In Regent Um's view, students would not be returning to campus soon, so this could become a long-term issue. Committee Chair Weddle stated that she would share Regent Um's ideas with the Systemwide Basic Needs Committee and campus basic needs coordinators. It would be important to keep students involved in these decisions. Ms. Gullatt thanked Regent Um for his idea. Some campuses were considering pop-up centers in case a building where a basic needs center was located had to close. She suggested taking the idea of universal access to the California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance. Committee Chair Weddle added that some students would remain in on-campus housing because it was the safest option for them.

Regent Leib noted that many campus basic needs services were also being provided by County agencies and that campuses did not tend to lobby them. He suggested lobbying County supervisors and staff for funding that Governor Newsom has announced in response to COVID-19. Ms. Gullatt agreed that UC was more focused on State and federal

advocacy and asked chancellors to share their strategies. Committee Chair Weddle added that State Governmental Relations should be consulted. Chancellor May stated that UC Davis was well connected with Sacramento and Yolo Counties. He believed that most campuses were connected with their local County government as well. The UCD basic needs center was in regular contact with Yolo County as part of normal operations.

Faculty Representative Bhavnani asked whether students who worked more than 20 hours per week were still food and housing insecure. Ms. Brown replied that a greater proportion of students who reported basic needs insecurity, especially students who reported housing insecurity, were working over 20 hours per week. Working itself did not necessarily affect student outcomes. Ms. Bhavnani expressed concern that there were students who were food and housing insecure despite working over 20 hours per week and remarked that it seemed counterintuitive. Committee Chair Weddle asked how the UC financial aid model could better support students within this category.

Staff Advisor Klimow praised the creativity of Regent Um's suggestion. Local food banks were rethinking food delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She suggested that campuses work with County food banks instead of designing a new distribution system.

Regent Park emphasized that any food pantry coordination must be done in concert with public health officials. Guidance on COVID-19 was changing rapidly. UC must also consider how lobbying the County would affect its State and federal advocacy efforts. The impact of COVID-19 would go beyond students and would be a long-term issue.

Regent-designate Muwwakkil noted that families also lived on campus and asked how working more than 20 hours per week affected graduate student performance. He noted that graduate students often worked over 20 hours per week. Ms. Brown replied that the Graduate Student Well-Being Survey did not measure this and that other considerations could be used to arrive at an answer to this question.

Regent Zettel asked whether students working over 20 hours per week who were still food and housing insecure were also supporting their families. Ms. Brown replied that the Office of the President (UCOP) has been examining this. First-generation and Pell Grant recipient students who were food or housing insecure were also more likely to be supporting families. UCOP was trying to gain a better understanding of this situation. Regent Zettel underscored the need for community partnerships.

Faculty Representative Gauvain asked whether learning and course engagement were comparable between students who reported experiencing basic needs insecurities and students who did not. Ms. Brown responded in the affirmative; poor study habits were comparable regardless of whether students had basic needs insecurities. Ms. Gauvain suggested that campuses provide additional support at this time and keep in mind the disruptions in campus study support that students experience when studying remotely. These disruptions could trigger issues with physical or mental health.

Ms. Brown stated that the dashboard was a work in progress and that she was open to any feedback. She thanked her team for creating the dashboard.

Regent-designate Stegura expressed concern about whether CalFresh eligibility would be affected when students move home to a different county and what advocacy by the Regents could help students maintain their access to CalFresh benefits.

4. **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FOR THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASIC NEEDS REPORT**

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Interim Vice President Gullatt stated that the Special Committee's final report would provide its strategic vision for addressing basic needs systemwide. The current environment might lead to a changed student experience and a reduced need for basic needs intervention. The report would include the policy framework for basic needs; impact of food and housing insecurity on student academic success and well-being; and UC's current efforts. The report would also include the Special Committee's conclusions, the methods used to reach those conclusions, and the its recommendations for improving the student experience and reducing their basic needs insecurities. The Office of the President (UCOP) has provided the Special Committee with an aggregation of its observations and reflections to aid in the creation of the report.

Committee Chair Weddle stated that the Special Committee's findings would be discussed at this meeting and that recommendations would be discussed in the following meeting.

Regent Butler asked whether parenting, undocumented, and carceral-impacted students would be included in the report. UC should call attention to these groups, which might be facing acute basic needs issues regardless of whether those issues are addressed on campus.

Regent-designate Stegura suggested that the report include best practices from all ten campuses, as well as college campuses not within the University system. She hoped that the report would be disseminated among decision makers at all ten campuses as well as UC's partners. She believed that legislators would be interested in the report and that the report could help UC's efforts in acquiring Proposition 63 funds for mental health services.

Committee Chair Weddle acknowledged UCOP staff, Regents Park, Cohen, and Leib, and Regent-designate Muwwakkil for their efforts in preparing the draft version of the report.

Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked how student narratives would be included in the report. Ms. Gullatt replied that student narratives would be graphically interspersed in the report. The Systemwide Basic Needs Committee co-chairs and members were collecting these narratives, but suggestions for collecting a broad range of student narratives were welcome. Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked when these narratives would be collected. Ms. Gullatt replied that the Systemwide Basic Needs Committee had been collecting them

for some time and was working to ensure that every UC campus, demographic, and community would be represented. Committee Chair Weddle added that the Special Committee's final report working group could discuss ways to acquire diverse student narratives.

Regent Um emphasized the importance of having recommendations in the report that had measurable goals. For instance, the Committee could recommend tangible ways to close the ten percent gap in graduation rates for food insecure students. These metrics should be realistic and attainable so that their return on investment could later be justified. Committee Chair Weddle added that there should be accountability regarding the oversight of particular recommendations and measures of success.

Faculty Representative Bhavnani asked how students who live in their vehicles, whom she regarded as houseless, would be regarded in the report and at UC in general. Committee Chair Weddle replied that these students would be included in the report as housing insecure. The report recommendations might need to go into more detail, given how a broad category like housing insecure captures a variety of different experiences. Ms. Bhavnani suggested including narratives from students living in vehicles.

Regent Leib noted that the draft report states that there is no mechanism in place to ensure a strong relationship between Counties and campuses. He stated that the Merced and Davis campuses seemed to have better relationships with their local County governments because they were a large part of those counties. There also seemed to be strong relationships between County supervisors and campuses with medical centers. The report should explore how to improve these relationships for County social services.

Committee Chair Weddle added that hygiene should be included within the definition of basic needs as suggested by Student Observer Senuri Boralessa. She also suggested including in the report the latest findings on basic needs related to the COVID-19 response.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Attest:

Secretary and Chief of Staff