

The Regents of the University of California

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASIC NEEDS

May 19, 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 Kieffer, Reilly, and Zettel, Faculty Representative Gauvain, Secretary and Chief of Staff Shaw, Deputy General Counsel Woodall, Interim Vice President Gullatt, and Recording Secretary Li

The meeting convened at 4:30 p.m. with Special Committee Chair Weddle presiding.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of March 17, 2020 were approved, Regents Butler, Cohen, Park, Simmons, Um, and Weddle voting “aye.”¹

2. SUPPORTING STUDENTS’ BASIC NEEDS DURING COVID-19

[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.]

Committee Chair Weddle introduced Student Observer Senuri Boralessa, who shared her feedback on the items to be discussed at this meeting. Ms. Boralessa stated that varying income levels, ethnicity, family structure, citizenship status, and access to health services affect students’ education and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and are visible in the context of basic needs challenges. Pickup and mobile services have been very helpful to students who live on or near the San Diego campus. Students would select grocery or personal hygiene items using an online form and schedule a pickup time. So far, about 100 students have used the personal hygiene item pickup service alone. A mobile food pantry distributed pre-bagged items at community and apartment centers, and students scheduled time to pick up food recovered from dining halls. Lower or stagnant numbers of students seeking CalFresh application assistance or temporary housing could be attributed to more students moving back home. The campus’ CalFresh assistance and off-campus housing coordinators have adapted to providing online assistance. The laptop loaning program has been a great resource for students who had relied on campus libraries for computer and printer access. Students could complete a basic needs assistance form for a 30-minute online consultation or a COVID-19 relief form for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding from the financial aid office. Ms. Boralessa

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

wished to compare the efficiency of grant allocation and consultation practices at other campuses. Students who do not have access to the aforementioned resources might rely on these grants, and campuses should allow donations to them. Information about grants was changing daily, which has been frustrating for students. She recognized the work of student workers and staff at basic needs centers and thanked the Regents for supporting basic needs initiatives. If this pandemic had happened when basic needs services were taking shape several years ago, campuses would not have been prepared to handle something of this scale.

Interim Vice President Gullatt thanked Committee Chair Weddle and the Special Committee for their advocacy and support of student basic needs. She thanked student workers and staff at basic needs centers for acting as first responders during the pandemic. She regarded UC's basic needs movement as nascent and coinciding with the times when food, housing, and a sense of community have been needed most.

Director of Student Financial Support Shawn Brick stated that the CARES Act has allocated \$260 million to the University; half would go toward emergency grants to students and the other half toward other campus needs. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education intended these grants to be given in addition to traditional financial aid, so students' financial aid packages did not need to be revised. The Office of the President (UCOP) sought input from the UC Student Association and provided campuses with high-level guidance for developing their plans, such as recommending that campuses provide equivalent aid to help undocumented students who were ineligible for CARES funding. The CARES Acts ceased loan collection, accrual of interest, and late fees for federal student loans through September 30, 2020. The University could continue to pay federal work-study even if students' work was interrupted, and it did not have to return financial aid to the federal government if a student was forced to withdraw for the spring term. While the Department of Education held the majority of student loan debt, UC held a small portion of debt from California Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) loans, UC's own loan program, and \$92 million in federal Perkins loans. UC wished to provide the same level of relief to those borrowers as was provided by the CARES Act.

Systemwide Basic Needs Committee Co-Chair Tim Galarneau shared some examples of on-site basic needs services, such as food distribution, ready-to-eat meals, and grocery electronic gift cards. Campuses were providing CalFresh assistance and case management for housing, transportation, technology, and financial support. Online resource lists were updated regularly, and workshops, training sessions, and orientations were also online. Campuses were also developing targeted resources for students who were not eligible for federal or State relief, such as undocumented students, Underground Scholars, out-of-state students, and international students. There was a systemwide agreement that all UC students would have access to food distribution and online resources at all ten campuses. Mr. Galarneau thanked campuses for their efforts.

Systemwide Basic Needs Committee Co-Chair Ruben Canedo shared some innovative campus responses to the pandemic. UC Berkeley's basic needs center has aggregated funds from the CARES Act, financial aid, scholarships, fundraising, and other sources to provide

housing, food, health, and technology support. Over 100 applications were received on the first day the funds were made available. UC San Diego has transitioned its basic needs services to grocery and meal delivery, virtual cooking demonstrations, and CalFresh application, emergency grant, and temporary housing support. The UCSD basic needs website has had more than 2,000 visits per week. UC Santa Barbara has included a chat function on its basic needs website, and its spring break grocery assistance has grown to serve 749 students. A community donor has also provided 210 laptops. Key challenges remained. Daily uncertainty regarding resources and processes have required real-time decision-making often outside of normal protocol and policies. Basic needs centers have been designated essential service providers and first responders but do not have the staffing and funding to meet increased demand for services. There were also concerns about how future budget cuts would affect basic needs efforts.

Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked how the CARES Act's \$130 million for student grants would be allocated. Mr. Brick responded that the federal government decided how much each campus would receive. The funding has been distributed primarily through financial aid offices. Congress and the Department of Education required that this money go directly to students, so it was not used to pay past due bills. An estimated 75 to 80 percent of the funding has been delivered. Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked whether the funding went directly to students' accounts. Mr. Brick responded in the affirmative.

Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked whether international and undocumented students could receive this funding. Mr. Brick stated that the Department of Education clarified that the money was only for students who were eligible for federal aid, so it could not go to international or undocumented students. UCOP recommended that campuses set aside funding for undocumented students, and all have done so. Campuses were also considering providing funding for international students.

Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked whether the CARES Act was funding campus food distributions. Mr. Brick responded in the negative, stating that basic needs funding supported food distributions. Regent-designate Muwwakkil asked about the remaining \$130 million in CARES Act funding. Mr. Brick stated his belief that the University was waiting for guidance from the Department of Education.

Committee Chair Weddle called on campuses to ensure that all students were receiving funding, especially those who were not eligible to receive federal funds. She commended UC for being proactive in filling gaps in funding.

Regent-designate Stegura shared that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has suspended the requirement that CalFresh recipients update their addresses when they move, but some students were in the CalFresh application process when their address changed. CDSS has asked Counties to align their CalFresh eligibility requirements. CalFresh recipients could now use their benefits to order groceries online. A Los Angeles County supervisor has asked Congress to waive work requirements for students to qualify for CalFresh. Regent-designate Stegura asked how students could overcome these burdens. Mr. Galarneau replied that students could keep their CalFresh benefits regardless of

whether they moved home through June. The Systemwide Committee was trying to determine eligibility thereafter. Partnerships between campuses meant students could seek CalFresh assistance from the campus closest to them. Mr. Canedo added that the Systemwide Committee had been in daily conversation with CDSS since the start of the pandemic. A handbook for eligibility workers co-authored by UC and CDSS needed to be updated. Students who decide not to return to campus in the fall would need CalFresh support beyond June. The Systemwide Committee was addressing these issues. Mr. Brick stated that CDSS collaborated with higher education officials to create a standardized CalFresh eligibility letter based on the work-study exemption, which would mean a more consistent approach to eligibility.

Regent Kieffer asked how many students remaining on campus had basic needs insecurities and what would happen to students during the summer. Ms. Gullatt stated that UC did not have data on the students remaining on campus but had anecdotal information. Mr. Canedo stated that the number of students on campus was fluid. Some students returned to their campus apartment because of safety or socioeconomic issues, the lack of resources, or family responsibilities affecting their academic performance. The ratio of graduate to undergraduate students who remained on campus varied, and basic needs interventions needed to be responsive to that. Special attention has been paid to providing food and resources to those who are disabled or immunocompromised. Numbers of students served in an emergency food distribution could range from 300 to 1,200 students. Case managers were assisting a record number of students. CARES Act and basic needs funding has helped campuses revise their approach to basic needs support during the pandemic. A mass migration away from campuses was anticipated during the summer, as most campuses planned to continue remote instruction and student housing contracts were ending. Mr. Galarneau added that the number of students living on the Santa Cruz campus declined from over 9,000 students to 1,200 students. Basic needs staff also recognized the need for remote or distance-based support for students who still had leases. Numbers would be clearer by the summer.

Faculty Representative Bhavnani stated that CARES Act funding was allocated based on the number of Pell Grant recipients, not graduate students. She asked how UC would ensure that graduate students receive sufficient resources. Mr. Brick replied that UCOP's guidance to campuses suggested consultation with graduate student divisions. All campuses' CARES Act funding plans have included graduate students. Ms. Bhavnani asked about the criteria for providing funding to graduate students. Mr. Brick responded that some campuses provided flat awards to every graduate student. In other cases, parenting graduate students might receive additional money. Some campuses considered whether a student submitted a financial aid application while recognizing that it was not a common practice for academic graduate students. Professional degree students typically submit a financial aid application. Mr. Canedo added that some campuses allocated funding based on a population distribution. At UC Davis, for example, 18 percent of CARES Act money has gone to graduate students. The Systemwide Committee raised issues of where CARES Act money could go, where funding gaps were, and how those gaps could be addressed with financial aid directors and basic needs staff. Campuses were using institutional and fundraising dollars to support international and undocumented students. Graduate students

have participated in these discussions. Ms. Bhavnani praised Mr. Canedo and Mr. Galarneau for their creative and progressive thinking. Committee Chair Weddle expressed her appreciation that students remained at the center of decision-making.

Staff Advisor Klimow noted that staff were also affected by the pandemic and asked whether basic needs centers were open to them. Staff were guaranteed employment until the end of the fiscal year but might have family members who lost their jobs. UC Berkeley and UCLA have allowed their staff to access basic needs centers. Including staff might help with fundraising. Mr. Canedo replied that UCOP began a dedicated effort to support staff basic needs this year. The Systemwide Committee has also been discussing this issue. Staff would not be turned away from food pantries or basic needs centers. He noted the diverse backgrounds of some of the lowest-wage workers still on campus and the need for campus information in more languages. Some campuses have distributed groceries to staff in need or connected them with CalFresh. Mr. Galarneau added that community resources listed on basic needs websites were not just for students. Committee Chair Weddle agreed that it was important to consider how these strategies might help other populations.

Regent Reilly asked whether campuses have been able to forge closer relationships with community nonprofit organizations, food banks, and housing and health clinics. Mr. Canedo replied that community organizations have provided services to the UC, and members of the UC community join the efforts of these organizations. Mr. Galarneau stated that the Systemwide Committee was excited to support these growing relationships.

3. **SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASIC NEEDS REPORT DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

[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.]

Committee Chair Weddle stated that the Special Committee, which would sunset in fall 2020, committed to produce a final report which would provide UC with a basic needs strategic vision. She thanked Regents Cohen, Park, and Leib, as well as Regent-designate Muwwakkil, for their contributions to the report.

Interim Vice President Gullatt stated that the draft report should be available to the Committee at the September meeting and the final report at the November meeting. In March, the Committee discussed its findings since its inception in January 2019. This presentation would focus on recommendations for student basic needs and goals that would help UC change the student experience and reduce the need for basic needs interventions. The recommendations should have measureable and tangible goals that reflect the University's fiscal landscape as shaped by the pandemic. The University should aim to share best practices with external partners in order to address the needs of vulnerable populations, such as underrepresented, parenting, and undocumented students, as well as former foster youth and students affected by incarceration. The draft recommendations also addressed the role of Counties and expanded the definition of student basic needs.

Regent Zettel suggested adding student veterans, who have presented the challenges that they have encountered to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, to the list of vulnerable groups in the draft report. Many student veterans did not have employment or the support of families. Ms. Gullatt stated that student veterans would be included.

Regent Um suggested that the goals in the report should be more specific and precise given that funding requests and successes would be based on these goals. With regard to one of the recommendations, cutting undergraduate students' need to work and borrow by 2025, he did not recall discussing student borrowing at previous Special Committee meetings. He also suggested adding a recommendation about financial literacy programs to the "Recommendations for Student Service Practitioners" portion of the report. Mr. Brick responded that strengthening the financial aid program was one proactive way to address basic needs insecurity. Including the burden on students to work and borrow among the goals was an attempt to connect these goals to the metrics in the Education Financing Model. Borrowing did not necessarily lead to basic needs insecurity, but it was a measure of financial pressure. Committee Chair Weddle added that drafters of the report tried to incorporate what was learned from other Committees, such as the discussion about former foster youth in the Public Engagement and Development Committee and about borrowing patterns in the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. There would be an opportunity to discuss financial aid further at a future meeting.

Faculty Representative Bhavnani, referring to the percentages of undergraduate and graduate students with food and housing insecurity in the draft report, asked that there be recommendations specifically addressing graduate students' basic needs insecurity. She emphasized the important role of graduate students at the University. Ms. Gullatt stated that the narrative of the final report could specify graduate needs.

Regent Leib asked whether the final report would be updated to reflect changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, citing how difficult it would be to secure additional State funding. Ms. Gullatt acknowledged the changes and stated that more would be known in the summer, after which the recommendations could be checked for their longevity. Metrics and dates might change. Regent Leib stated that UC did not necessarily need to change the goals, but perhaps the goalposts have to be moved. Committee Chair Weddle recognized Regent Leib's advocacy for the creation of a meaningful, relevant, and useful document, and she was glad that the Committee had more time to complete it.

Regent-designate Stegura stated that borrowing does affect how students meet their basic needs. Students did not always have the financial literacy that they needed, and financial literacy was one of the goals from the Total Cost of Attendance Working Group final report. She suggested a goal of having a CalFresh eligibility worker at every campus basic needs center. UC Davis has a dedicated CalFresh eligibility worker on campus from Yolo County, and the application success rate has risen to nearly 80 percent. This could be a County worker or campus staff trained in CalFresh. Ms. Gullatt stated that this would be included among the recommendations for Regents to review.

Staff Advisor Jeffrey suggested adding postdoctoral researchers as a vulnerable population. Ms. Gullatt replied that this would be captured.

Regent Kieffer remarked that, although this Special Committee had a term, he did not see the issue of basic needs going away. He suggested that the term be extended or that basic needs issues be reported in another Committee. The Regents have learned a great deal from the Special Committee. Committee Chair Weddle expressed her agreement, adding that the final report working group had been discussing continuity. Regent Kieffer offered to help with those discussions. He wished to make sure that the issue of basic needs was not forgotten.

Regent Zettel expressed concern that students would lose the benefits of working, such as learning and networking opportunities and added interpersonal skills, if the recommended working hours were reduced. In light of reductions to State funding, she also suggested that senior citizens could volunteer to help students complete CalFresh and financial aid forms. Ms. Gullatt replied that there was a concern that students were working too much. Ten hours of work per week was ideal, but not 40 hours per week. There must be a balance. While there were restrictions on who could work, she could follow up on volunteering at a future meeting.

Committee Chair Weddle stated that chairing this Special Committee had been the greatest privilege of her University career.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Attest:

Secretary and Chief of Staff