

The Regents of the University of California

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

March 20, 2025

The Public Engagement and Development Committee met on the above date at the UCLA Luskin Conference Center, Los Angeles campus and by teleconference meeting conducted in accordance with California Government Code §§ 11133.

Members present: Regents Hernandez, Kounalakis, Pack, Robinson, and Sarris; Ex officio member Reilly; Advisory members Brooks, Komoto, Palazoglu, and Wang; Chancellors Lyons, May, Muñoz, and Wilcox; Staff Advisor Emiru

In attendance: Regent Beharry, Staff Advisor Frías, Regents Analyst Sheridan, Deputy General Counsel Drumm, Senior Vice President Turner, Chancellor Yang, and Recording Secretary Li

The meeting convened at 10:25 a.m. with Committee Chair Sarris presiding.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of November 13, 2024 were approved, Regents Hernandez, Kounalakis, Pack, Robinson, and Sarris voting “aye.”¹

2. UPDATE FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

[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.]

Senior Vice President Turner announced that External Relations and Communications (ER&C) has developed a new webpage to keep the University community informed regarding federal issues. The webpage has already received 106,000 views from nearly 70,000 users in just the last nine weeks, becoming the top webpage in the University of the California domain. Since the U.S. presidential inauguration, ER&C has received over 500 media inquiries, which was five times the normal monthly average. Ms. Turner expressed deep appreciation for her team. The last nine weeks, ER&C staff were working late into the evenings, early mornings, and on weekends; their work was vital to helping UC navigate the challenges ahead.

Chancellor Lyons suggested adding links to UC websites like the new federal webpage in email signature blocks to boost their visibility.

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

3. **ALUMNI REGENT PERSPECTIVES: UC VETERAN SUPPORT**

[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.]

Senior Vice President Turner introduced Regent Pack. He was a graduate of UC Riverside and a retired career officer of the U.S. Navy who had commanded a destroyer, a squadron of logistics ships, and a hovercraft in the Indo-Pacific region. He was also a graduate of the Royal Australian Navy Staff College and the U.S. Marine Corps War College. Regent Pack served as Naval Attaché at the American Embassy in Lithuania and as Defense Attaché at the American embassy in Denmark, where he received an honorary knighthood from Queen Margrethe. After retiring from the Navy, he served as emergency manager in San Diego and created a local government office that sought to prevent targeted violence and hate crimes. Over the last two years, Regent Pack visited veterans resource offices at all ten UC campuses. He has completed a master's degree at Tufts University while participating in a Navy fellowship program and receiving U.S. Veterans Affairs (VA) assistance. As a City employee, he attended Harvard University and Durham University with G.I. Bill assistance. In May, Regent Pack was set to graduate from Harvard University School of Medicine with a master's degree in bioethics, fully funded by the VA. His children also benefited from higher education programs for military family members.

Regent Pack began his remarks by noting that, with 1.8 million veterans, California had eight percent of the U.S. total veteran population, the largest population of veterans in any state. He described educational benefits that were instituted to incentivize military service and could be transferred to family members. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, or the original G.I. Bill, has paid for veterans' attendance of the University since 1944, and the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill offered veterans or their dependents full tuition and a monthly, tax-free stipend for living expenses. The California Veteran Dependent College Fee Waiver was a State program that covered tuition and fees at any UC campus and was primarily meant for veterans' family members. Regent Pack shared the number of veterans and their family members that Veteran Resource Centers (VRCs) served at each campus; on average, VRCs served 4.5 times more family members than veterans. There were instances in which military members might transfer or share their education benefits, such as having already earned an undergraduate degree while on active duty. The amount of monthly cash benefit provided by the G.I. Bill was determined by the U.S. Department of Defense and was based on the local cost of living. These were VA funds, not State funds, which freed UC to allocate the latter to students with financial need who were not military-affiliated. All eligible veterans received the same educational assistance irrespective of rank. Regent Pack emphasized the transformational impact of such a benefit on social and economic mobility.

People of color were disproportionately represented in the military, and this percentage has continued to increase. Over 30 percent of active-duty military members identified as a member of a minority group, and over 40 percent of California veterans identified as Latino(a). Programs like the G.I. Bill and the California Veteran Dependent College Fee Waiver played a role in training government employees, as 30 to 40 percent of the government's workforce was comprised of veterans, as well as training employees in the

private and nonprofit sectors. VRC directors had expertise and credentials in higher education and program management. Many were UC alumni, and most were themselves veterans. From his encounters, Regent Pack found that VRC directors and staff were dedicated to the veteran community and cause. They shared their success and meaningful connections and answered his questions directly, frankly, and enthusiastically. Veterans and their family members could contribute to VRCs through work-study programs for veterans. At one mid-sized UC campus, for instance, 19 such work-study positions offered tax-free compensation of about \$4,000 to \$6,000 per quarter. VRCs were well integrated with other support services and staff on campus, and some VRCs have adopted campus-wide functions. The VRC at UC Santa Barbara administered a shuttle service for those with access and functional needs or mobility issues. VRC directors connected with certifying officers in financial aid or registrar's offices to confirm the eligibility status of military-affiliated students and met monthly to coordinate policies and share information. VRCs also participated in an annual summit held at a rotating campus; he invited Regents to attend future summits to learn more about the experiences of UC veterans.

The California State University (CSU) system enrolled about twice as many veterans per capita as UC. According to some VRC directors, this could be the result of more targeted outreach to veterans at CSU campuses and community colleges, a more flexible timeline for admissions decisions at CSU, and other factors that seemed to favor older and working students with young families. Regent Pack stated that cost was less likely a factor, as the aforementioned funding programs applied to both UC and CSU. While higher CSU enrollment might demonstrate that veterans and their family were making well-informed choices, Regent Pack suggested that the University determine the reason for such a difference in case there are obstacles that need to be mitigated.

Regent Pack concluded by advocating for graduate degree opportunities for active-duty military officers. Leading universities such as Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton University, Yale University, Stanford University, and Tufts University and think tanks such as the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Atlantic Council have participated in graduate education and fellowships for mid-grade and senior military officers, often funded by the U.S. Department of Defense. In light of the current relationship between the federal government and universities, such programs could create relationships with military officers who later serve or advise senior government officials, legislators, diplomats, and ambassadors, and UC students and faculty could learn about military officers and better understand global security challenges. Regent Pack expressed hope that UC would consider similar opportunities and underscored nurturing the interest that senior military officers and federal leaders had in the University.

Committee Chair Sarris thanked Regent Pack for his service to the country and to UC. He highlighted that military members and veterans came from the same minority backgrounds, particularly the Latino(a) community, that were being targeted by the federal government. He opined that UC might have fewer veterans than CSU and community colleges because the latter had more locations and because UC had different admissions requirements.

Regent-designate Brooks thanked Regent Pack for his service. She recalled reaching out to veteran students during each campus visit and was heartened to see their dedication both to UC and to their branch of the military. However, veterans needed better access to both academic and mental health counseling. Staff supporting veteran students were under a tremendous amount of pressure, and one did not wish to see burnout among these staff.

Regent Pack observed that the delivery of mental health resources to veteran students varied considerably among campuses. At UC Berkeley, an office was reserved for VA social workers and psychiatrists, while some campuses were not able provide those services. Regent-designate Brooks recalled Regent Leib's advocacy of accessing County funding for mental health services, which would be helpful for veteran and transfer students. She reiterated the need for both mental health and academic counselors, the latter of whom could help students choose courses needed for timely graduation.

Regent Beharry thanked Regent Pack and Chancellor Muñoz for their service in the military and for the example they set as leaders. He shared that, in December 2023, the VA suggested that educational institutions have one full-time School Certifying Official (SCO) for every 125 G.I. Bill students. UCLA reported having over 770 students who received VA benefits but had only two full-time SCOs. Regent Beharry acknowledged the systemwide hiring freeze and that changes might not be made at this time.

Regent Hernandez thanked Regent Pack for his military service. He asked about the impact of the California Veteran Dependent College Fee Waiver on UC and whether UC had its own veterans fee waiver program, which could attract more students. Regent Pack explained that the California Veteran Dependent College Fee Waiver only applied to California schools, whereas the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits could be applied to State schools across the U.S. or supplemented with the Yellow Ribbon Program at private institutions. The California Veteran Dependent College Fee Waiver required a VA disability rating of zero percent for family members, a relatively low threshold. While this was not a cash benefit, which would require a higher disability rating, the fee waiver still enabled the State to fund veterans' dependents at a fairly generous rate.

4. UC STATE GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UPDATE AND THE CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

[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 Sarris invited Student Observer Brenda Sanchez to make remarks.

Ms. Sanchez asked the Regents to support the following bills sponsored by the UC Student Association and shared student testimonials related to each bill. Assembly Bill (AB) 79 would provide campuses with County liaisons to help students qualify for CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and other public benefits. Many students experienced food insecurity but did not know how to access resources; one UC student who experienced food insecurity did not know that they qualified for food assistance until much later. AB 850 would ensure that students

avoid unexpected institutional debt and receive clear financial notices before being removed from courses. While appealing a financial aid decision, a UC Irvine student was removed from all their classes during midterm examinations and owed unexplained fees. AB 791 would require that the cost of attendance be based on actual housing prices, which could help students budget more effectively and avoid unexpected debt. One UC student did not receive enough financial aid to cover rent and had to take out a loan. Senate Bill (SB) 98 would require that UC provide timely notification of immigration enforcement on campus. One student shared that a notification system would help their parents feel safer. SB 323 would allow all California students to complete the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) in place of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). One UC student was afraid to complete the FAFSA because it required information on the immigration status of family members. SB 271 would define childcare as a basic need and require that childcare support be provided to parenting students. At UCLA, three Early Care and Education centers served about 335 children, and families could be on the waitlist for up to three years. High childcare costs have led to students bringing their children to class, missing lectures, or dropping out of school altogether. Supporting parenting students could improve graduation rates. AB 7 would allow institutions to consider prioritizing the admission of descendants of enslaved people without violating Proposition 209. Ms. Sanchez noted that most of these bills would not impose a financial burden on UC.

Associate Vice President Kathleen Fullerton stated that, despite the undercurrent of concern in Sacramento about what was transpiring in Washington, D.C., the State Legislature was busy introducing bills and working on the State budget. UC was sponsoring five bills, more bills than in a typical year, as well as three bond measures, one general obligation bond for higher education and two companion housing measures. The Office of State Governmental Relations (SGR) was mobilizing grassroots advocates, the Regents, and President Drake, who has recently completed over 30 meetings. The UC Advocacy Network (UCAN), which sent over 7,000 emails to legislators, has added 1,200 members in the past few months. Ms. Fullerton met with campus governmental relations colleagues weekly to discuss strategies for engaging legislators regarding shared priorities, chief among them being the State budget.

Jennifer Poulakidas, Associate Vice Chancellor of Government and Community Relations at UCLA, underscored the role of UCLA's partnerships. The campus worked closely with SGR and the Office of Federal Governmental Relations and has expanded its partnership with alumni interested in advocacy by promoting UCAN and communicating UC's budget priorities. UCLA has held many town hall meetings on civic engagement topics such as State appointments and State and local ballot measures; the audience was made up mostly of alumni. Civic engagement was seen as a pathway to advocacy.

Julie Sina, Associate Vice Chancellor for Alumni Affairs at UCLA, shared that UCLA had 670,000 alumni around the world, more than half of whom lived in California. Any UCLA student who has earned a degree or UCLA Extension certificate was part of the alumni community; dues were not required. Under the leadership of Regent-designate Wang, the UCLA Alumni Association board formed a civic engagement task force to promote involvement and engagement in the local community, working closely with UCLA

Government and Community Relations as a staff partner. Alumni Affairs also amplified UC advocacy priorities through social media.

Regent-designate Wang recalled Ms. Sina's mentorship when she was a student at UCLA. In her view, UC could leverage its alumni population to galvanize support and address the perception of the University and the current political landscape. She encouraged the Board to keep this as a regular topic of discussion.

Regent-designate Wang asked the presenters about UCLA's response to the Los Angeles wildfires. The campus partnered with the mayor's office, and more than 1,000 alumni signed up to volunteer within 24 hours. This was an example of how alumni were demonstrating UC impact on communities. Ms. Sina responded that almost 3,000 UCLA alumni have volunteered at the disaster recovery center, which was still open six days per week. The center was offering free diploma replacement for alumni of any UC campus, and UCLA was providing other support regarding items that could not be recovered from the fire. Ms. Poulakidas added that the disaster recovery center was located at UCLA Research Park. The mayor's office and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) asked to use the space there, which took much time and effort to prepare. She shared Chancellor Frenk's decision to donate the space for use by local, State, and federal government, serving as a "one-stop" location for those affected by the fire. This demonstrated the campus' partnerships with the local community and all sectors of the government. Ms. Sina added that people returned to the disaster recovery center multiple times to address different issues.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Attest:

Secretary and Chief of Staff