

The Regents of the University of California

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

July 16, 2025

The Public Engagement and Development Committee met on the above date at the UCLA Luskin Conference Center, Los Angeles campus.

Members present: Regents Brooks, Hernandez, Komoto, Robinson, Sarris, and Wang; Advisory members Craven, Melton, Tokita, and Palazoglu; Chancellors Lyons and May; Staff Advisor Frias

In attendance: Regents Analyst Sheridan, Deputy General Counsel Drumm, Provost Newman, Senior Vice President Turner, Chancellors Hu and Frenk, and Recording Secretary Li

The meeting convened at 3:55 p.m. with Committee Chair Sarris presiding.

Committee Chair Sarris provided brief opening remarks, noting upcoming presentations and highlighting the significance of the Student Regent program and the role of the UC Student Policy Center.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of March 20, 2025 were approved, Regents Brooks, Hernandez, Komoto, Robinson, Sarris, and Wang 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 welcomed Regent Komoto as Vice Chair of the Committee and provided an update on systemwide external engagement efforts. She discussed UC’s work addressing antisemitism, recent outreach to key stakeholders, and the redesign of the UC homepage to highlight the University’s impact. She also described the launch of the “Speak Up for Science” initiative and a new branded research investments effort emphasizing federal support for research and innovation.

Ms. Turner previewed a video highlighting UC’s impact across California and the nation, noting its role in building pride and engagement among the UC community. Regents discussed campaign reach, alumni engagement, and metrics used to evaluate effectiveness.

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

Ms. Turner indicated that toolkits and reporting on campaign performance were in development.

3. THE STUDENT REGENTS' VOICE AT THE TABLE: ADVOCACY IN ACTION

[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 a presentation marking the 50th anniversary of the Student Regent program. Student Regent Emeritus Beharry and Student Regent Brooks reflected on the four pillars of their work: advocacy, education, communication, and innovation. They described extensive engagement with legislators, campus communities, faculty, and student organizations; advocacy on issues including basic needs, disability access, undocumented students, and research funding; and efforts to elevate student voices in policy discussions.

They also highlighted educational outreach through conferences, campus visits, mentoring, and statewide engagement; communication efforts emphasizing listening and inclusion; and innovative approaches to engagement through social media, podcasts, and new outreach tools. Regent Emeritus Beharry and Regent Brooks discussed lessons learned, advice for future Student Regents, and the program's lasting impact. They emphasized the importance of student voices in the decision-making process, highlighting discussions of disability rights, undocumented students, and parenting students, and noting the significant impacts these communities have experienced due to political challenges on campuses.

Regent Emeritus Beharry discussed the educational component of the Student Regent role, noting the extensive volume of information presented at Board meetings and the importance of translating that knowledge to students. He reported attending more than 50 conferences and presenting at over 30 events, sharing insights gained with students, faculty, and staff, and bringing student perspectives to the Board. He highlighted visits to Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, conferences for women and men of color, and campus experiences such as UC Davis programs in viticulture, the Native American museum, and veterinary school demonstrations, emphasizing efforts to support students.

Student Regent Brooks emphasized her role in providing the Board with on-the-ground campus perspectives, noting that there is often a misconception that the Board has full visibility into daily campus experiences. She described engaging with Regents to share student viewpoints on key issues. Regent Brooks reported participating in nearly 200 meetings in laboratories, classrooms, and campus spaces, engaging with faculty, students, parents, and families. She underscored her role in mentoring students and emerging leaders and empowering them to use advocacy skills to address challenges on their own campuses, while helping to build structures that support issue resolution and collective growth.

On communication and engagement, Regent Emeritus Beharry emphasized a "listening first" approach, followed by speaking truthfully and constructively. He described visiting all ten campuses, meeting with student groups, staff, alumni, and advocates, and

participating in conferences and meetings with Regent Wang. He also noted student engagement efforts during the Los Angeles wildfires.

Regent Brooks referenced participation in campus milestones, including the opening of a Latinx Success Center and a robotics center, and attendance at the Cal–Stanford Big Game.

Regent Emeritus Beharry explained that he prioritized fireside chats over large town halls to encourage one-on-one dialogue and open forums, creating space for candid feedback and amplifying voices that are often unheard. Regent Brooks highlighted collaboration across campuses, including work at UC Irvine on issues common to all ten campuses, emphasizing the collective strength of the UC system when campuses work together.

In discussing innovation, Regent Emeritus Beharry described a strong social media presence and the use of platforms such as the UC Advocacy Network and the Office of the President (UCOP), podcasts, and newsletters to reimagine the Student Regent role as accessible, responsive, and adaptive. Regent Brooks shared examples of outreach efforts, including a social media video to recruit future Student Regents and participation in the *Speech Matters* podcast, which explored civic engagement and advocacy. She noted advising students that issues often find them, rather than vice versa.

Both speakers reflected on the relationships built during their service. Regent Emeritus Beharry noted the importance of friendships formed and the availability of Regents as mentors and advisors. Regent Brooks expressed gratitude for the opportunity to build genuine relationships grounded in shared ideas and mutual respect, and reflected on the lasting impact and legacy of previous Student Regents.

Committee Chair Sarris commended the Student Regents for their extraordinary services and dedication, noting the value of their presentation as a mentoring resource for future Student Regents.

Regent-designate Craven remarked on the significance of assuming the Student Regent role, noting that he had “big shoes to fill,” and asked the outgoing Student Regents what guidance they would offer to future Student Regents. Regent Brooks emphasized the importance of belonging, noting that it can be challenging to join a governing body with the depth of knowledge and experience represented by Board members and University leaders. She stated that being seated at the table and regarded as a peer is both meaningful and affirming and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve as a Regent and fulfill the role’s purpose. Regent Emeritus Beharry advised future Student Regents to remain authentic and not attempt to emulate their predecessors, underscoring the value of individuality and acknowledging that imperfection is an important part of leadership.

Staff Advisor Frías asked the Student Regents to reflect on the most significant student strengths and challenges they observed. Regent Emeritus Beharry identified housing and food insecurity as the most pressing challenges facing students, noting that the Board has been actively addressing these issues. Student Regent Brooks added that concerns regarding research funding, particularly in light of State budget reductions, have also been

significant, along with challenges faced by student parents and students with dependents. She noted reductions in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and widespread food insecurity among students.

Both Student Regents highlighted student strengths, emphasizing the support systems formed by student organizations despite limited resources. They described tight-knit campus communities characterized by collaboration and a shared commitment to collective progress, referring to the “connective tissue” that links campuses across the UC system. Staff Advisor Frías noted that these observations aligned with feedback received from staff across the University.

4. INTRODUCING CATHARINE BAKER AND THE UC STUDENT AND POLICY CENTER

[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.]

Provost Newman introduced the item and highlighted recent leadership additions, including the appointment of Professor Christopher Witko, a distinguished political scientist from Pennsylvania State University, who would join UC on September 1, 2025, as the Executive Director of UC Center Sacramento. She then introduced Catharine Baker, the inaugural Director of the UC Student and Policy Center, noting the University’s good fortune in recruiting her. Provost Newman emphasized Ms. Baker’s extensive public service background, including her tenure as a former California State Assembly Member, and praised the Center’s early success and strong engagement.

Ms. Baker described the Center as grounded in the University’s public service mission and designed to serve as a hub for engagement within the policy-making ecosystem. She outlined two primary objectives: fostering constructive dialogue through top-tier speakers, debates, and conversations that promote civic engagement and create a public square for respectful discourse; and contributing UC expertise and innovation by connecting policymakers with UC research, faculty, and student insights.

Ms. Baker reviewed first-year milestones, including the California Leaders Speaker Series, a bipartisan conversation series on the future of California. Events featured a range of viewpoints and offered unparalleled access for students, faculty, and the public. Notable speakers included State Assemblyman James Gallagher, State Senators Brian Jones and Mike McGuire, and former Speaker of the Assembly Antonio Villaraigosa. Events were unscripted, included open question-and-answer sessions, and regularly sold out, requiring overflow space. The Center also benefited from strong media coverage through partnerships with outlets such as *Politico*.

She highlighted the Second Annual California Economic Futures Forum, a half-day conference in partnership with the UCLA Anderson Forecast. The event featured forecast authors and panel discussions across multiple industries, with attendance from legislators, the Governor’s Office, State agencies, business and labor leaders, and Regents. Regent

Reilly greeted guests, and the event received broad statewide media coverage, including by *Politico* and *CalMatters*.

She emphasized the Center's role in supporting all UC campuses by hosting dozens of briefings, conferences, and events over the past year, helping connect faculty and programs with government leaders. Examples included a UC Santa Cruz reception and a book signing for "Charging Forward: Lithium Valley, Electric Vehicles, and a Just Future," co-authored by UCSC Professor Chris Benner, highlighting faculty scholarship and opportunities for future UC Press collaborations.

Ms. Baker noted that the Center had become a welcoming home for the UC community and a trusted space for policymakers, with regular use by groups such as the Legislative Women's Caucus, GoBiz, the Energy Commission, and various legislative caucuses. The Center frequently connected policymakers with relevant UC faculty and student experts and continued to build partnerships across the Capitol community. She also referenced ongoing initiatives, including podcasts, a website to showcase UC expertise, collaboration with the California Policy Lab, a new rental program, and construction improvements at the Center. She thanked staff for creating a hospitable and effective environment, particularly at a time when some universities were reducing their presence in Sacramento.

Staff Advisor Frías commented on the value of constructive discussion and criticism grounded in a collaborative mindset. Ms. Baker invited all Regents to visit the Center.

Committee Chair Sarris underscored the importance of bipartisan dialogue in the current political climate.

Regent Robinson congratulated Ms. Baker and the team, noting that while UC had a strong federal presence in Washington, D.C., it did not yet have the same level of programming in Sacramento. He asked how similar efforts might be replicated. Ms. Baker cited examples such as books and talks, and emphasized the unique opportunity Sacramento presents as the capital of one of the world's largest economies and a leader in public policy.

Chancellor Hu suggested creating an orientation or institute for newly elected legislators, similar to programs in other states, and cited the strategic advantage of proximity to the Capitol. Ms. Baker welcomed the idea and shared that discussions had begun with the Capitol Institute on new member training, and potential training for legislative staff.

Regent-designate Craven highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and suggested events or conferences that bring students together across public policy and related disciplines. He encouraged inviting UC Davis students to participate. Provost Newman noted that increased activity was anticipated with the arrival of new leadership and engagement from public policy deans across campuses.

Regent-designate Melton emphasized the Center's role as a meeting point for all campuses and encouraged increased alumni engagement. He also suggested tracking metrics such as attendance and demographics to identify gaps in representation. Ms. Baker responded that

data collection had begun and that she looked forward to reporting back with insights and areas for improvement.

Regent Hernandez stressed the importance of preparing future political leaders and suggested developing a comprehensive roadmap for students interested in public office. Ms. Baker responded that the UC Center in Sacramento had already launched many public service careers.

5. STATE GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS UPDATE

[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 provide remarks. Ms. Sanchez expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve over the past year and reflected on the importance of collective advocacy within higher education. She emphasized that meaningful change requires sustained commitment, resilience, and a willingness to engage in complex systems while remaining grounded in shared values. Policy decisions directly affect students' lived experiences, including classrooms, housing, financial aid, and support services. She noted that student participation in policymaking contributes to more transparent, accountable, and effective systems. She provided an update on key state legislation affecting UC students and requested continued UC support for student-sponsored measures. She concluded by thanking the Regents, UC leadership, and fellow student leaders and indicated that while her term as Student Observer was ending, her commitment to public service and advocacy would continue. Committee Chair Sarris thanked Ms. Sanchez for her passion and leadership, noting that her dedication and heart would serve her well in future endeavors.

Associate Vice President Kathleen Fullerton provided a legislative update on the 2025-26 State Budget and broader advocacy efforts. She reported that proposed budget cuts were ultimately deferred, resulting in no immediate reduction to UC funding, with a three percent funding level projected for the following year and repayment deferred to 2026-27. She described grassroots advocacy efforts through the UC Advocacy Network (UCAN), coalition building, legislative engagement, and coordination with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners, and emphasized that continued advocacy with the Governor and Legislature remained essential.

Regent Reilly expressed appreciation for the comprehensive advocacy strategy and its impact.

Ms. Fullerton noted that grassroots advocacy through UCAN set records with approximately 18,000 emails sent from the UC community, supported by expanded outreach through student, staff, faculty, and alumni organizations. Early legislative engagement resulted in more than half of the Legislature signing a letter in support of higher education funding. Targeted communications and media engagement included student ambassador videos, op-eds, and coordinated efforts with the California State

University system. Direct advocacy and leadership engagement included more than 20 meetings by President Drake with legislative leaders and the Governor; numerous meetings with Regents; advocacy days with alumni and student leaders; and testimony before budget committees. Coalition building included working with labor organizations, civil rights groups, business leaders, and other external partners to support UC and higher education.

Regent Reilly expressed appreciation for the multi-pronged advocacy approach undertaken during a challenging state and federal budget environment and thanked the team for effectively engaging Regents and stakeholders.

Committee Chair Sarris echoed these remarks, emphasizing the significance of avoiding a larger proposed cut and expressing gratitude for the advocacy efforts.

Regent-designate Melton commended the breadth of the advocacy strategy, particularly alumni engagement, and encouraged continued efforts to expand and sustain alumni participation in future budget cycles.

Regent Brooks expressed appreciation for student advocacy efforts and collaboration at the Capitol, noting that student engagement had a meaningful impact and expressed her hope for continued partnership.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Attest:

Secretary and Chief of Staff