

COMMITTEE ON PLANNING & BUDGET
MINUTES
JANUARY 31, 2023

PRESENT:

Peter Atkinson, Entomology, Chair
Dana Simmons, History, Vice Chair
Reza Abbaschian, Mechanical Engineering
Subramanian Balachander, Business
Bronwyn Leebaw, Political Science
David Lo, School of Medicine
Hiroki Nishimura, Economics
Frances Sladek, MCSB

ABSENT:

Roger Lake, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Ayala Rao, Microbiology & Plant Pathology
Yadong Yin, Chemistry

Chair Peter Atkinson called the meeting to order at 11:04am.

The committee unanimously approved the January 24, 2023 minutes as written.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES/REMINDERS

Chair Atkinson indicated he attended the PhD Funding Workgroup meeting on Thursday, January 26. The workgroup is led by Provost Watkins and aims to come up with new campus policy/a framework for PhD funding/TA assignments. Senate Chair Lee and the Chair of Graduate Council, Christiane Weirauch, are also a part of this workgroup. They attended the January 26 meeting as well. Chair Atkinson, Senate Chair Lee and Professor Weirauch hope the workgroup will meet more frequently. They felt it might be a good idea to create a shared document where both P&B members and Graduate Council members could list any/all PhD funding concerns. Perhaps the document can help generate key points and language that can be included in a letter to the Provost or other administrative figures.

Chair Atkinson and Senate Chair Lee will attend the forthcoming Graduate Council meeting on Thursday, February 16. Senate Chair Lee and Professor Weirauch may attend next month's first P&B meeting on February 14.

Building on its discussion from the January 24 committee meeting, P&B spent a bit more time discussing Gillian R. Hayes' article, "It's Time for a Professionalized Research University," as Provost Watkins indicated the article was circulated to the PhD funding workgroup not as a prescriptive document but to analyze and discuss its point of view. [The research university needs professionalization \(opinion\) \(insidehighered.com\)](https://insidehighered.com/opinion/2023/01/26/the-research-university-needs-professionalization-opinion/)

P&B members agreed with Hayes' sentiment that the apprenticeship model is in need of repair.

Ph.D. students without the guarantee of tenured positions will no longer tolerate years of training with low wages. For their part, undergraduate students deserve to be taught by dedicated, well-trained, full-time teachers. And the pace and quality of modern academic scholarship necessitate expert, full-time research staff. The modern research university must be reconfigured to acknowledge the reality of the academic job market for newly minted Ph.D.s and to ensure that the work of teaching and research is mostly done by full-time, expert professionals—not those who are still in training.

Committee members believe that UC as a system has to define “what is valuable.” What is valuable may be costly. And, in this case, UC has to somehow raise funds accordingly.

P&B harkened back to its belief captured in a document drafted last month and intended for VCPBA Bomotti:

The UC mission to educate the next generation of Californians is an integrated one which involves both undergraduate as well as graduate education. The high quality of undergraduate education provided by the UC system is dependent on the quality of our graduate programs, as well as our faculty. All three – faculty, UGs and graduate students – are linked in an interdependent fashion and hence any solution to the current (and future) challenge must consider the impact on all three.

Related to this discussion, the committee referred to another article published recently in the Los Angeles Times, “To afford historic labor contract, UC considers cutting TAs, graduate student admissions.” <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-27/uc-scrambling-to-pay-big-wage-gains-for-academic-workers-grad-student-cuts-loom>

As it pertains to funding the raises ensured in the UC-UAW Contract, the article states:

Funding the raises could touch off far-reaching changes to UC’s traditional model of graduate student education, including potential reductions of teaching assistants and researchers. Decreasing their numbers could have a cascading effect by narrowing the pipeline for future faculty and industry innovators, affecting research output and diluting the learning experience of undergraduates with potentially larger class sizes and less personalized instruction.

Also, in the article, UC Chief Financial Officer Nathan Brostrom said some funding is available for researchers and postdoctoral scholars, whose jobs are generally supported by federal grants obtained by faculty. But faculty will need to incorporate the larger price tags in their contract renewals. Brostrom added that UC will build into future budgets the higher costs for teaching assistants, who are paid with state funds. But he told regents at their meeting this month that a “mismatch” between rising labor costs, insufficient revenue to pay for them and inflation could tip campuses into budget deficits in coming years.

P&B members remain concerned. If the price of UC TAs goes up, will there be less of them?

At UCLA, more than 260 faculty members have [signed a letter](#) opposing any move by UC President Drake and campus administration to impose the costs of the contracts on “the already strained finances of departments, research centers and faculty.”

The result of such “punitive austerity,” the letter said, will be a “reduction of graduate student appointments; an increase in the already high number of undergraduates per discussion section, and a correspondingly negative impact on course curriculum, undergraduate assignments and grading; the weakening of currently funded research; and ultimately fewer funded research opportunities for graduate students.”

FINALIZE QUESTIONS FOR MEETINGS WITH DEANS

More committee members proposed revisions to the current draft document that contains questions for the forthcoming meetings with Deans.

Committee members stressed the need to be specific about what information P&B wants from the Deans. P&B discussed asking for comprehensive information on costs of instruction, along with specific source of funds and how those funds are used. P&B also wants numbers related to total budgets, salaries, and benefits.

There should be questions eliciting feedback with respect to planning and budget-related challenges the Deans face. What are these challenges? And, what are the roots of these challenges?

The deadline for submitting all proposed revisions to this document is end of business on Thursday, February 2.

The meeting was called to a close at 12:05 pm.