COMMITTEE ON PHYSICAL RESOURCES PLANNING

December 19, 2022

To: Sang-Hee Lee
   Chair, Riverside Division

From: Linda Walling, Chair
   Committee on Physical Resources Planning

Re: [Systemwide Review] Proposed Revisions to Presidential Policy on Sustainable Practices

The Physical Resources Planning (PRP) Committee reviewed the Proposed Revisions to Presidential Policy on Sustainable Practices document. Overall, PRP supports the initiatives within the document and the revisions proposed. We provide the following comments.

- The PRP Committee supports the efforts for sustainable practices on all UC campuses. Perhaps we missed it, but it is not clear how the progress and use of purchased offsets for each campus is monitored and evaluated. It is also not how these sustainability initiatives are communicated to its students, faculty, and staff. More transparent processes and better communication would allow each campus to better embrace the principles of sustainability.

- The Committee expressed concern about the ability of our campus to support the energy-savings initiatives planned for LEEDs buildings. The maintenance of these systems must be considered in the planning process. One recurring limitation on our campus is having an insufficient number of staff to keep the systems working as planned. The LEEDs initiatives proposed must be more carefully aligned with future building residents. For example, LEEDs initiatives resulted in MRB1 having insufficient power to support the ultracold freezers of the faculty who moved into this building. PRP understands that this mandated the purchase of new ultracolds. The replacement of expensive functional equipment might not be considered a “green” policy.

- Throughout the proposal, one transitional strategy to achieve carbon neutrality is to purchase carbon offsets. Several questions arise. How is the use of purchased carbon offsets monitored on each campus? Are there ramifications for the heavy reliance on purchased carbon offsets? How will the UC system decrease the use of purchased carbon offsets? There is the Offsets Technical Committee in place, but it appears that projects are viewed independently. Is the impact of a project on a campus’ overall sustainability plan evaluated at the time of project discussion? Is there a mechanism to motivate campuses to implement more sustainability proactive measures rather than the use of purchased carbon offsets? This might provoke more rapid change.
• In Section V.C.10.g., the proposal suggests that the UC system should prioritize development of its own carbon offsets. Are there such plans for each campus? How are they prioritized? How are they communicated to students, faculty, and staff?

• Section III. A.1.e. We wondered why parking structures are recommended to have a "Silver" rating rather than a "Gold" rating.

• Section III B.1. The rationale behind a “2%” annual average reduction in energy use is not clear. This seems like a modest goal for energy use reduction. Furthermore, there is no timeframe for achievement of this annual reduction or what the desired end result would be (since we cannot reduce energy use to zero).

• Section III. H.1.c.i. appears to be missing.

• Section III. H.1.c.ii. The campuses and health locations will strive to increase amounts of plant-based foods. We are hoping that the campuses are seriously looking at the salt and fat content of the plant-based meat substitutes that might be used. Some of the meat alternatives are as high in fat and higher in salt than meat and their carbon-footprint is not currently understood as components are imported from around the globe and not produced locally. While avoiding meat does indeed decrease our carbon footprint, in some cases the plant-based meat alternatives are not a healthier alternative and may not be as “green” as touted.

• Section III.I.3. It is an important advance to pursue more sustainable water systems on our campuses. The use of water-to-waste systems is an admirable goal. However, the campuses must consider the quality of their city’s water system when pursuing such goals. The high salt content of the Riverside water system wreaks havoc with current autoclaves causing lost time and mandating constant and costly repairs.

• Section III.L.2.i. “will” is misspelled.

• Section III.L.2.b.i. We question the “eye-level placement of vending machines”. Will this easily accommodate the average standing human and a human confined to a wheel-chair?

• Section V.A.3.a. We strongly support the green design of new buildings and for building renovations. However, is there a mechanism to assure that a sufficient number of sustainable measures proposed in a building renovation project are actually implemented? This may be addressed elsewhere in this document. Perhaps directing the reader to the correct location of the implementation policy would be sufficient to resolve this comment.

• Section V.C.6. The revision and review process for the Framework for Incorporating Environmental & Climate Justice into Climate Action is not clearly indicated.

• Section V.D.4. Parking is expensive for our commuting students. We would like to know if parking pricing for students be adjusted or compensated to ensure affordability for all UC students.

• It was not clear if there are procedures or provisions for consultation or feedback from local Native Nations at each campus location. This should be clarified.