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RE: Statements on Contributions to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Dear Colleagues:

In February 2020, Academic Senate committees were consulted regarding the use of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) statements in faculty hiring. Senate leadership initiated this consultation in response to growing faculty concerns about administration-led directives on how DEI statements should be evaluated and prioritized in the faculty search process. Nine committees responded: Academic Freedom and Responsibility (CAFR), Academic Personnel Oversight (CAP), Affirmative Action and Diversity (AA&D), Faculty Welfare (FW), Graduate Council (GC), and the Faculty Executive Committees (FEC) of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), the College of Letters and Science (L&S), the School of Medicine (SOM), and the School of Nursing (SON). All committee responses are enclosed. After receiving this feedback, Executive Council discussed where faculty shared common ground and where there was more disagreement among perspectives. Here, we highlight central themes.

There is widespread support for creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment at UC Davis, with many committees endorsing DEI statements as contributing to a holistic approach in the evaluation of faculty candidates (AA&D, CAFR, CAP, L&S, SOM). As opined by CAFR, “Given the University of California’s institutional commitment to the pursuit of diversity and equal opportunity, the committee does not think there is a fundamental problem with asking faculty applicants to include DEI statements as part of their applications. This is akin to asking applicants to demonstrate how they will contribute to the University’s commitment to having a faculty that makes significant research or teaching contributions.”

Nevertheless, committees raise serious concerns, especially regarding the June 2019 Faculty Recruitment Authorization letter that asked Deans in their faculty searches to “use the required diversity statements by scoring them with rubrics provided by Academic Affairs, and require applicants to achieve a scoring cutoff to be considered.” Committees criticize the lack of full Senate consultation and review to inform the development of these new institutional practices for how DEI statements should be used in faculty hiring (CAFR, CAP, CAES, L&S). Many committees oppose the use of a rubric to assess DEI statements, particularly the practice of

scoring rubrics and only proceeding with candidates who reach a certain cutoff score (CAES, CAFR, CAP, FW, GC, L&S, SOM). As articulated by CAP, “The privileging of one component of a dossier to the extent of not considering some candidates who do not ‘achieve a scoring cutoff’ is at odds with holistic review, which is a best practice for minimizing bias in the search process.” There is no enthusiasm for a top-down mandated DEI rubric: An imposed rubric “could conflict with principles of academic freedom” (CAFR) and cause its own form of bias in the hiring process (CAP, FWC, GC, CAES). Some committees, however, offer support for search committees to develop their own rubrics that are integrated into meaningful departmental considerations (CAFR, CAP, L&S, SOM). There are also concerns about the usefulness of DEI statements when hiring Assistant Professors (e.g., they may not have had opportunities to develop a strong record of DEI efforts; FW, GC, L&S), that international applicants may be particularly disadvantaged (e.g., they may live in less diverse social and economic environments; GC), and of the potential for well-resourced candidates to “work the system” (CAES, L&S). Faculty request that additional guidance be provided on how to write statements, including any legal considerations (CAFR, CAES, FWC). Finally, DEI statements, although well intentioned, are not a quick fix: They neither solve deep historic, systemic, and structural reasons for the exclusion of certain groups from higher education nor replace adequate support services for students from various groups who experience academic difficulties (FW, GC).

These committee perspectives voiced in response to the Senate-initiated consultation were also reflected in two different faculty-initiated resolutions. The “First Resolution” (as it was the first of two resolutions) was submitted for a faculty-wide vote during this consultation period (**Resolved:** ‘Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statements shall not be mandatory for the appointment or for the advancement of faculty.’). This resolution failed. It was supported by 426 and opposed by 441. All 194 arguments provided by faculty in favor of and opposed to the resolution are available [here](#). This narrow defeat of the First Resolution is consistent with statements made during the consultation process, namely, that faculty are divided on whether DEI statements should be mandatory for faculty searches, as opposed to being optional or encouraged (or mandated, if desired, by a particular search committee).

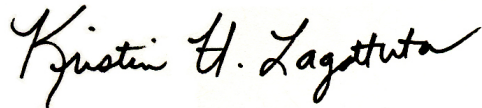
The “Second Resolution” was subsequently submitted (**Resolved:** ‘Statements describing Contributions to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are a useful part of a holistic review in the appointment of new faculty.’). This resolution passed, with 486 voting in favor and 317 voting against. All 71 arguments provided by faculty in favor of and opposed to the resolution are available [here](#). This passage of the Second Resolution confirms support for incorporating DEI statements as one of many factors considered during the comprehensive evaluation of faculty candidates. Note that this resolution does not speak to whether DEI statements should or should not be mandatory, nor does it endorse the use of rubrics.

When combining feedback from the Senate consultation process with the outcomes of the two faculty-initiated resolution votes, there is a predominant (but not unanimous) Davis Division position: **The consideration of DEI statements in the faculty hiring process is consistent with the University of California’s mission to promote diversity and equal opportunity. When submitted, DEI statements should be holistically evaluated in conjunction with evidence of research and teaching excellence. As with research and teaching statements, rubrics associated with DEI statements should be developed locally by search committees,**

be meaningfully connected to the priorities and needs of the hiring unit, and be mindful of the concerns raised above.

We appreciate the time, effort, and dedication of the hundreds of faculty members who engaged in these productive discussions and debates. The Academic Senate looks forward to working with campus leadership to determine best practices for the use of DEI statements in the hiring process at UC Davis. This approach is summarized well by CAP's recommendation that "Campus leaders and Academic Affairs work with the Academic Senate to thoughtfully reexamine how it instructs faculty to incorporate these statements within their hiring practices. Additionally, CAP recommends that Academic Affairs consult with faculty in the future regarding any potential changes to the recruitment process."

Sincerely,



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Enclosed: Input from Davis Division Committees

c: Edwin M. Arevalo, Executive Director, Davis Division of the Academic Senate