



Study Group on University Diversity – Graduate and Professional Students

In fall 2006, UC President Robert C. Dynes and then-chair of the Board of Regents Gerald L. Parsky established a Study Group on University Diversity to examine the current state of diversity at UC and identify actions that the university should take to improve diversity. In September 2007, Regents received and unanimously endorsed the findings and recommendations of the task force's overview report. Because of the broad scope of its charge — which included examining undergraduate, graduate and faculty diversity as well as campus climate — the task force formed itself into four work teams to look in-depth at these issues. The following summarizes the findings and recommendations of the work team on graduate and professional students, which found that despite recent increases in individual programs and many pockets of success and innovation, the university needs to focus greater and sustained attention on its graduate diversity efforts.

Potential for impact

UC's graduate programs produce more Ph.D.s than any other university in the nation, and therefore are uniquely situated to impact faculty diversity both at UC and nationwide. But graduate diversity at UC has implications far beyond academia. By increasing diversity in the graduate pipeline, UC is producing the leaders and researchers whose work will effect change in California, the nation and on a global level.

Status of graduate and professional student diversity

Nationally, the proportion of underrepresented minority Ph.D. recipients from U.S. universities has been increasing slowly for the past 18 years. However, graduate diversity at the University of California shows a somewhat different trend. While there was incremental progress in graduate diversity at UC between 1987 and 1994, that improvement has stalled. The proportions of underrepresented minorities enrolled in UC's graduate academic degree programs have changed little over the course of the last decade, despite enrollment growth in UC's graduate programs. These trends are of particular concern in the national context, where steady progress has been the norm.

Major findings

- Overall, UC has slightly higher underrepresented minority graduate academic enrollments than UC's comparison eight institutions. However, African American/black graduate students at UC are underrepresented relative to UC's comparison eight institutions.
- Women, although well represented at the baccalaureate level, are less well represented at successively higher levels at UC. Enrollments of women vary by discipline, with particularly low proportions of women found in science, engineering and math fields (both graduate and postdoctoral levels) and in UC's MBA programs. Particularly high proportions of women are found in some of UC's health science programs (i.e., nursing, veterinary medicine and pharmacy).
- Despite overall enrollment growth, proportions of underrepresented minorities enrolled in UC's graduate academic degree programs (14.3 percent in fall 2007) have not increased in last decade.
- Enrollments of underrepresented minorities in UC professional school programs substantially declined following SP-1 and Proposition 209. While in UC's medical schools the downward trend has been reversed, underrepresented minorities have still not attained pre-209 levels. UC's business and law programs have shown little progress in underrepresented minority enrollment rates since the mid-1990s. In fall 2007, underrepresented minorities represented 16.9 percent of U.S. citizen or permanent resident new enrollees in MD programs; 14.7 percent in JD programs enrolled; and 7.3 percent in MBA programs.

A closer look

- The proportion of underrepresented minorities at UC decreases steadily with successive levels of the academic community (e.g., from high school graduates to undergraduate students to graduate/professional students to postdocs to faculty).
- Within UC's graduate academic disciplines proportions of underrepresented minorities vary. For example, low proportions of underrepresented minorities are found in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines. However, aggregated numbers mask disparities in representation.
- Underrepresented minority graduate students are more financially needy as compared to other students. They have a higher frequency of borrowing and borrow slightly higher amounts on average in order to complete their studies. In UC's professional schools, cumulative debt for all students has risen substantially in recent years. Cumulative debt is particularly high in UC's medical schools.
- At the postdoctoral level, trends in underrepresentation are similar to that in graduate programs, but underrepresentation is more acute.

Recommendations

The work team made more than 30 recommendations in five key areas: leadership, academic planning, resource allocation and assessment, recruitment and retention, and accountability.

Highlights of these recommendations include:

- **Leadership:** Strong UC leadership is crucial to increasing diversity at post-baccalaureate levels. An example of an area where UC can provide leadership is in making diversity a part of national rankings.
- **Academic planning:** Diversity will not thrive unless it is incorporated into academic planning at the graduate, professional student and postdoctoral levels.
- **Resource allocation and assessment of departments and schools:** Resource allocation is essential to influence departmental behavior and demonstrate the university's commitment to diversity.
 - Adequate funding for pipeline programs and diversity fellowships is essential.
 - Raising graduate financial support levels for all students will help with diversity efforts, because increases in funding will have a greater impact on underrepresented minorities than non-underrepresented minorities.
- **Recruitment and retention:** Campuses and departments can do more to promote a competitive, diverse pool of applicants and retain matriculated students.
 - Given the diversity available in California's undergraduate population, and UC's responsibilities to our state and students, UC must maximize "in-reach" recruitment efforts to UC and California State University undergraduates.
- **Accountability:** Increased accountability at the campus, division and departmental levels is a key component to increasing graduate and professional school student diversity.