

SENATE HIGHLIGHTS DIVERSITY

Two recent Senate actions — the adoption of a proposed [University of California Diversity Statement](#) by the Academic Assembly and the addition of the chair of the Universitywide Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity (UCAAD) to the Academic Council roster as a guest — underscore the Senate’s commitment to equal opportunity and signal the growing importance of diversity issues to the faculty.

The Assembly adopted the Diversity Statement — originally proposed by UCAAD — at its May 10 meeting. It was later announced as a Statement of the Academic Senate at the President’s Systemwide Summit on Faculty Diversity on May 23, where campus leaders met to discuss the findings and recommendations of the President’s [Task Force on Faculty Diversity](#). The Assembly also sent the Statement to President Dynes with a recommendation that it be adopted as University policy.

The genesis of the diversity statement came last year, when UCAAD asked Academic Council to consider its proposed systemwide statement about the importance of diversity. UCAAD and Council agreed that it was an ideal moment for such a statement, particularly because the President’s Task Force had convened to conduct a comprehensive review of faculty diversity efforts at UC. Senate divisions and systemwide committees reviewed the Statement’s language, and a final version was endorsed at Council’s April 19 meeting.

The [report](#) of the President’s Task Force on Faculty Diversity was also discussed at the biannual joint meeting of the Academic Council and the Council of Chancellors on April 5.

“The report makes clear that we need to redouble our efforts and forge innovative approaches to increasing the diversity of our faculty,” notes UCAAD Chair and UCSF Professor of Psychiatry Daniel S. Weiss. “If we continue to proceed along the path we have been following, not only will we be unable to perform our core mission of serving the interests of the State of California, but also we will be unable to retain the excellence and uniqueness that has characterized the UC system.”

In April, Council invited the UCAAD Chair to sit on Council as a non-voting guest through the 2006-2007 academic year. Council has not added a member to its roster since the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) was given permanent membership status in 2003, after enjoying guest status for several years.

Professor Weiss said Council’s endorsement of the diversity statement and its invitation to UCAAD to sit in at Council meetings reflects a growing recognition that diversity is fundamental to the mission and excellence of the University. “Weaving attention to diversity into the core fabric of Senate activities will help to achieve the kind of diversity of our faculty required by the mission of the University,” he observed. “These decisions turn the words of the statement into concrete actions.”

Professor Weiss believes UCAAD's presence on Council will give more weight to the implications for diversity — not only for faculty, but also for students — in actions where such consideration might well be overlooked.

- Michael LaBriola