

University of California, San Diego

**Graduate and Professional Student Experience and
Satisfaction Committee Report**

May 2007

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**Report of the
University of California, San Diego
Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Committee
May 2007**

I. Executive Summary

In Spring 2006, Dean-Graduate Studies/Vice Chancellor-Research Richard Attiyeh and Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs Joseph Watson charged the Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) Committee to investigate issues affecting the graduate student experience in academic and extracurricular life, recommend improvements in programs and services, identify efforts that will support the diversity goals of the campus, identify campus-wide approaches to promote a supportive and engaging campus environment, and identify a Five-Year Graduate and Professional Student Life Plan (Appendix A). The committee was co-chaired by Graduate Student Derek Lomas and Professor Vistasp Karbhari. The committee reviewed available data from multiple years of graduate exit surveys and the Graduate Student Association's Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey – 2005 (Appendix B). To gain additional information and collaborate more fully, unstructured community meetings were held with each of the academic divisions and professional schools in which all interested parties were invited to participate and provide input (Appendix C).

The committee identified five areas as critically important to the graduate and professional student (hereafter referred to as G/PS) experience, well-being, and success:

1. Community - Create opportunities for students to feel a sense of belonging.
2. Academic Life - Encourage positive academic interactions between G/PS and faculty and between students within their departments and programs and across disciplines.
3. Housing - Expand housing opportunities to maximize student access, create equitable accommodation, maximize educational benefit, and build community.
4. Student Support Services - Construct and expand student support services tailored to meet the needs of G/PS and their families.
5. Communications - Expand and improve communications to G/PS regarding activities, events, policies, procedures, and funding opportunities.

To accomplish these broad goals, the committee proposes five actions that will help to ensure that recommendations found herein will be implemented in the next five years:

1. **Create a New Position:** Expand the Office of Graduate Studies' capacity to deal more effectively and directly with the student life needs of graduate students by establishing a new senior level position, reporting to the Dean-Graduate Studies, with appropriate responsibility, resources, and authority to make an immediate impact in this area by coordinating services and enabling a higher level of dedicated focus on graduate and professional student life.
2. **Evaluate Funding Mechanisms:** Determine the extent to which the Registration Fee paid by graduate students is used to effectively support the comprehensive academic and student life needs of graduate students and implement changes in fee allocation management and processes that the Dean-Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs, deem necessary.
3. **Fund Community Structures:** Implement actions to make available resources for increased funding of interdisciplinary events and spaces. Take steps to ensure that notification of events held across campus are communicated to the broad graduate and professional student community such as via a centralized web site.
4. **Develop and Apply Student Satisfaction Research:** Enhance avenues of research on G/PS life and partner with the Graduate Student Association to administer a Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Survey at regular intervals. Based on outcomes of student satisfaction research, ensure that student support services grow in concert with the G/PS population and adapt to changing needs as expressed by students via surveys, reviews of best practices, and other measures of satisfaction and outcomes.
5. **Establish a Steering Committee:** Establish a Steering Committee to regularly review progress in implementing recommendations found in this report, evaluate the effectiveness of existing, augmented, and new programs and to develop, monitor, and revise, as needed, a strategic plan for graduate and professional student life.

II. Introduction

In Spring 2006, Dean-Graduate Studies/Vice Chancellor-Research Richard Attiyeh and Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs Joseph Watson charged the Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction (GPSES) Committee to “review and make recommendations regarding the quality of graduate and professional student life at UCSD” and to “investigate issues affecting the graduate student experience in academic and extracurricular life.” Specifically, the committee mandate was to:

- evaluate the nature and quality of graduate and professional student life at UCSD both within and outside home academic programs;
- recommend improvements in programs that provide services to graduate and professional students;
- identify efforts that will support the diversity goals of the campus and encourage an inclusive and responsive environment for all students;
- identify campus-wide approaches to promote a supportive and engaging campus environment;
- develop a Five-Year Graduate and Professional Student Life Plan that will supplement the current Student Affairs Strategic Plan.

The committee was co-chaired by Graduate Student Derek Lomas and Professor Vistasp Karbhari. It consisted of 18 members including seven graduate students, two faculty, and nine staff.

III. Methodology

The committee reviewed available data from multiple years of graduate exit surveys (see <http://www-ogsr.ucsd.edu/reports/graddata/04Fall/pdf/6.6.pdf>) and the Graduate Student Association’s Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey – 2005 (Appendix B). To gain additional information and collaborate more fully, unstructured community meetings (Appendix C) were held with each of the academic divisions and professional schools in which all interested parties were invited to participate and provide input. Policies, practices, and plans of many universities across the United States were reviewed in order to identify “best practices.” Finally, committee members drew upon their own experiences to flesh out and distill issues, topics, and recommendations. Subcommittees were convened to concentrate on key areas of G/PS life. The subcommittees issued the following reports:

- Strengthening a Sense of Community and Improving Communications
- Meeting Housing Needs for Graduate and Professional Students

- Services and Programs for International Graduate and Professional Students
- Graduate and Professional Student Health and Family Services
- Cross-Disciplinary Academic Interactions
- Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentoring
- Graduate and Professional Student Transportation and Parking Services

Subcommittee reports may be found in Appendix D.

IV. The Context of Campus Life and Graduate Education at UCSD

The UCSD Campus is located in the La Jolla/University City community. With an exceptional climate and setting, UCSD is located at the heart of a regional system of canyons and mesas, with breathtaking views and access to the Pacific Ocean. According to the UCSD Master Plan Study, “growth over the past years has continually challenged UCSD to simultaneously accommodate growth and advance the quality of the physical setting.”

While the surrounding natural and built environment undoubtedly enhance the quality of life of students, it also raises a challenge since UCSD is located in a community that has not experienced typical college-town development in areas adjoining the campus. Although there is a major retail mall located near UCSD, there are no student-oriented retail, dining, or social venues within reasonable walking or bicycling distance from the areas where most of the graduate students live. Nearby rental housing is among the highest in cost in San Diego; recent condominium conversion activity has diminished rental opportunities and exacerbated the high rental cost problem. The existing graduate “affiliated” housing communities offer few of the amenities readily available to residents of typical main campus undergraduate college communities, such as stores, cafes, and recreational facilities, but have just as many of the restrictions that apply to students under 21 years of age (e.g., alcohol consumption in community rooms or outside is prohibited). These are a few of the important factors which result in the lack of a “sense of community” within the G/PS population. According to the Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Survey (Spring 2005), only 10% of graduate students “feel a sense of community.”

UCSD’s extraordinary success in less than 50 years has catapulted the campus into the highest academic ranks—the campus is widely considered to be one of the premier public universities in the nation. UCSD was ranked sixth best in the nation by Washington Monthly’s 2006 College Guide based on three categories: community service, scientific and humanistic research, and social mobility. According to the Milken Institute Study, UCSD ranked among the world’s top

universities for its process in developing and translating biotechnology into medical treatments, drugs, and other commercial applications. The campus is ranked fifth in the nation by the National Science Foundation in federal research and development obligations and expenditures. The quality and impact of the faculty is noteworthy: UCSD ranks 6th in National Academy of Sciences memberships.

The tremendous drive of a very young campus without strong social traditions, has essentially resulted in an unfortunate conundrum. Although graduate and professional students have the opportunity to study at one of the top educational institutions in the United States, known for pioneering advances in all areas, the students do not have the benefit of some of the support services and social networks found in older peer institutions.

Given UCSD's stellar reputation, it is not surprising that the campus attracts among the best and the brightest graduate students. These students come to the campus with high expectations at every level. UCSD has been highly selective in recruiting and offering admission to students in its graduate and professional programs. There were a total of 10,440 applicants for general campus graduate programs for Fall 2006. Of these, 2,576 were admitted and 1,078 enrolled. The School of Medicine received 5,238 applicants, admitted 290, and enrolled 122. The 3,740 General Campus graduate students comprise 14.9% of the student population. By 2015, the campus plans for 6,000 graduate students (a growth of 60% over an eight year period); this equates to 20% of the general campus student body. The School of Medicine and Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences plan to increase enrollments from 1,643 to 2,000 by 2015, a growth of 22%.

Because UCSD is located along the rapidly developing biotechnology and information and communications technology corridor in La Jolla, students have access to one of the greatest concentrations of research facilities and intellectual talent anywhere. There are opportunities today and in the foreseeable future for all aspects of the graduate student experience to reflect UCSD's rise as the pre-eminent research institution in the United States. With the confluence of planned growth in the graduate and professional student population through 2015 and the ability to make substantial changes through new leadership and administrative reorganization, UCSD is well positioned to initiate changes that will enhance the quality of the graduate student life. For example, the recent move that separated the functions of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research into the Office of Graduate Studies and the newly formed Office of Research Affairs will allow the new Dean of Graduate Studies to build an organization that can focus on a wide range of graduate student life issues from diversity and recruitment to graduate financial support and housing.

V. Report Structure

To ensure facilitate review and implementation, the report has been structured to provide findings and recommendations at three levels:

1. *Principal Findings and Recommendations* that address overarching and umbrella issues,
2. *Short-Term Actions* that address immediately doable actions that could result in ongoing improvements, and
3. *Subcommittee Reports* that detail the issues and recommendations raised by each of the subcommittees constituted for this study.

VI. Principal Findings and Recommendations

Principal Findings

UCSD's reputation for high caliber academic and faculty research, as well as financial support considerations, is paramount in recruiting excellent G/PS. Once here, academic and financial issues remain of critical importance, but so do concerns regarding the sense of community, social interactions, administrative and other support services, and living conditions.

UCSD is a very young campus that has had tremendous academic success; however, the campus has experienced some growing pains in non-academic areas. Over the past ten years, the undergraduate population has grown about 45% (from 14,600 to 21,350) and has nearly reached steady state. Because UCSD's growth plans show the G/PS population more than doubling, the rate of G/PS growth will be robust and will constitute the bulk of future expansion in UCSD's student population. Thus, it will be more important than ever to develop graduate programs, services, resources, and financial support along with enhancing the sense of belonging amongst students by creating opportunities for and implementing specific aspects for community building for G/PS.

The following sections summarize critical issues and potential corrective actions that can be initiated or completed within a three to five year time frame. The committee identified *Community* as the overarching concern and one that influences all of the other areas affecting the graduate experience. *Academics*, *Housing*, and *Student Support Services* were three principal areas in need of attention. *Communications* was the fifth concern, identified as an embedded topic, that can be examined within each of those contexts or separately on its own. Detailed accounts of the results of graduate student surveys and subcommittee findings are provided in Appendices B and D, respectively.

1. Community

More than any other aspect, the current lack of community at UCSD resonated with students across background, discipline, gender, and marital status. It is crucial that UCSD address this largely intangible, yet all encompassing, aspect through the creation of opportunities for community building. This building process must understand the nature and importance of diversity – the existence of many unique individuals and social groupings on the campus including men and women from different nations, cultures, ethnic groups, generations, backgrounds, skills, abilities, family status and all the other unique differences that make us who we are. These could range from the development of areas and facilities for graduate students to congregate, to establishing formal and informal group activities and events both within divisions/professional schools and across campus, to expanding the graduate intramural recreation programs. UCSD graduate programs draw from the top undergraduate students, often coming from much older and well established peer schools which already have strong traditions, links to alumni groups, and developed graduate and professional student communities. Our students expect the same, if not more, avenues fostering a sense of community at UCSD that they found at their undergraduate universities. In addition, the campus lacks a “home base” for all graduate/professional school students—a place that can address the multiple and complex needs of graduate students. The Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) is currently viewed primarily as a resource for administrative matters that the academic department or program cannot or is not designed to address, rather than as a resource for various concerns of student life and the different stages of one’s graduate experience. The recent separation of responsibilities for graduate studies from research affairs creates a unique opportunity to strengthen and expand the resources and responsibilities of OGS to enable greater attention to support functions of G/PS life.

2. Academics

While most students recognize the tremendous opportunity of studying at one of the top universities in the United States and acknowledge that UCSD faculty are leading researchers in their areas of expertise, they also express a growing need for a dynamic curriculum, faculty mentorship, and increased transparency and fairness in areas ranging from financial support to research opportunities. Because graduate and professional students have come to expect excellence in their academic programs, faculty are likewise expected to teach well, be accessible, mentor, and provide career support. There is a sense of disappointment when expectations are not met. Given rapid developments in established fields and the growing emergence of

new multi-disciplinary fields, there is an increasing call for updated curricula.

Students are aware of funding practices and levels of support between departments and are often upset over perceived inequalities. Because all students have the same basic expenses related to staying in a relatively expensive city, students feel that levels of support should be also roughly the same. In addition, there is continued frustration when there is ambiguity related to a department or research advisor's financial commitment through a students' normative time to degree.

The pioneering research being conducted at UCSD is diverse and often multi-disciplinary, and the Chancellor's emphasis on interdisciplinary research as one of her foci, present significant opportunities to promote interdisciplinary events for students and for the development of novel ways to encourage and promote interdisciplinary interactions across the G/PS experience.

3. *Housing*

Given the increasing shortage of affordable housing in the proximity of campus, it should be no surprise that the need for increased G/PS housing was one of the key issues raised. The committee recognizes that in many ways the solution of this would go a long way towards enhancing G/PS life. Since a large percentage of G/PS come from outside the local region and State and most incoming students have not yet established ties to their department, the campus, to one another, or to the larger community, it is important that UCSD offer campus housing to incoming graduate students at the beginning of their graduate student careers. The committee believes that early placement will enhance student recruitment and maximize the educational and social benefits that on-campus housing provides the G/PS. Anecdotal evidence from peer institutions suggests that the G/PS experience is significantly enhanced through the non-academic interactions developed through living in close proximity with other G/PS students. G/PS student housing at UCSD should be expanded through constructing additional new housing, reallocating housing allotments, and revising methods used to set priorities, occupancy lengths, and wait lists. Together, these efforts would provide increased opportunities for G/PS to live on campus, establish a community of their peers, and reap the benefits of having affordable housing while keeping in close proximity to their research labs or campus offices. Currently, graduate and family housing communities lack substantial G/PS focused retail, dining and social venues. Future planning of residential areas should include construction of new graduate housing on the west campus. Furthermore, construction of additional units at Mesa and Coast Affiliated Housing Communities could be accomplished by increasing density. In addition to new G/PS housing that

will provide 800 more beds in Fall 2007, New development, redevelopment, and renewal of housing ought to emphasize the provision of more amenities attuned to meeting the needs of G/PS. These efforts would serve to revitalize the campus while assisting in the development of a stronger sense of community and belonging.

4. *Student Support Services*

With a rapidly growing G/PS population, student support services must grow commensurately. While UCSD has made tremendous strides in recognizing and meeting the service and retention needs of its undergraduate student population, there is an increasing gap between perceived service needs specific to G/PS and those that are actually available. According to the 2005 GPSES Survey, over half of the respondents reported that they “sometimes” to “frequently” felt impairment due to stress with academic concerns with being cited as causing the most stress. It is perhaps telling of the environment that roughly 40% of the students reported that they have considered psychological counseling at UCSD and 24% have actually sought counseling services while students at UCSD. Expansion of Psychological and Counseling Services counseling and wellness programs is essential. The high stress levels reported by G/PS require that stress prevention and management as well as wellness promotion become priorities necessary to meeting the health needs of G/PS. The psychological and counseling interventions need to be addressed with culturally and socially appropriate approaches reflecting the diversity of the campus. Continued research on student satisfaction and experience can be particularly useful in identifying service gaps and needs.

Issues related to wellness of spouses and families have only recently been raised as a critical issue facing academic institutions nationally. UCSD is well placed to provide national leadership in this area through provision of wellness support not only for the enrolled G/PS, but also for their immediate families. In a similar vein, resolution of issues related to infant and child care needs to be more broadly recognized as a need that requires attention as part of UCSD’s comprehensive student support strategies and an area where appropriate action is critically needed. Following the visionary establishment of an International Cooperative Nursery School by Friends of the International Center in 1965 and the UCSD Early Childhood Education Center in the early 1980’s, the campus is again presented with an opportunity to support childcare for G/PS.

Just as student retention has become increasingly important at the undergraduate level, the issue needs to also be addressed at the G/PS level. Most undergraduate students who do not complete their degrees cite academic problems. In contrast non-academic concerns (e.g., financial support, family pressures) are primary factors that graduate and

professional students cite for not completing their degrees. This emphasizes the crucial need for enhanced levels of G/PS services and financial support.

5. *Communications*

Although many current activities and resources at UCSD meet some of the needs highlighted earlier, there is both a lack and an over-abundance of information combined with a sometimes weak information dissemination strategy that makes the search for information extremely difficult and, at times, unfruitful.

UCSD is known for its excellence in a large number of fields and this provides unique opportunities for G/PS to expand their academic horizons and for training outside the narrow confines of their specialties. However, it also requires the development of novel ways of informing the campus at large. Partly because of the geographic expanse over which the campus spreads, there is a difficulty in keeping abreast of all activities. The enormous strides made by centers such as Calit2 in developing novel information systems could provide unique platforms to not only address the issue of information availability, but also initiate new ways of using means of technical communications to build more closely knit G/PS communities. It is emphasized that while communications enhancements do not explicitly build community (or address aspects 2-4), they are crucial to enable G/PS to gain access to all that UCSD has to offer and thereby implicitly improve the G/PS experience.

Beyond technical solutions, other ways of addressing the communications challenge must be found. Orientation activities for incoming G/PS have increased over the past few years, yet the unique challenges faced by UCSD students (including those mentioned above) make it necessary to have more extensive orientations with emphasis not only on academics but also those associated with student life. A potentially successful model is suggested by the international student community. The committee was surprised to note strong and supportive connections inherent in students coming from international locations, connections which were set and fostered by their own groups.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were made by graduate and professional students who met with the committee and by committee members themselves. These are detailed in later sections and appendices. Following are overarching recommendations that affect multiple areas of concern that were raised during the committee's deliberations:

1. Reassess and augment current staff resources to meet the increasing needs of G/PS. Given the increased G/PS population and the plans for further increases over the next eight years, it is believed that a new senior level position, reporting to the Dean-Graduate Studies, needs to be created with the requisite authority and resources to make an immediate impact by coordinating services and enabling a higher level of dedicated focus on G/PS life. It is stressed that this position must work in concert with the Assistant Vice Chancellor-Student Life who is a direct report to the Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs in order to enhance and focus efforts and services to ensure that matters of importance to the G/PS sector of UCSD's student population have a champion and a specialized resource. While this individual is expected to be a leader, innovator, and advocate for graduate students and the programs that serve them, it is anticipated that additional assistance within OGS will also be dedicated to meet requisite needs, including those of coordination with existing support functions through UCSD, implementation of recommendations, best practices and appropriate actions to improve G/PS life, development of processes and programs to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of aspects being implemented, and maintenance of strong ties with the Graduate Student Association and programs that serve UCSD students (e.g., Student Health Services, Psychological and Counseling Services, Career Services, and Office for Students with Disabilities).
2. Ensure more effective distribution and use of the registration fee paid by graduate students through a review of current registration fee allocations by the Dean of OGS and the Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs. They should determine whether changes are needed to better meet current and future needs for a supportive G/PS experience at UCSD and should direct staff to implement new policies and practices as needed.
3. Implement actions to make resources available for increased funding of interdisciplinary events and spaces that would serve to build G/PS communities. Take actions to ensure that notification of events held across campus are posted on a centralized web-site and other communication platforms that would be attractive to and highly utilized by the G/PS population. Support and replicate successful existing structures for graduate community, such as Porter's Pub and departmental "happy hours."
4. Establish a Steering Committee to regularly review progress in implementing recommendations found in this report, evaluate the effectiveness of existing, augmented, and new programs. The committee should develop, monitor, and revise, as needed, strategic plans for G/PS life. It is recommended that a faculty member designated by the Dean of OGS and a graduate student designated by Graduate Student Association (GSA) co-chair the committee. Other

committee members would include at least two representatives of GSA, at least two divisional deans, the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Life, and the proposed new professional reporting to the Dean-Graduate Students. It is anticipated that the committee would meet monthly and would report on a quarterly basis to the Dean-Graduate Studies, the Vice-Chancellor Student Affairs, and the Chancellor. In order to ensure continuity of the functions of the committee and make certain that it has the requisite authority and responsibility; it is recommended that the committee be constituted as either a standing joint committee or a special committee of the Academic Senate, with student representatives having full voting rights.

- 5 Expand research practices regarding the nature of G/PS life. In partnership with the Graduate Student Association, the OGS should administer a Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Survey at regular intervals. This provides the means for assessing the effectiveness of the implemented changes and ensures that needs of the growing G/PS population are recognized, updated, and addressed. Other research should include a cost-of-living survey and study of best practices with comparable universities for the expressed purpose of implementing these practices.

VII. Short Term Actions

The recommendations provided in this section highlight actions that should be taken in the short-term to meet specific issues mentioned as the “committee mandate” in the charge letter. Rather than provide an extensive list of recommendations, the committee has selected those that in its opinion would have the maximum immediate effect, while also providing mechanisms for further research and assessment of additional measures.

1. Emphasizing the importance of communal spaces within and around buildings and open spaces. Review the current availability of indoor/outdoor informal “meeting” and social areas, recognizing ‘dead space’ (e.g., the Geisel Library pavilion) that can be invigorated as socially active spaces. It appears less likely that G/PS will be drawn to a major, centralized venue such as the Price Center, but rather to smaller venues that would be attractive to a more mature student. Improve the availability of outdoor seating, electrical access, and coffee and food carts that stimulate community formation. Improve accessibility between Mesa Housing and the rest of the campus. Finally, ensure that departments have dedicated graduate student lounge areas. This is important not just for existing facilities, but in the planning of new buildings.
2. Provide additional emphasis on the critical importance of a true mentorship on the part of graduate research advisors towards their

- students and develop programs and resources for faculty to enhance skills in mentorship of G/PS both for academic and support situations, such as those related to career development and employment.
3. Increase opportunities for interaction between alumni and G/PS as a means of building both community and a support system. This could also assist in other areas such as recruitment, development of specific programs, and even for the generation of funds and resources targeted for G/PS activities. This is particularly important for the development of non-academic options for G/PS.
 4. Develop grant programs for the improvement of G/PS life in a manner similar to that currently being done through the Triton Community Programming Fund. Advertise this type of program in a way so that the G/PS are able to learn and access this type of information.
 5. Increase cross-cultural graduate student interaction. Develop new programs to support and encourage diverse cultural and social groups of G/PS to be established and developed. Promote the diversity of the campus to create an inclusive and welcoming environment. Increase collaboration across disciplinary boundaries through the establishment of special seminar or lecture series, as well as by providing opportunities for increased collaboration between students.
 6. Improve communication to students by establishing a well-organized, accessible central “clearing-house” for information related to G/PS life and resources available to G/PS. Involve graduate department advisors so that they can more widely publicize information and to ensure that these advisors are informed of relevant on-campus activities and events. Information about valuable resources, activities, events, and programs is not easy to access or promote amid the “information overload” reported by many students.
 7. Evaluate departmental orientation programs. Priorities should be given to the acclimating needs of first year G/PS, emphasizing access to university resources and supporting social connectivity. Some programs currently support skills development during this time, which could be more widely considered. At present, many students report that many hours of orientation are seemingly unnecessary restatements of written procedures and rules.
 8. Emphasize the academic importance of a strong residential community. Explore new housing policies that give priority to first year G/PS, limit occupancy to cycle the opportunity to reside in affiliated housing, and increase social connectivity. Support the formation of G/PS activities off-campus in areas of higher density of G/PS off-campus housing, for example in the Hillcrest and North Park neighborhoods. Housing communities are currently fragmented because of the need to find housing immediately upon arrival to UCSD, prior to making social connections.

9. Promote and extend health and wellness services and activities to G/PS. A great majority of the G/PS are on campus year round conducting research and writing. Access to RIMAC and participation on intramural teams should not be discouraged due to high costs to G/PS not enrolled in summer courses. Consider extending transportation services to locations such as the Mission Bay Aquatic Center and the local beaches to promote wellness and encourage activity away from the labs and offices.
10. Expand services and increase funding resources deemed critical by G/PS such as psychological and counseling services and child care. Balancing the stresses of academic, financial, and familial pressure overcomes many G/PS. Access to counseling services should not be postponed due to under-staffing of psychologists. Child care services should be located near affiliated housing and the campus, costs commensurate with the earnings of G/PS, and offer part-time and half-day services to accommodate the schedules of G/PS.

While the ten actions listed above do not comprise a comprehensive five-year plan, the committee felt that it was more important to advocate specific steps that could be taken on an immediate and continuing basis to improve G/PS life at UCSD. It was felt that initiation of a process through these, backed up by the establishment and empowerment of the committee (as suggested in recommendation 4 in section 6) would actually serve UCSD better than a plan without immediate implementable steps.

It is, however, emphasized that these ten aspects address the mandate provided to the committee in broad-ranging and multiple faceted fashion, as depicted in the following table:

Mandate	Action Item									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Evaluate the nature and quality of graduate and professional student life at UCSD both within and outside home academic programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommend improvements in programs that provide services to graduate and professional students		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Identify efforts that will support the diversity goals of the campus and encourage an inclusive and responsive environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identify campus-wide approaches to promote a supportive and engaging campus environment;	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop a Five-Year Graduate and Professional Student Life Plan that will supplement the current Student Affairs Strategic Plan	Through initiation of the above, backed up by the establishment and empowerment of the committee (as suggested in recommendation 4 in section 6)									

VIII. A Vision of Graduate and Professional Student Life at UCSD in 2012

UC San Diego is an internationally renowned research university, highly desirable to graduate students of all disciplines for its world-class faculty, diversity of thought and people, and well-rounded academic lifestyle.

Much of the UC San Diego education comes from the vibrant surrounding community of intellectually inspired peers. On a given afternoon, students might spend their time listening to a public lecture or hashing out project plans with a collaborator underneath the eucalyptus trees. Across disciplines, students have personal access to faculty, department chairs, deans and visiting scholars, commonly encountered at the regular public academic/social events. The personal

relationships cultivated between graduate students and their faculty mentors accelerate the production of important research. The highly-motivated undergraduate population becomes increasingly accessed as a pool for talent to assist graduate research projects.

Students visit the library as a place to study, research, and socialize in an academic context. An indoor coffee-shop with a view serves as an academic social center on campus. Computer labs are always kept up-to-date with important software, and workshops are held regularly to help students learn relevant computer skills to their discipline.

Students have a number of culinary choices during the day, due to the proliferation of ethnic food carts on campus. The surrounding eucalyptus groves have been equipped with benches to facilitate community development around the desire for a good cheap lunch. Outdoor lunch meetings are common. Multiple coffee-shops around campus provide numerous locations to sit and study.

First year G/PS students often host informal dinner parties at their Mesa apartments, cooking barbecues while the weather is warm. The Mesa coffee shop is a great place to “run into” people. At night, a number of students can be found hanging out at Regents Pizza across the street for some late night pizza or a beer. Housing is easily obtained on-campus, at the Mesas, or from departing grad students housed in Hillcrest or other areas. More and more people bike around the campus, pedaling from home or arriving via public transit.

Students are accustomed to hanging out around the well-lit campus at night, grabbing pizza or a drink at Porter’s Pub after work in the lab or office. Students could attend one of the many film screenings on campus, hosted by an academic group or film society, or stick around to see a student performance or reduced price ArtPower! event. Afterwards, a late night shuttle is available to take students home safely.

Healthy lifestyles are a notable part of the UC San Diego experience with its outdoor-friendly weather. Students form groups to go to the beach, surfing on the weekends. Improved access to La Jolla Shores and Black’s Beach results in a number of events being hosted on the beach. Students congregate around campus—but also have a significant online community, posting events and housing offers. A single location online also directs students to find the relevant support services they need, from psychological counseling to child care—or they could just ask their grad advisor.

Writing is recognized as a common skill at UCSD. Student publications have flourished, both print and online, as a result of cross-UC publication practices. Students become aware of research at other schools and compete to submit their own writing. Conferences are commonly held at UC San Diego, due to the intellectual atmosphere and appealing climate. Of course, many students plan to

pursue non-academic career opportunities, and there is notable entrepreneurial activity on campus.

UC San Diego is styled as a campus community that supports interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration across the Arts, Humanities, and Sciences. Increasingly, students are able to engage in group projects with students of other disciplines. An individual student's network extends beyond UC San Diego to the other University of California schools in particular. Travel opportunities abound, to domestic and to overseas universities, with an equally large number of students studying at UC San Diego from abroad. These divergent experiences and new understandings contribute to the variety of political organizations that complement the increasingly cosmopolitan university experience at UC San Diego.

APPENDIX A Committee Charge Letter

SAN DIEGO: OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR-STUDENT AFFAIRS
(858) 534-4370

SAN DIEGO: OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
(858) 534-3555

May 8, 2006

DEREK LOMAS, Visual Arts graduate student (Co-Chair)
VISTASP KARBHARI, Structural Engineering faculty member (Co-Chair)
RAMON ALDECOA, School of Medicine
MICHAEL ALLER, IR/PS graduate student
KRISTOPHER BARBEE, Bioengineering graduate student
MENZIES CHEN, Bioengineering graduate student
CYNTHIA DAVALOS, Special Asst. to the VCSA
JONA FEINBERG, Communication graduate student and OGSR Intern
VALERIE HARTOUNI, Communication faculty member
TIM JOHNSTON, Office of Graduate Studies
REBECCA KAASA, Theatre and Dance graduate student
CAROL LARKIN, Graduate Coordinator History
JEANNE MANESE, Psychological and Counseling Services
NANCY MAPUSAO, Campus Community Centers
BOB MIFFLIN, Bioengineering graduate student
JUDITH O'BOYLE, Campus Planning Office
KAROL PREVITE, Graduate Coordinator ECE
CECILIA RIVAS, Ethnic Studies graduate student
CRAIG SCHMIDT, Career Services

SUBJECT: Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction
Committee

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this committee to review and make recommendations regarding the quality of graduate and professional student life at UCSD. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The committee will meet regularly to investigate issues affecting the graduate student experience in academic and extracurricular life. The first meeting is scheduled for:

**Friday, May 12, 2006
11:30 – 1:00 (lunch at 11:30; meeting at 12)
Faculty Club, Room 6**

The committee will draw upon existing resources, best practices, institutional research, and the newly administered Graduate and Professional Student Experience survey to

Graduate and Professional Student
Experience and Satisfaction Committee
May 5, 2006
Page 2

further develop campuswide approaches to better serve our graduate and professional students. The committee mandate is to:

- evaluate the nature and quality of graduate and professional student life at UCSD, both within and outside home academic programs;
- recommend improvements in programs that provide services to graduate and professional students;
- identify efforts that will support the diversity goals of the campus and encourage an inclusive and responsive environment for all students;
- identify campuswide approaches to promote a supportive and engaging campus environment;
- develop a “Five-Year Graduate and Professional Student Life Plan” that will supplement the current Student Affairs Strategic Plan.

Your recommendations should include both short- and long-term actions the campus could undertake to enhance graduate student life.

To aid the committee in its work, a number of campus and systemwide studies will be made available to the committee. We would also encourage the committee to consult broadly with current students, other campus constituencies, and alumni for opinions and suggestions.

We would appreciate receiving your report by the end of Fall Quarter 2006.

We look forward to attending an early meeting to clarify the charge and to answer any questions the committee members may have.

Thank you again for agreeing to undertake this task that is so important for the success of our graduate programs.

Sincerely,

Richard Attiyeh
Dean of Graduate Studies

Joseph W. Watson
Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs

c: Chancellor Fox
GSA President

APPENDIX B

Executive Summary of the UCSD 2005 Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey

Andrew Stringfellow, Dana Dahlstrom, & Laura Kwinn (Graduate Student Association)

Foreword

The 2005 Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey was designed and conducted by a handful of volunteers in an attempt to understand all aspects of graduate and professional student life at UCSD. This is the first survey of its kind on campus and one that we hope will be part of a long-term effort to improve the quality of graduate education.

This survey and summary report are intended to identify, in concrete terms, graduate and professional student perceptions of their social, emotional, and educational experience at UCSD. Thus, this report offers no specific recommendations; rather, it is descriptive and highlights novel findings as well as areas in need of improvement. It is our hope that substantive changes, where necessary, will be further investigated and proposed by the Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Committee (<http://graduatestudentexperience.ucsd.edu>)

With over 170 questions and 1,600 respondents, the survey contains a wealth of data of which only a portion is presented here. Researchers interested in further exploring and analyzing the data may contact Andrew Stringfellow (astringf@ucsd.edu).

Introduction

The Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Survey is the first comprehensive survey of the graduate and professional student experience at UCSD. It comprises 178 questions, and was administered in the spring of 2005. A very high response rate of 37.2% was obtained. Overall, the respondents to the Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey provide a very representative sample of the student body. Thus, the response data are likely to be representative of the student body as a whole.

Respondents

The graduate and professional student body at UCSD is quite diverse. Nearly two-fifths come from within California, and slightly more come from elsewhere in the US; nearly one-fifth received their previous degrees abroad. Over half of respondents enrolled in their programs within a year of completing their previous

degree, while one-fifth waited two or more years before enrolling. The average age of students is about 28; although this varies by division of study, the overall average age for each division fits within a relatively narrow five-year band. Nearly three-fifths of respondents are single, while approximately two-fifths are married or otherwise partnered. As diverse as the background of graduate and professional students are their daily lives—the amount of time spent in class, in research, teaching, studying, writing, and working non academic jobs varies based on type and level of degree pursued. Further, for research doctorate students (the bulk of the student body and respondents to this survey), time spent on each of these varies by the year of study. Overall, then, the UCSD graduate and professional student body are quite varied in where they come from and in what they do while here.

General Results

General Experience

Overall, over two-thirds of graduate and professional students are satisfied with their academic experience at UCSD, and nearly two-thirds would again choose to attend UCSD. This is generally on par with other graduate institutions (Northwestern¹, Carnegie Mellon², Ohio State³), which range from 63-72% on similar measures; this is, however, markedly lower than overall satisfaction reported by undergraduates on UCUES (84%). However, only about half of graduate and professional students agree that UCSD has met their expectations. This fifteen-point discrepancy between overall satisfaction and programs meeting expectations may arise from much lower satisfaction with the social and cultural experience at UCSD: less than two-fifths find the social experience satisfactory, and less than one-third find the cultural experience so. Only about one-third feel a sense of belonging at UCSD, and fewer than one-third find sufficient opportunities for involvement on campus. Strikingly, only 10% of graduate and professional students feel a connection to the campus community, and nearly two-thirds (64%) do not feel a connection. This social satisfaction and connection/belonging are low in comparison to comparable survey: the undergraduate reports (UCUES) show a sense of belonging more than double the graduate rate; other graduate institutions (Northwestern, Carnegie Mellon, Ohio State, Stanford⁴) generally report social satisfaction in the 55-60% range—markedly higher than the 38% found at UCSD. Thus it is possibly the case that the somewhat negative

¹ Northwestern's Graduate Students: Perspectives on Academic and Student Life
(<http://www.adminplan.northwestern.edu/ir/reports/grad99exec.PDF>)

² Results of Graduate Student Survey—Spring 2000
(<http://www.cmu.edu/adm/gpo/survey/results'00.html>)

³ The Graduate Quality of University Experience (G-QUE);
(<http://gradsch.osu.edu/Depo/PDF/GQUE/>)

⁴ Graduate Quality of Life at Stanford Survey
(<http://gsc.stanford.edu/Advocacy/Surveys/GradQualityOfLife/>)

“extracurricular” experience of graduate and professional students negatively impacts their overall UCSD experience.

Program Satisfaction

As above, students are generally satisfied with their academic experience at UCSD. However, sentiment is quite varied about specific aspects of the program environment. Most students find the working environment within their programs collegial, and most students understand what is required of them to graduate. Fewer than half feel their programs make a sufficient effort to foster a sense of community, and only 38% feel their programs provide an adequate social experience (on par with the overall satisfaction with social experience reported above)—and the majority feel a graduate student lounge area is important. Students generally find their programs less-than-flexible for personal responsibilities, and fewer than one-third find their programs encourage career diversity. Lastly, nearly half (46%) feel their programs do not allow sufficient student input into department decision-making (such as faculty hires and program requirements). As above, then, it appears that although graduate and professional students are academically satisfied, when it comes to “extracurricular” aspects of their training environment (funding, flexibility during study, career counseling, student input), there is room for improvement.

Mental Health

The state of mental health of graduate and professional students is somewhat poor. Nearly one-half of respondents are sometimes or frequently overwhelmed by stress, and over one-tenth may be experiencing symptoms of clinical depression. The biggest stressor is academic program, followed closely by the future/careers. Substantial numbers of students are also stressed by finances and “other” topics. Two-fifths of respondents have considered seeking counseling while enrolled in their programs, and nearly one-quarter have actually sought counseling (with nearly four-fifths of those who have sought counseling using Psychological and Counseling Services). The frequency with which graduate & professional students seek counseling is greater than the undergraduate rate—although the relatively poor state of graduate and professional student mental health is not surprising; indeed, it is quite commensurate with results reported by UC Berkeley in 2004⁵.

Research Mentor Relationship

For students pursuing research degrees, the mentor relationship with their advisor is immeasurably important. 72.3% of survey respondents reported having a research advisor. Nearly three-fourths of respondents feel comfortable suggesting

⁵ Berkeley Graduate Student Mental Health Survey
(<http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~gmhealth/reports/>)

their own research directions to advisors, feel supported by labmates, feel their advisor values their work, and feel their advisor is available when needed. Somewhat fewer (63%) feel they receive sufficient feedback from their advisors. Overall, the results show that the majority of students are quite happy with the relationship with their advisors, and perhaps this explains in part why students report a relatively high degree of satisfaction with the academic experience at UCSD. It should be of concern, however, whether the nearly one-fifth of students who are dissatisfied with the mentor relationship are at special risk of attrition.

Differences in Experience

Differences in UCSD experience were examined for eight different variables (division of study, degree sought, year of study, gender, ethnicity & citizenship, sexual orientation, disability status, and students with families; for more information, see *Appendix II of the general report*), and were calculated in five areas (general experience, program satisfaction, mental health, connection to UCSD, and, for those with research mentors, mentor relationship; for more information, see *Appendix III of the general report*).

Division of Study

There many reliable differences in student experience base on division of study (Arts, Biological Sciences, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, IR/PS, Physical Sciences, School of Medicine/SOM, Social Sciences).

- Students in Arts & Health Sciences reported substantially higher satisfaction with their general experience at UCSD, and SOM students reported a lower satisfaction than others.
- Students in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences experienced more stress than their counterparts in other divisions; additionally, students in Biological Sciences also reported somewhat elevated stress, although not so great as Arts, Humanities, nor Social Sciences students.
- Students in Health Sciences were by far the most satisfied with their academic programs, and students in Biological Sciences & IR/PS also showed high satisfaction; on the other end, students in Humanities, Social Sciences, and SOM showed relatively low program satisfaction.
- For connection, SOM and to a lesser extent IR/PS students felt less connected to UCSD than students in other divisions.
- For mentor relationship, Humanities and Arts students more satisfied (and Social Sciences students were marginally more satisfied overall as well), and Engineering students were least satisfied.

Degree Sought

There were several differences in experience based on degree level (doctorate⁶ or masters⁷), and degree type (research⁸ or professional⁹).

- For mental health, students seeking a professional doctorate reported significantly less stress about the future than any other degree type.
- There was a marginal difference in program satisfaction: overall, students seeking professional doctorates were least satisfied with their programs and master students in professionally-oriented programs seemed most satisfied.
- For sense of connection to UCSD, research doctorate students reported a relatively higher sense of belonging (it should be remembered that overall, *all* graduate and professional students feel very disconnected from UCSD), and professional doctorate students reported an extremely low sense of connection to UCSD as a group.
- For mentor relationship, research masters students were less satisfied: for every question composing the mentor relationship factor, and they reported marginally lower satisfaction than doctorate students (time spent with advisor, advisor availability, sufficient feedback received, work is valued, comfortable suggesting research directions).

It is also possible to summarize the differences in experience by simpler variables.

- For mental health, students seeking research-oriented degrees experience more stress than students seeking professionally-oriented degrees.
- For connection, research students feel more connected to campus.
- For program satisfaction, research students are somewhat more satisfied than professional students.
- And for mentor relationship, doctorate students are more satisfied than master students.

Year in Program

Quite clearly the experience of graduate & professional students changes over time (1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, or “nth” year).

- For general experience, 1st year students reported higher satisfaction than students in any other year of study.
- Regarding program satisfaction, 1st year students felt their programs fostered a greater sense of community and encouraged a greater diversity of career options than did later students.
- For connection, later students reported feeling more connected than junior students.
- There were also effects of year in program on mental health: later-year students experienced more stress about their future and finances.

⁶ PhD, DMA, & MFA, MD, EdD, & PharmD

⁷ MA, MS, MAS, MBA, MEd, MEng, & MPIA

⁸ PhD, MFA, MA, & MS

⁹ DMA, MD, EdD, PharmD, MAS, MBA, MEd, MEng, & MPIA

Gender

Student gender showed two effects.

- First, male graduate and professional students reported a slightly better general experience at UCSD—a small, but reliable effect.
- Much more strikingly: for mental health, female students reported experiencing markedly more stress than male students. On further exploration, this effect held for every single mental health variable: stress due to academic program, finances, career/future plans, and other stressors, frequency of feeling overwhelmed, whether counseling was considered, and whether counseling was actually sought.

Ethnicity & Citizenship

Ethnic background¹⁰ & citizenship¹¹ were reliably related to differences on all summary measures except mentor relationship.

- For general experience with UCSD, there was a marginally reliable difference: underrepresented minority respondents reported somewhat less satisfaction.
- For mental health, underrepresented minorities reported experiencing substantially more stress than white/Asian and international students; in fact, across-the-board, underrepresented minorities reported more stress about their programs, their future/careers, finances, and other topics, are more likely to feel overwhelmed, and are more likely than average to have considered seeking counseling).
- For program satisfaction, underrepresented minorities reported lower satisfaction than white/Asian respondents.
- For connection to UCSD, international students expressed a stronger connection than either white/Asian or underrepresented minority students (who did not differ from each other).

Sexual Orientation

To our knowledge, this information is not collected elsewhere at UCSD. Eighty-three (83) respondents (5.4%) identified themselves as gay/lesbian, bisexual, or otherwise claimed sexual minority status; if this trend holds across the student body, this extrapolates to 233 individuals.

For the summary factors, sexual orientation showed a single effect: for mental health, LGBTQ students reported experiencing more stress than their heterosexual counterparts. LGBTQ students experienced more stress related to

¹⁰ White or Asian US citizens & permanent residents vs. underrepresented minority US citizens & permanent residents

¹¹ Non US citizens or permanent residents

academic program, finances, and “other” topics, reported feeling overwhelmed more often, and considered seeking counseling at a higher rate than their heterosexual counterparts.

Disability Status

Students with disabilities (physical or learning) represented 3.8% of survey respondents (59 people); this predicts that there are approximately 163 graduate & professional students with some form of disability. Although this information is ostensibly recorded by the Office of Students with Disabilities/OSD, it appears likely that the results of this survey provide a more accurate census of disabilities in the graduate & professional student population: only 42% of disabled students report that they have disclosed their disability to OSD, and only 43% report disclosing their disability to their program. All told, only 53% of students with disabilities appear to have disclosed their disability to either OSD or their program. It should also be noted that only 6% of students with disabilities were referred to OSD by their programs, and possibly as a result, only 50% of students with disabilities report that their disabilities have been accommodated.

There were three differences between students with disabilities and non disabled students on the summary measures:

- Students with disabilities reported experiencing more stress (which mainly seems to arise from stress due to their academic programs)
- Disabled students were marginally less satisfied with their general experience at UCSD
- Finally, students with disabilities were less satisfied with their programs (however, as students with disabilities are disproportionately distributed across division of study; when division of study is factored, the overall difference in program satisfaction is no longer reliable).

Students with Families

To our knowledge, this information is not recorded elsewhere at UCSD. One-hundred respondents (6.4%) reported having children; this predicts that there are approximately 276 graduate & professional students with children. Eighty-nine (5.7%) respondents reported having dependent children; this predicts 245 graduate & professional students have children at home. More than half of students with children reported their children were born during their course of study, over one-eighth of students have taken a leave of absence to accommodate family responsibilities, and over one-fourth have reduced their workload. Graduate & professional students do not utilize UCSD resources for students with families: fewer than 10% of students have utilized lactation or childcare facilities, and sizeable percentages of students are unaware of these resources, and very few students have used any Women’s Center resources

There were two differences on summary measures between graduate & professional students with families, compared to those without; however, both of these effects are only marginal:

- Students with families report experiencing marginally more stress mainly due to marginally more frequent stress over finances, and significantly more stress over “other” topics. However, students with families are not evenly distributed across division, year of study, and degree sought; if all of these variables are controlled for, the difference in mental health between students with families and those without is eliminated.
- Students with children are marginally more likely to report a greater connection to campus; however, as with mental health, if all of the other demographic variables associated with students having families are controlled for, the effect disappears.

Focus on Mentor Relationships

Nearly three-fourths of respondents report a research mentor. If respondents are compared based on their overall mentor relationship, there are no demographic differences between those with an above-average relationship and those with a below-average relationship, indicating that the two groups are roughly comparable except for their mentor relationships.

When these two groups are compared for the quality of their UCSD experience, quality of the mentor relationship very strongly correlates with a neutral-to-negative UCSD experience, marked by general dissatisfaction, higher stress, and a greater likelihood of considering quitting.

Concretely, students with a below-average mentor relationship report less mentor “face time” (less than half has much), and less advisor availability, support, and feedback. This is despite the fact that nearly all of the students who report having asked their mentors for more feedback are in the “below average” group. There is also a marginal trend for students with a below-average mentor experience to be in larger-than-average labs. Finally, it is the case that students with above-average mentor relationships are more likely to be in programs where there is a means of evaluating research mentors.

Focus on Careers

Interest in non academic careers is widespread among graduate and professional students, with nearly three-quarters of all students considering various non academic career options. However, fewer than half of professional students feel their programs encourage career diversity. Fewer than one-third of research students feel their programs encourage career diversity, and more than one-third disagree.

The Career Services Center might be expected to alleviate this problematic situation, and it may for masters students, over half of whom have used CSC resources. Among doctoral students, however, fewer than one-third use any CSC resource—even those who are most dissatisfied with their within-program career resources. Overall, students are satisfied with CSC workshops, somewhat satisfied with CSC career advising and the CSC website, and neutral about CSC-organized job fairs.

It would appear then that for many students, career resources are a gap in their UCSD experience—in particular, the low use of the CSC by doctoral students, coupled with general dissatisfaction of within-program career resources, may contribute to stress and dissatisfaction over time (and in part explain the high levels of stress reported related to academic program and the future/career).

Conflict

An important but unpleasant reality is that people may experience unfair or unwelcome treatment. In this survey, 352 respondents (approximately 23%) reported experiencing some form of “unwelcome attention or unfair treatment.” This predicts that 988 graduate & professional students in the whole student body would report experiencing some type of unfair treatment or unwelcome attention.

The most common type of conflict reported was gender/sexism (one-fourth of all “yes” responses, 6% of all survey respondents), with race or ethnicity and age-related prejudice each being selected by about one-eighth of those who responded “yes” (about 3% of all survey respondents).

Actually, the most frequently selected category was “other,” chosen by 40% of those who responded “yes” (9% of the total survey respondents). This indicates that a large number of respondents were unable to classify their experience into an existing category. The descriptions entered by those who selected “other” showed two additional patterns: program or course-related conflict (typically relating to “unfair” grading or instructor expectations), and personal conflicts with advisors, other faculty members, or other students.

As above, conflict is a fact of life. While it would be desirable to eliminate such problems, realistically, that will not occur. It is important, however, that there are methods of conflict resolution if and when conflict arises. Of the 23% of students who experienced unfair treatment, over two-thirds did *not* seek assistance in dealing with the problem. Of the slightly less than one-third who sought assistance, fewer than half found sufficient help. Reasons given for not seeking assistance include thinking there was anything that could be done (31%), the problem not seeming important enough (30%); fear of retaliation (19%), and not knowing where to seek assistance (14%).

Retention

Another reality is that not all students who begin graduate and professional programs complete them. OGSR reports an attrition rate for graduate studies of 35%; in this survey, over one-third (36%) have seriously considered leaving or quitting their program of study. The most frequently given reasons for considering leaving were that program expectations were not met (40%), financial/funding concerns (34%), changes in career plans (33%), quality of advisor relations (32%). Large percentages of respondents also indicated that problems with their social life (26%) or an unwelcoming environment at UCSD (21%) provoked such considerations. At this point, these should all be unsurprising—each of these has been a recurrent theme in previous sections (and indeed, they played a major role in the general plan of this report).

Summary

Overall, this survey shows that graduate and professional students at UCSD are generally satisfied with their academic experience and training. However, only about half feel that UCSD has met their expectations. Possibly this differential occurs due to the general dissatisfaction with the social and cultural opportunities on campus, and an extremely low sense of connection to UCSD. While it could be considered that this poor “extracurricular” experience is part of the graduate student’s lot, sentiment at UCSD is markedly lower than other graduate institutions.

Graduate and professional students experience a lot of stress, mainly due to academics and careers. Nearly one-fourth have sought counseling while at UCSD—a rate much higher than undergraduates. Thus, access to and use of counseling services should be of concern.

The UCSD experience differs along many variables. Of special note are that newer students generally have a more positive outlook on UCSD; and women, underrepresented minorities, disabled students, and LGBTQ students experience markedly more stress than the norm. Further, there are many differences in student experience and satisfaction between divisions—studying these differences may highlight ways to address weaknesses.

Most students with research mentors are quite satisfied with these relationships. However, there are striking differences in student experience for those with below-average mentor relationships. Nearly every aspect of the student experience is severely and negatively impacted for these students.

A potentially surprising finding is that nearly three-fourths of students are considering non academic careers. Yet, very few (as low as 28%) feel their programs encourage career diversity. While some students take advantage of the Career Services Center, many do not, and among those that do, satisfaction is not

overwhelming. These could contribute to the generally high level of anxiety about the future and careers which students experience.

Almost one-fourth of students report having experienced some form of unwelcome attention or unfair treatment, with sexism, ageism, and ethnic and cultural conflicts being the most frequent. Additionally, a sizable number of students report course- or grading-related conflicts, as well as personal conflicts with advisors, other faculty, and other students. Some of this is a fact of life; however, only one-third of those experiencing conflict sought assistance, with most indicating they felt nothing could be done, they feared retaliation, or did not know where to go for assistance. And among those seeking assistance, only one half felt they received adequate help. There may thus be gaps both in awareness of assistance and the quality of institutional assistance available in cases of conflict.

Finally, over one-third of graduate and professional students have “seriously” considered quitting their programs. The reasons they give are many and varied, but the most prevalent reasons are those mentioned above: program expectations were not met, changes in career plans, quality of advisor relations, problems with their social life, an unwelcoming environment at UCSD, and/or financial/funding concerns. These have all been recurrent themes in this report. Hopefully, this report provides a foundation by which these problems can be further investigated and addressed.

APPENDIX C

CAMPUS COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Jacobs School of Engineering
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Atkinson Hall (Calit2 Main Auditorium)
Wednesday, May 24, 2006, 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Biological Sciences
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Room 3500 Pacific Hall
Thursday, May 25, 2006, 9:30-10:30 AM

Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Room 10 Old Scripps Building
Thursday, May 25, 2006, 12:30-1:30 PM

Arts and Humanities
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Gallery A, Price Center
Wednesday, May 31, 2006, 3:30-4:30 PM

Rady School of Management and International Relations and Pacific
Studies (IRPS)
Community Meeting on Professional Student Life
IRPS Auditorium
Thursday, June 1, 2006, 11:30 12:30

Social Sciences
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Media and Communications Center 201
Friday, June 2, 2006, 11:00 - 12:00

Health and Physical Sciences
Community Meeting on Graduate Student Life
Mayer Hall Room 4322 (Mayer Room)
Monday, June 5, 2006, 12:30 to 1:30

School of Medicine and Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical
Sciences
Community Meeting on Professional Student Life
Medical Teaching Facility (MTF) 175
Wednesday, June 21, 2006, 12:00 to 1:00 PM

APPENDIX D SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

I. Strengthening the Sense of Community and Improving Communications

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges at a large research university is to achieve a sense of community among the range of diverse interests, backgrounds, and perspectives of the many individuals and groups who make up our campus community. Although a “sense of community” appears at first to be an intangible value, it is undoubtedly important to students’ overall experience. That only about one-third of the respondents to the GPSES Survey (Spring 2005) are satisfied with their social experience, feel a sense of belonging, have interactions with students outside of their own program, find opportunities for involvement in campus activities, or are satisfied with the cultural experience at UCSD, strongly suggests that there are insufficient opportunities for community formation at UCSD. According to the Boyer Commission Report (1995),

Research universities should foster a community of learners. Large universities must find ways to create a sense of place and to help students develop small communities within the larger whole.

A university’s “sense of community” largely refers to personal connections and affiliations--formal and informal--that an individual forms with fellow students, friends, faculty, organizations and the larger university as a whole. Therefore, the campus must take bold steps to enhance the connectivity and strengthen the affiliations of students at UCSD. To involve more students more passionately in the events, organizations, traditions and formal and informal social activities of UCSD represents a major cultural change for the institution’s administration, faculty, staff, and students. Changes must occur in the four spheres that influence students’ daily life: where they learn, where they work, where they live, and where they “hang out”.

Issues

Issues or problems identified by the committee, in community meetings, and in student surveys include:

- Dissatisfaction with their social experience not directly related to academics; only 10% of graduate and professional students report a connection to the campus community (GPSES Survey Spring 2005).
- One-third of the GPSES respondents indicated that they have seriously considered quitting their programs of study. The most frequently given reasons were related to program expectations not being met, financial/funding concerns, and changes in career plans. A large percentage of these respondents also indicated that problems with their

social life (26%) and an unwelcoming environment at UCSD (21%) provoked thoughts about leaving.

- Difficulty in discovering events of interest due in part to e-mail overload and bulletin boards spread across all areas of the campus without a centralized location to find out about all events.
- Limited number of places to congregate or hang-out on- and off-campus.
- Too much academic pressure leading to little time to socialize.
- Perception that UCSD is a commuter school.
- Dissonance between students' expectations about living in La Jolla and the reality of UCSD's surrounding community.
- Insufficient connections between the campus and the surrounding community.
- Lack of time or opportunity to connect and interact with the natural resources and diverse cultures of San Diego (e.g., beaches, mountains, Mexico, downtown San Diego).
- Sense of isolation felt by underrepresented groups on campus because they are small in number, and lack cultural and social activities specific to their interests.
- Perception that UCSD's physical environment (e.g., architecture, gathering places, and walkways) are sterile and do not invite interaction or celebration.
- Few opportunities for cross-disciplinary academic and social events.
- Little sense of campus history and few traditions.
- Student publications (e.g., the Guardian and Koala) are under-developed and immature.
- Overly restrictive alcohol policies.
- Lack of Graduate Student Commons or Graduate Student Center near food and drink (e.g., the Jack Farris Lounge at the School of Medicine is a good example of a well-located and well-designed commons serving medical and pharmacy students).

Services and Strengths

According to the published summary of the Office of Graduate Studies Exit Survey responses of graduate degree recipients, between 2000-01 through 2003-04, 88% of respondents stated that their overall graduate student experience was above average or excellent – up from 79% in 1996-97 through 1999-2000.

The Exit Survey also rated a very high level of satisfaction with campus recreational programs (89%) and the University libraries (96%).

According to the GPSES Survey (2005), 92% of respondents feel that the UCSD campus is safe and secure.

Festivals sponsored by the Graduate Student Association (e.g., Fall Free for All, Winter Snow Goddess Festival, Spring Fling) are well-attended.

The Office of Graduate Studies Office sponsors orientation activities, programs for under-represented students, All-Graduate Research Symposium, and topical workshops for all graduate students and targeted groups.

Recommendations

There are ways to break through the isolation and bring more balance to the lives of graduate students using academic and social events, programs, and traditions that bring students together outside of their classrooms, labs, and offices. As an institution, UCSD must demonstrate its willingness to develop and nurture the graduate community. Suggestions are:

- UCSD should take steps to improve community and connectivity through improved campus communications. Currently, there is an over-reliance on using e-mail and students receive so many unsolicited messages that they ignore the messages.
- Install and maintain a large bulletin board (the Big Board) in the University Center neighborhood as a single place where all notices and event advertisements can be posted.
- Maintain an up-to-date, multi-faceted website of campus-wide and graduate student events.
- Improve the quality of student newspaper publications. Include a section dedicated to graduate student academic, social, and recreational events.
- Publish a book on what to do in San Diego including Tijuana and Mexico that includes an organized compendium of popular places and activities.
- Offer a WIKI website for the entire graduate community sponsored by GSA. The University of North Carolina offers such an amenity.
- Coordinate with undergraduate colleges to join the Convocation Speaker Series.
- Expand and encourage opportunities to share students academic work with other graduate students, particularly in a cross-disciplinary setting.
- Organize poster sessions that would enable students within a discipline to learn about the specific interests of their peers; students outside the discipline learn about a subject area that is potentially relevant to their own work; and everyone gets to meet new people.

- Increase the number of events that involve work-sharing within a cross-disciplinary environment.
- Better advertise and encourage students to attend graduate student performances and shows in theater, dance, music, and the visual arts.
- Expand programs and activities offered by the Cross-Cultural-Center, academic departments, OGS and student service units that are culturally and socially relevant for the small number of underrepresented students on campus. Supportive campus communities are essential to retain and build these groups and further the diversity commitment of the campus.
- Establish a weekly series of inter-departmental teas highlighting formal and informal presentations by noted individuals from on- and off-campus.
- Ignite school spirit by promoting and increasing the profile of “spirit inducing” sports that are particularly connected to UCSD and the regional lifestyle such as surfing, water polo, volleyball, and skateboarding.
- Build a skateboard park.
- Improve the residential life for on-campus students and commuter students. The emptiness of the campus at night and during the weekend attests to the contention that UCSD more resembles a corporate park than a major university campus. The lack of activities and venues within the residential areas is exacerbated by the lack of nearby commercial areas that would be attractive to college students. There is a dearth of affordable, student-oriented restaurants and pubs within walking distance.
- Redevelop the Mesa-East Campus residential community with apartments, restaurants, pubs, shops that would be attractive to students.
- Encourage the re-development of Costa Verde into a UCSD-oriented, college-town commercial zone.

II. Meeting the Housing Needs of Graduate and Professional Students

Introduction

The off-campus rental market in La Jolla and the surrounding vicinity is one of the highest priced in the country. On-campus housing currently accommodates 39% of eligible graduate and professional students. The Miramar One housing project, now under construction, will provide an additional 800 beds for single graduate and professional students when it opens in Spring 2007. Between 2005-06 and 2015-16 graduate and professional school enrollments will increase by 2,770 or 64%, while undergraduate growth is projected at 1,275 or 6%, with undergraduate steady state enrollment reached by 2010-11.

Issues

Of the 4,500 graduate and professional students attending UCSD in Fall 2005, 1,750 or 39% were accommodated in on-campus housing. And for those on the wait list, it takes, on average, 30 months, to secure on-campus housing. If housing becomes available mid-year, students who have signed leases often cannot take advantage of the opening without breaking lease commitments. Problems and issues identified by the committee, in community meetings, and in student surveys include:

- Incoming students who are not accommodated in on-campus housing have a difficult time securing affordable and convenient housing and are dissatisfied with the level of housing-related assistance they receive from UCSD.
- It is difficult for incoming students to find affordable temporary housing while they look for permanent housing or are wait-listed to live in UCSD Affiliated Housing facilities.
- Most graduate students pay high rents, often exceeding more than half of their income.
- Graduate support is often insufficient to cover the high cost of living in the area
- Over the past five years, condominium conversions have further decreased the number of affordable rental units.
- UCSD's target to house 50% of graduate and professional students is insufficient given the local rental market, current levels of graduate financial support, and the campus goal of attracting the best graduate students nationally and internationally.
- There is wide disparity in the rental costs at various campus single graduate student and family-housing communities.
- There is concern that incoming graduate and professional students may not be accommodated in UCSD Affiliated Housing, because current

students are allowed to remain until they complete their degrees (or until normative time to degree is exhausted); therefore, an insufficient number of units are available for new students.

- The La Jolla community is often inhospitable to UCSD students; the campus lacks a nearby college-town environment.
- Two of the affiliated housing facilities, Coast and Mesa Apartments, should be redeveloped with greater density to provide more housing and could possibly include mixed-use development.
- Parking time limits for visitors to UCSD Affiliated Housing facilities are overly restrictive and impede community-building between residents and non-residents.
- Restriction on the use of community rooms, especially the complete prohibition of alcohol, is excessive, impedes community building, and is unnecessary because nearly all student residents are over 21 years of age.
- There is a perception that the housing wait-list system is unfair because roommates can be chosen who are not on the wait list, departments are given housing slots for selected students, families with children are accelerated for housing placement, and some students may not want to have roommates assigned based on wait list order.
- Students already living in UCSD affiliated housing facilities advise Housing and Dining Services and the Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs on policies related to contracts, budgets, rates and levels of service. There is a strong perception that non-resident students have little voice in informing such decisions.
- Full-time child care offered by the Early Childhood Education Center located at Mesa Housing is too expensive for most graduate students.
- Affordable childcare options (e.g., part time or cooperative childcare) located near family housing communities are insufficient, too costly for graduate students, and do not meet demand.
- There is a perceived lack of truth-in-advertising regarding La Jolla housing costs and availability of on-campus housing in communications with potential students during recruitment and admissions process.

Services and Strengths

- Affiliated Housing is a leader in sustainability and recycling efforts on campus.
- The Commuter Student Services Office offers a searchable website to find housing and roommates.
- Rents in Affiliated Housing are substantially below market rates.

Recommendations

- Revise the current advisory committee structure to create a standing committee on graduate housing that would engage in long-range planning and policy development. Members of the committee would include an equal number of graduate students living on campus and graduate students not living on campus, representatives from Graduate Council, Housing and Dining Administration, Campus Planning, faculty from each of the academic divisions and professional schools. Chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies, the committee would review survey results (GSA and Exit Surveys) regarding housing issues, conduct comparative housing studies amongst peer institutions, review and make recommendations concerning housing policies and rules, develop a strategic plan to expand affordable housing opportunities, and review progress toward meeting the objectives and milestones identified in the plan.
- Establish affordable graduate student housing as a key element in academic and financial-assistance planning.
- Explore options for fast-track graduate housing development in collaboration with Housing and Dining Services, Real Estate Development, Facilities Design and Construction, and Campus Planning (e.g., ground lease, turnkey, purchase, housing cooperatives, master leases).
- It has been suggested that the name "Affiliated Housing" does not describe the housing community this unit administers, and that individuals searching for information about graduate housing may not understand this name or interpret it correctly. Instead, "Graduate and Family Housing" has been suggested.
- Examine the feasibility of expanding the number of University owned condo or apartment complexes near the campus or near major public transportation corridors.
- Substantially increase the percentage of incoming graduate students housed on-campus.
- Modify waiting list policies, e.g., the primary occupant may select secondary occupants from the top two-thirds of the wait list. Students should be able to put themselves on a primary occupant or a secondary roommate wait list or both.
- Increase housing density at the Mesa and Coast Graduate and Family Housing communities and add commercial, mixed-use elements such as grocery store or farmer's market should be included in these housing areas.

- Admission letters sent by the Office of Graduate Studies should include accurate, objective housing-related information.
- Establish affordable child care options, (e.g., cooperatives or part time care) at campus family housing communities.
- Clearly identify housing opportunities and policies on the Office of Graduate Studies website for prospective and current students.

III. Services and Programs for International Graduate and Professional Students

Introduction

International students enrich UCSD by bringing a variety of views and life experiences to the university campus. The convergence of perspectives strengthens the institution and contributes in many ways to the educational and social experience of the entire UCSD community. The international graduate student population has increased by 30% over the last five years and will continue to increase for the next ten years.

Issues

Of the 4,200 graduate and professional students attending UCSD in Fall 2005, 900 or just over 20% were international students. The number of International Center staff has not increased to meet the needs of these student needs. Enrolling at UCSD as an international student offers both challenges and opportunities, all of which international students must tackle without the support systems and cultural understanding that they have spent a lifetime cultivating in their home countries. Within weeks of arrival in San Diego, international students are expected to adjust to different norms, cultures, and belief systems and perform at a level of language and academic sophistication that challenges even domestic students. Problems and issues identified by the committee, in community meetings, and in student surveys include:

- Survival issues such as immigration assistance, currency, housing, banking, transportation, food, and school registration for children.
- Academic differences including testing, teaching atmosphere, informal interactions between students and faculty, and language.
- Campus culture of personal autonomy and self-responsibility makes it difficult to ask for assistance.
- Adaptation to gender roles.
- Interaction with the larger San Diego community.
- Understanding United States standards for academic integrity.
- International student are now required to complete and maintain extensive legal forms, authorizations and information required by the SEVIS reporting system and there are not enough International Center staff to assist graduate students.

Services and Strengths

The International Center/ International Student and Scholarship Office at UCSD offers a range of services beginning well before students actually arrive on the

campus, during orientation, and throughout their graduate studies. These services include: pre-arrival checklist, assistance with SEVIS and visas, listserv communication opportunities, identifying housing opportunities on-and off-campus and with host families, identifying child care opportunities, language tutoring, programs to facilitate cultural adaptation, and weekly lunch time events. They maintain SEVIS records on all international students and assist students in maintaining their DHS status and completing the multitude of forms and records required for research, travel, and reentry. Student Legal Services also provides specialized programs and services for international students.

The International House offers limited housing for domestic and international upper division and graduate students. However, application deadlines and student selection priorities have created obstacles for incoming international graduate students.

Recommendations

- Increase International Center staffing to address the needs of a growing international student population.
- Provide the International Center/International Student and Scholarship Office regular feedback on quality of programs and services via the proposed Graduate Student Survey.
- Offer multiple-day orientations for international students scheduled before the general OGSR orientation sessions. Ensure that international, general, and departmental orientations do not overlap in time. The international orientation should occur as early as possible so that students will have an opportunity to take care of essential survival issues before the academic year begins. One day of the orientation should include outings to places of interest and of necessity in San Diego (e.g., cultural and shopping venues, schools, public transportation, etc.) and cover other topics that will help students make a smooth transition to living in the United States.
- The campus International House is managed by Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC). It is recommended that ERC guarantee that at least 50% of the international student slots are reserved for international graduate students. Restrict these slots to no more than two years in residence to allow a turnover for new incoming international graduate students.
- Develop a searchable database with information about current international graduate students (country of origin, languages, academic program, single/married, etc.) so that incoming students can communicate on a variety of issues well before their UCSD arrival. Participation should be voluntary with expressed permissions granted.

IV. Graduate and Professional Student Health and Family Services

Introduction

Stress is a frequently identified factor in the graduate student experience. It has been shown that negative stress and an imbalance between stressors and stress buffers can cause deleterious physical and mental health problems. According to the 2005 Graduate and Professional Student Experience Survey (GPSES), over half the respondents reported they "sometimes" to "frequently" felt impairment due to stress. Furthermore, academic concerns were cited as causing the most stress. As such, stress prevention and management as well as wellness promotion are priorities necessary to meeting the health needs of graduate students.

Issues

- Nearly one-fourth of the survey respondents have sought counseling while students at UCSD, and two-fifths have considered utilizing counseling services. Thus, maintaining access and availability of services requires expansion of services as the graduate student population continues to grow.
- According to the GPSES survey, students with families report experiencing more stress than those without families.
- Academic stress appears to be a by product of many variables including students academic preparation, resources, the academic program, student-program-faculty advisor match, the campus environment, and the surrounding community.
- Mental state is also affected by social networks and support systems, family life, and institutional affiliations.
- Needs of "non-traditional" students and those of students in "minority" groups (such as students with children, re-entry/second career students, students with disabilities, international students), for "stress-busters" or protective factors have not been well served.
- Many student services such as Student Health Services (SHS) only provide treatment for the individual or single student and not for children or spouses of graduate students.
- Wellness, in terms of provision of basic needs (e.g., food, shelter) and balance between work and play have been pointed out as problem areas for graduate students. The high cost of living and the intense work-oriented culture of the university environment seem to be more conducive to negative stress than wellness for the graduate student experience.
- The UCSD campus is not family friendly or family oriented.
- Convenient, affordable childcare at UCSD is limited.

- Graduate students residing at the Mesa Apartments who have young children (ages 2-5 years old) report a need for part-time nursery school care at the Mesa Apartments. Currently, they address this need by pooling their time informally.
- There are gaps in health insurance coverage for some treatments and medications.
- Accommodation for students with disabilities is insufficient. According to the GPSES survey, 45% of students with disabilities reported that their condition had been accommodated. And, Graduate Student Exit Survey results show that 47% of respondents in 2000-01 to 2003-04 indicated “above average” or “excellent,” for the Office of Students with Disabilities, down from 54% in the 1996-97 to 1999-00 group.
- Overall, students with disabilities are slightly more likely to have considered quitting graduate school and less likely to say that they feel a sense of belonging at UCSD than students without disabilities.
- Students with disabilities experience more mental stress than non-disabled students, especially related to their academic programs. And they report that they consider and seek counseling more frequently than do non-disabled students.
- Students with disabilities report markedly lower satisfaction with their programs especially in departmental assistance in securing funding than do non-disabled students.
- Accommodations for parking are not always adequate and are currently in jeopardy of becoming worse.
- Student organizations are required to cover the costs to accommodate students with disabilities. These accommodations may be expensive and many groups have not been informed of this duty or are struggling to comply.

Services and Strengths

Graduate students know about and use available health services, particularly those offered by Psychological and Counseling Services. The community psychology model and systems oriented model are integrated as core philosophies in providing services that facilitate use by the graduate student population.

Health insurance is available to all graduate and professional students.

According to the Graduate Student Exit Survey, 70% of respondents in 2000-01 to 2003-04 reported that Student Health Services (SHS) are “above average” or “excellent,” an increase from 62% from the 1996-97 to 1999-00 group.

During the period 2000-01 to 2003-04, 77% of respondents reported they received “above average” or “excellent” services at Counseling and Psychological Services.

Recommendations

- Psychological and Counseling Services is understaffed and cannot meet the current and growing needs of the graduate population for individual counseling, group counseling, wellness training and collaborative workshops with other student service units. Increase funding for the expansion of health and mental health services to provide for expanded facilities and personnel.
- Increase FTE allocation to campus Psychological Services. The International Association of Counseling Services recommends 1 mental health professional per 1000-1500 students. Currently Psychological Services has 13.5 FTE (ratio is 1 per 2000 students). Clearly additional FTE are needed.
- Include emphasis on wellness in the campus community as a basic need of graduate students. Specific examples of community changes include adding mini “wellness” centers particularly in high density areas of graduate students such as Mesa Housing Complex, near the Medical and Pharmacy Schools, Scripps institution of Oceanography, and Rady School of Management. Such wellness centers could include areas for educational programming/counseling, socializing, relaxing, and drop-off for short-term child care.
- Streamline the outside referral process; dedicate a staff member to deal with graduate student issues if one does not already exist.
- Expand and improve health insurance coverage to increase treatment and prescription benefits.
- Allow graduate students the option to extend the benefits of health insurance to spouses and children.
- Increased coverage for expanded benefit packages can be paid for through tuition increases, since most graduate students have their tuition funded.
- Perform a comprehensive operational review of services and funding at the Office for Students with Disabilities.
- Continue periodic assessment other health services agencies on campus such as Psychological and Counseling Services and Student Health Services.
- Extend child-care services in high-density communities to include after school care and short-term drop-off.
- Increase interaction and collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs through programs and positions.

- Demonstrate campus departments and services commitment to fostering a “family-friendly” institution by advertising programs, services, outreach efforts available to the spouses, parents, and children of graduate students.
- Continue reaching out to "non-traditional" graduate student populations and regularly assess the success of these activities.
- Ensure that UCSD is in compliance with federal and State Americans with Disabilities requirements.
- Review OSD policy and practices to determine if the needs of disabled students are being met.
- Provide funding to accommodate students with disabilities at extracurricular activities (i.e., transportation to events or sign language interpreters) that would be available to all student groups (SOLO orgs).

V. Cross-Disciplinary Academic Interactions

Introduction

Advancements in scholarship and research occur most rapidly at the intersections of departments and disciplines. Top research institutions ought to provide graduate students with opportunities for multidisciplinary research and interactions. The opportunities for cross-disciplinary exchange exist at UCSD, but the campus must do more to promote them. Such cross-disciplinary exchange provides participants a forum for critical examination by members of other disciplines and opportunities to expand knowledge and scholarly experiences.

Issues

Although the benefits of cross-disciplinary academic interaction are clear, graduate students have expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities to interact with faculty and graduate students in other disciplines. In the 2005 Graduate and Professional Student Survey Report, only 29% of graduate students indicated that they interact with students from other departments. In addition, graduate students expressed frustration with lack of opportunity to interact and collaborate with faculty and researchers from other disciplines. In some cases, faculty never responded to graduate student emails. In other cases, faculty explained that they were simply over-extended, and although sympathetic, were not able to become involved with any more graduate students.

Further, there is currently no mechanism to share research interests among graduate students at UCSD. There are situations in which faculty might be interested in hiring a graduate student researcher from another department who has related research interests, but they often are not aware of such a student. This lack of awareness of similar research interests is problematic for both students and faculty.

Services and Strengths

Each year the Graduate Student Association and the Office of Graduate Studies offer a day long All-Graduate Research Symposium.

Recommendations

The Committee proposes:

- Establish additional venues to foster cross-disciplinary exchange.
- Identify, nurture, and fund emergent areas of study that transcend traditional departmental boundaries.
- Offer monthly cross-disciplinary seminars which would be followed by social mixers.

- Offer quarterly mixers, brown bag lunches, or teas organized by the Divisional Dean.
- Create searchable, web-based database with information on graduate students and research interests. This database could be associated with the current UCSD Faculty Expertise database (<http://research.ucsd.edu/>).
- Expand Tritonlink's resource guide for graduate students who are exploring research opportunities, funding, and conferences.

VI. Faculty Advising, Mentoring, and Teaching

Introduction

This section addresses performance standards, issues, and recommendations concerning the overall quality of the academic programs, academic environment, academic courses, teaching, mentoring and advising, the provision of adequate and balanced financial support, and the preparation of students for academic and non-academic careers.

Graduate students consider the reputation of the faculty, the perceived caliber of the academic program, the placement of alumni, and the level of financial support as paramount in making decisions concerning applying to and attending UCSD. Once here, the academic environment must be welcoming, collegial, and consistent with what had been communicated or advertised when students were recruited.

Student participants in community meetings held by the Committee emphasize that the relationship formed with their respective faculty mentors is the most important in their graduate academic experience. The most significant relationships occur when the faculty mentor serves in a multi-faceted role as teacher, collaborator, colleague, advisor, and role model. An important factor student satisfaction with their academic program is the degree to which faculty are accessible to students. At UCSD, students reported that faculty access competes with demands on the faculty to conduct research, to teach undergraduate courses, and to increase the number of graduate student advisees.

Accurate, informative, and consistent advising by faculty advisors and graduate program coordinators is critical in retaining graduate students and maintaining high levels of academic performance, career preparation, and ultimately job placement.

Graduate training must include training in the art of teaching, the opportunity to participate in and conduct research at the forefront of one's field, and the opportunity to present and publish one's work.

Multi-year, adequate graduate financial support is an important factor in recruiting students and in providing the scaffolding necessary for timely degree completion. It is critical to provide adequate financial assistance during students' initial years in graduate programs and also during the dissertation writing phase. Financial support should be available to non-science and non-engineering students and not rely primarily on teaching assistantships.

Issues

- In the most recent Exit Survey (academic year degree awarded 2000-01 through 2003-04) the percent who responded above average or excellent are as follows: TA training and evaluation (48%), career

advising (43%), assistance in locating employment after graduation (46%). Each of these areas showed improvement over earlier survey results.

- In the recent Graduate and Professional Student Experience (GPSES) Survey (Spring 2005), fewer than half of the respondents agree that their programs make an explicit effort to foster a sense of community among students, and only 38% agree that their programs provide adequate social experiences for students.
- At committee and community meetings, students voiced concern that some faculty and departments/programs do not conduct high-quality first- and second-year graduate courses. They cited lack of preparation by the faculty, out-of-date course content and syllabi, and out-of-date presentation materials as major concerns.
- Some faculty and departments/programs do not demonstrate interest or respect for graduate students -- faculty are inaccessible and there is little opportunity for communication, collegiality, and social integration between faculty and students.

Services and Strengths

- In the most recent Exit Survey (2000-01 through 2003-04) the percent who responded above average or excellent for aspects of their graduate experience are: quality of the faculty (94%), overall intellectual environment of the department (87%), and overall quality of the academic program (87%), dissertation supervision (78%), academic advising provided by faculty (76%), graduate level teaching (70%), fairness of financial support (70%), and graduate curriculum (68%), Each of the areas showed improvement over earlier survey results.
- In the recent Graduate and Professional Student Experience (GPSES) Survey (Spring 2005), 65% of the respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the academic experience.
- The GPSES Survey also reported that 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their academic program had a collegial working environment. And, 66% were able to interact with students in different years of study.
- Several departments are noteworthy in that they have clubs, publications, and regular social activities.

Recommendations

- All academic departments and programs should be urged by the Chancellor and the Senior Vice Chancellor-Academic Affairs to create substantial student service activities in conjunction with student affairs

programs on campus. The programs must be culturally sensitive and include underrepresented students.

- The campus should broaden activities focused on career preparation and provide a survival skills courses over the course of each academic year, including:
 - How to be a successful grad student,
 - Communication skills I (the art of publishing),
 - Communication skills II (delivering an oral presentation),
 - Job search skills,
 - Basics of teaching, and
 - Grant writing,
 - Accessing services.
- Faculty should receive training on the requirements of effective mentoring and advising and they should be acknowledged and rewarded for their quality efforts.

VII. Graduate and Professional Student Transportation and Parking Services

Introduction

Most graduate and professional students study, work, and conduct research on campus during the days and evenings, and for many on nights, weekends and during the summer. Safe and reliable transportation is vital. Future campus building will inevitably reduce the number of parking spaces and because building parking structures is very expensive, many of these lost spaces will not be replaced. To reduce or eliminate the need to build costly parking structures, Transportation and Parking Services (T&PS) is working to significantly reduce the number of cars parked on campus by encouraging commuters to use alternative methods of transportation.

UCSD T&PS operations are wholly supported by parking permit fees and State law requires that transportation and parking enterprises at public colleges and universities be self-supporting. Parking fees are used to 1) maintain/build new parking lots and structures, and 2) finance the operation of alternative transportation including the campus shuttle system, Flexcar, carpools, vanpools, pedal club, and the transit/coaster club. In addition, these fees subsidize free and reduced cost bus permits. All such programs are available to graduate students.

Issues

About two-thirds of all graduate and professional students live off campus. The majority of on-campus graduate housing is located east of I-5 and at La Jolla del Sol which for many is more than walking distance. According to the GPSES survey, of the 3,570 year round graduate students 30% drive to campus and 250 students are registered in a carpool. Students complain that there are not enough parking spaces available close to the center of campus at a time when they need them.

Approximately one-third of all graduate students live on-campus or in campus-owned housing. The remainder live in these San Diego areas:

- La Jolla, UTC, University City, and Clairemont (34%)
- Hillcrest and Uptown (7%)
- Mission Beach, Pacific Beach, and Ocean Beach (7%)
- South of downtown San Diego (3%)
- North County (3%)
- Other areas (12%)

Services and Strengths

Over the past several years, T&PS has worked closely with the San Diego MTS to improve six routes (3, 30/30B, 41, 48/49, 150, 921) that serve UCSD. The result has been faster ride times, increased frequency of service, and expanded express bus service particularly in areas heavily populated by UCSD students such as Clairemont, Mira Mesa and Hillcrest. Students may ride on these routes for free if they obtain a sticker for their ID card. T&PS Alternative Transportations programs work well; for example, City Shuttle has over 8,500 daily riders.

Recommendations

- Offer financial incentives via subsidies for alternative transportation modes to decrease automobile use.
- Operate campus shuttles during the summer to accommodate graduate students, especially those living at Mesa Housing and for those who park on East Campus and rely on the Regents Express Shuttle.
- Encourage students to walk more by building a pedestrian only bridge across I-5 to connect the Mesa Housing Complex to main campus.
- Provide a graduate student parking lot for a reduced permit price on the East Campus lots.
- Provide shuttle or another reliable escort service on nights and weekends.

APPENDIX E

INPUT FROM MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW PANELS

Subsequent to the submission of the draft report, Vice Chancellor-Student Affairs Watson, and Dean Graduate Studies Barrett at the recommendation of the committee, constituted two review panels to provide comments on the report. It was anticipated that these would enable the inclusion of a broader perspective prior to submission of the final report. Input received from panel members till the end of April 2007 are included in this Appendix. With the exception of factual details that necessitated correction to the actual report, no changes were made to the report to ensure that future readers and those acting on the report would have all documents in the actual form submitted.

Input From The GSA

Received by Email on April 27, 2007

The Graduate Student Association (GSA), as a primary stakeholder in the direction and actions taken to improve life and the student experience for graduate and professional students at UC San Diego, supports the GPSES committee's general vision for graduate student life. We agree with the identification by the committee of five areas critically important to the graduate and professional student experience – Community, Academic Life, Housing, Student Support Services, and Communications – and feel strongly that community and housing are especially significant problems.

The appendices were filled with many useful recommendations that should be taken seriously by the administration as priorities for action by their respective subunits (Housing and Dining Services, Parking and Transportation Services, etc.). The GSA, however, disagrees with some of the recommendations within. In particular we have many reservations about the hiring of a new administrator. A new administrator could benefit graduate students by following through on policy changes and recommendations from graduate and professional students. Alternatively, a new administrator could become merely another layer of bureaucracy preventing action from taking place.

Several short-term actions mentioned in part VII of the GPSES report will be very useful and relevant in drawing attention to actions that would improve the graduate and professional student experience. We are currently working on a further set of recommendations to elaborate and specify approaches to dealing with some of the extensive issues outlined in the report. We recommend the formation of the committee to implement the recommendations of the GPSES report before the end of the quarter. We feel that actions taken in response to the suggestions in these reports will create a more satisfactory and comprehensive graduate and professional student experience.

We thank the GPSES committee for its work delineating these issues. We thank the administration for considering our concerns and hope that they will respond to both the report and our additional comments by the end of the spring quarter of 2007.

Input From Derek Lomas, Co-Chair, Graduate and Professional Student Experience and Satisfaction Committee

Received by e-mail May 17, 2007

Introduction

This section contains my personal perspectives and recommendations as the Graduate Student Co-Chair of the GPSES Committee. They are included here because they emerged after the time that the GPSES committee generated its formal report. These 10 statements are meant to supplement and support this official report, which I strongly endorse. As these perspectives emerged out many, many hours of conversations that I have had with fellow students, administrators, staff and faculty regarding the UC San Diego graduate student experience, I now extend these ideas to the committee members who will be following up on this report.

Derek Lomas
Graduate Student Co-Chair of the GPSES Committee

Outline

1. Bringing Academic Best Practices to UC San Diego
2. The Academic Value of On-Campus Housing
3. The Campus Periphery and Town-Gown Relations
4. Campus Architecture and Community Formation
5. Food Carts and the Creation of Vibrant Community Spaces
6. Funding Open Spaces
7. Event Publicity
8. Graduate Coordinators and Administrative Transparency
9. Graduate Student Skill Development
10. Creating a Formal Research Agenda

Bringing Academic Best Practices to UC San Diego

UCSD is a young school that that has grown rapidly. Growth has brought with it tangible growing pains as the campus matured. Graduate students are uniquely positioned to contribute to the developing character of UCSD because they bring with them knowledge and experience of the social and academic practices of their Alma Mater. UCSD could implement selected policies and practices from the best schools around the world by utilizing its graduate student population as a resource for informing, evaluating, and implementing best practices.

As part of the continuing research on the graduate student experience, UCSD could survey graduate students after their first quarter. This survey could assess G/PS expectations, current experience, and collect specific aspects of university life that graduate students find lacking compared to their previous undergraduate experience at other higher education institutions. This information could prove

invaluable to the continued maturation and increasing sophistication of UC San Diego.

The Academic Value of On-Campus Housing

The UCSD graduate community remains highly fragmented. Students often complain that it is very difficult to develop social connections outside of one's own department. One of the greatest issues affecting the development and connectivity of the UCSD graduate community is the availability of on-campus housing. While great strides have been taken to improve housing opportunities, a substantial number of G/PS commute and have to cope with associated parking problems. This commuter culture of 'going to school and then going home', inhibits the development of intellectual, cultural, and academic connectiveness.

While certain realities prevent 100% guaranteed on-campus graduate housing, there are significant ways to better optimize existing on-campus housing in order to stimulate intellectual, cultural, and academic community formation. After extended conversations with many graduate students, it appears that the most important issue is a re-prioritization of on-campus housing for incoming graduate students.

A policy that enables new graduate students to live and socialize in close proximity to one another would produce valuable social networks early on that could follow graduate students for the duration of their studies. While on-campus housing could only be guaranteed a short time (1-3 years), it would provide students the time to develop meaningful connections to others—as well the time to develop an awareness of other San Diego housing options. Instead of the fragmented, frantic search for housing immediately upon arrival to UCSD, students could find suitable group-living situations with far greater ease after having established some roots on campus.

The following is a brief list of suggested 'community enhancements' for the Mesa Apartments:

1. Limits on residency: currently, students can live in subsidized housing for 7 years.
2. Doubling shuttle service during morning rush hour.
3. Creating outdoor places for studying and socialization, such as benches, barbecues and picnic tables. These shared spaces allow for spontaneous encounters, which are essential to community development and sustainability.
4. Family clustering: policies that cluster families with other families in the same complex will result in improved social connectivity and less noise complaints.
5. Friendlier atmosphere: The police are far too eager to break up parties at 10pm, and the Mesa office tends to send threatening notices to residents for minor infractions, such as leaving a football on the back porch.

To improve overall housing availability close to campus, there are some broader issues that could be addressed at a legislative level. Currently, UC schools are

not legally allowed to use state funds for the purchase, construction, or maintenance of student housing. Considering the critical academic importance of residential university housing, this policy should be reviewed. On-campus housing is not merely a storage facility for housing students, it is a vital part of campus life, differentiating a great university from a commuter school. State funds would enable a more timely and integrated development of on-campus housing, contributing immensely to the intellectual and cultural vibrancy of the university.

University sponsored or supported real-estate investments along transportation corridors may also be considered. Partnerships with major area employers should be encouraged as it would contribute to the economic impact of having a research university located in San Diego. Clustered housing co-ops of graduate students within areas serviced by bus-lines could generate many of the same social benefits as on-campus housing, especially in other more reasonably-priced neighborhoods around San Diego.

The Campus Periphery and Town-Gown Relations

One difference between UC San Diego and a 'typical' university, striking to many incoming graduate students, is the nearly complete segregation between town and gown. There are no local (read: walkable) commercial spaces around UCSD. Those commercial areas within driving distance are frustratingly without university character—such as the UTC Mall or the Ralph's/Whole Foods plazas. It seems that the university has not taken an active role in ensuring that zoning practices around the school are in the university's best interests.

The one area that is within walking distance to graduate students is the Regent's Plaza, on Regent's road. This area has the potential to become a hub for graduate student activity, as it is directly across from the Mesa Housing Complex. Regent's Pizza, unknown to most residents of the Mesas, is a local gem and worthy of support, with excellent food and several beers on tap. A late-night bar, currently prohibited by local zoning, would do wonders for activating this space for graduate students. While some might argue that this sort of community involvement is not appropriate for the university, it needs to be recognized that the lack of walkable restaurants, bars, coffeeshops, and cultural centers is one of the major disadvantages of attending UCSD.

Campus Architecture and Community Formation

Campus architecture at UC San Diego appears to have a significant impact on the fragmentation of the student community. It has been oft repeated that post-Vietnam campus design was highly conscious of the possibility of student protests, following events at Berkeley, Kent State, and UC San Diego (the latter of which involved a student, George Wynne Jr., burning himself alive in Reville Plaza, to protest the war). This may be one of the reasons why UC San Diego lacks a large central plaza or quad, a unifying element of the classical college campus. Our social priorities are different today, however, and there is a sincere desire and

active plans by administrators and campus planners to unify this campus through architectural improvements and expansions that support informal social activity and student congregation.

Could UC San Diego ever have a central “Quad,” acting as the emotional and social center of campus? While it may seem surprising at first, it would be relatively straightforward to create a vast, central, emblematic “quad” or green-space on the UC San Diego campus. The Geisel “Seuss” Library is both the most recognizable feature of UCSD and the physical center of campus. Surrounding this library is a very large flat area consisting mostly of shrubbery. While these shrubs are very pleasant to look at, the functional benefits of converting this enormous space into open grass should be strongly considered. With a broad, flat grassy space extending sight-lines to library walk, this space could unify campus in the same way that grassy quads are used to unify campuses across the country. For graduate students, a central quad around the library would emphasize the unity of the UCSD community in a way that is often lost to a purely departmental or lab-based social existence.

Food-Carts and the Creation of Vibrant Community Spaces

Students often find it difficult to find social opportunities beyond one’s lab or office building, as the vast interstitial areas on campus tend to fragment both social and academic interactions. It is an unfortunate situation when students only pass through campus on the way from their car to their office. Informal, spontaneous interactions between students can lead to a great deal of constructive intellectual and academic engagement. This is why it is important to construct places that enable students to ‘run into’ one another.

In this regard, the potential usefulness of outdoor food options and coffee carts can hardly be overestimated. As an example, consider the Cups Coffee Cart in the Calit2 courtyard, which has friendly employees, good coffee, and a variety of breakfast and lunch options: the space around this cart is now the center of community engagement within the engineering quad! The seating and tables provided by Cups have become the preferred location for morning meetings between colleagues and researchers. People ‘run into’ each other here, and have both formal and informal discussions on a wide range of topics. This certainly enhances the academic and intellectual experience of individual students and also seems to enhance the creative productivity of the local community as a whole. A similar coffee-cart scene exists near Mandeville, which also provides tables, seating, food options, and personable employees.

Community spaces anchored by outdoor food-carts should be strongly considered as models for further campus development. These food-carts require minimal investment and generate a strong feeling of community among their patrons. Furthermore, outdoor food options enable busy graduate students to reap the psychological benefits of emerging from the lab to enjoy the mild San Diego climate (however briefly!). Another example of the impact of food on community is

the Wednesday Hare Krishna Lunch above the old student center. This weekly event is very popular among graduate students—not only because it offers cheap, healthy food but also because it offers the chance to ‘run-into’ other graduate students. Housing and Dining Services and other administrative bodies are reluctant to allow the expansion of food carts on campus due to a belief that any increased competition would result in the financial ruin of existing vendors, especially at the expanding Price Center. Nevertheless, the possibility of cheap, authentic, outdoor ethnic food-carts are extremely desirable to graduate students, and these carts could be strategically placed to maximize social benefits and minimize competition with existing food vendors.

As a specific suggestion, an Indian food cart and a burrito cart would operate very successfully on the Thurgood Marshall side of the Library, by the shuttle loop. This large, underutilized open space is an example of the type of space that could be inexpensively redesigned (with seating and food options) so as to connect regions of campus, instead of separating them.

As a synthesis, to improve graduate student community on campus, administrators should identify, cultivate, and attempt to replicate existing vibrant community spaces—such as Roma Coffee, the Scripps shack, the Mandeville coffee cart, and the Calit2 coffee cart. Similarly, ineffective community spaces can be identified and improved. Upcoming spaces that promise to appeal to graduate students, such as “The Loft” (a classy Tapas and Wine Bar planned for the Price Center Expansion), would also benefit from the strong support of key administrators.

Funding Open Spaces

The La Jolla weather is some of the best in the world, and this is clearly a consideration of every student applying and matriculating at UCSD. However, the Open Spaces at UC San Diego, where students would actually be experiencing this world-class climate, are generally inadequately funded and supported. For instance, there is very little outdoor seating at UCSD, and the large empty spaces between buildings are largely—empty. This appears to be a result of the fact that funding for campus buildings rarely allocates suitable funds for the spaces between buildings. Enhanced funding of these spaces would enable students to work, study, and socialize outside, facilitating spontaneous meetings and connecting currently fragmented parts of campus. Possibilities for funding include alumni involvement in the development of specific areas, or even a percentage allotment from building construction funds, as is often taken for constructing public plazas and public art in other metropolitan areas.

Campus Publicity

Anyone trying to host a campus event knows that it is extraordinarily difficult to publicize events on campus. Simultaneously, it can be frustratingly difficult to discover those interesting events that do take place. While improvements continue to be made to online systems, it is just as important to consider improvements to

physical systems for event publicity. The existing system for posting fliers is extremely inefficient, and benefits only those groups who can post as many fliers in as many spaces as possible. Other schools have different designs for bulletin boards, which seem to promote better posting practices—these designs should be considered. Through improved design, large, central bulletin boards can act as a true resource for students interested in attending and promoting on-campus events.

Graduate Coordinators and Administrative Transparency

Many students have expressed a desire for the administrative structures of UCSD to be more transparent and accessible to students. It is well acknowledged that very few people actually understand the functional administrative structure of UC San Diego. A centralized website explaining resources would be very helpful, but at the same time it is important to recognize that department-level Graduate Coordinators will continue to act as an interface between graduate students and the rest of the school. Furthermore, the Graduate Coordinators are often the primary staff member responsible for departmental community development and continuity. Ways of assisting Graduate Coordinators in effective community development (within and across departments) should be explored.

Graduate Student Skill Development

Another issue worth discussing in this section is the increased importance of technical skills to contemporary research, even within a university environment that is ideologically focused on theory. Computer programming skills, or lack thereof, is often a critical obstacle in the pursuit of high-level research within many disciplines. There perhaps needs to be institutional support and leadership advocating computer programming skills as a critical academic literacy. Academic leaders should also support literacy of contemporary computer programs, such as video editing software, Photoshop, Flash, 3-D graphics, and Web programming. Student-led workshops could help develop these skills within the student body at a minimal cost.

Creating a Formal Research Agenda

The issues raised in this report are not necessarily specific to UC San Diego, but are likely to affect other schools within the UC system. A formal academic research agenda around these issues could be considered, examining the role and design of the University as a primary institution in contemporary society. Similarly, “social design” is a topic pursued within the arts, sociology, cognitive science, and urban planning—this might be a useful area of research to encourage in the coming years, as this emerging cross-disciplinary field has the potential to contribute significantly to the issues at hand.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of the improvement of the Graduate Experience, it is important to remember that the campus should not simply improve the epiphenomenal 'pleasure' of attending graduate school at UC San Diego. Rather, the domain of these recommendations is the sum total of the educational 'experience' received at UCSD, spanning academic advancement, social connectivity, and intellectual/cultural exposure. The "mastery" of an academic discipline is not the solitary goal of the graduate education; "connectivity" is also a primary value that must be consciously cultivated. Consider a graduate education that contributes to strong connectivity to peers, to faculty, to outside researchers and institutions, to multiple disciplines, and to industry—these are some of the educational experiences that we seek to enhance at UCSD.

Through my engagement with campus administrators in the process of developing this report, I have developed a strong faith in the high-level leadership and overall direction of this institution. Therefore, it is my sincerest hope that a new relational attitude can be established between students and administrators, leading to an institutional culture based on mutual trust and empathy, effective collaboration, and a shared, ambitious vision for the bright future of the University of California, San Diego.