

BFA Annual Report: AY 2013/14

This has been a year of transitions. While Janet Napolitano became the new President of the University of California and Nicholas Dirks arrived as Berkeley's new Chancellor, there has also been a change of guard in our organization. Colleen Lye and James Vernon became co-chairs of the BFA, just as Patricia Morton from UC Riverside became chair of [CUCFA](#) (the Council of UC Faculty Associations).

Despite revival of the state's finances, it is clear that we still have considerable work to do to convince legislators in Sacramento that the University of California needs greater public funding to ensure all Californians enjoy access to a world-class higher education. In fact much of the public discussion has been instead on the so-called 'cost problem' of higher education, with online classes still commonly seen as a potential solution. With Napolitano promising a temporary tuition freeze, our new Chancellor has accelerated his [predecessor's policy](#) of bridging the gap by raising private funds and increasing the numbers of international and out-of-state students.

The BFA has sought to ensure that neither the interests of faculty nor the promise of a high quality undergraduate education for Californians are undermined. We have supplemented the work of the Academic Senate by both providing analyses of the changing conditions on our campus and speedy mobilization around specific issues.

- Faculty Welfare

Many faculty were deeply concerned by the changes in healthcare coverage announced with little warning last Fall. The BFA alerted members to these changes and through CUCFA helped register faculty disquiet to UCOP. We also highlighted how those changes, including the abandonment of out-of-state retirees with a good luck/lump-sum payment, were part of a [broader systematic degradation of salaries and benefits](#), including [our pension plans](#). Having last year prompted the Academic Senate to investigate the extent and cause of delays in the processing of merit and promotion reviews, we look forward to the review of this year's cases as well as the report of Vice Provost Broughton's committee on inequities in faculty salaries.

- Online Education

We continue to believe that the rush to online education represents the biggest threat to our mission as a public university. In its [media work](#), [petitioning](#) and lobbying in Sacramento, BFA and CUCFA played important roles in revealing the dangers of the San Jose State model of opening up publicly accredited classes to private providers. This year we discovered how many companies are already in business on our own campus providing online classes and programs. Having obtained copies of their contracts with the campus, and the university's own contracts with instructors, we alerted the Senate to how faculty and lecturers are being asked to sign contracts that surrender copyright control of their own classes. We published a piece on this issue, and what it means for faculty and for the quality of undergraduate education, in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#). We have also outlined some of the [provisions an ideal contract](#) and urge colleagues to also follow the launch of [Author's Alliance](#) by our Berkeley Law colleague Pam Samuelson

- Academics First

BFA has continued to push Senate for proper [oversight of Intercollegiate Athletics](#): protesting the commercialization of campus space by Fox Sports TV, questioning the need and expense of the new Aquatics Center, and ensuring that Senate established an Athletics Committee as mandated by the Academics First Resolution of 2009. We also coordinated support [from faculty](#) and [Department Chairs](#) to

ensure Berkeley can continue to recruit the best graduate students by urging UCOP to provide them with a competitive stipend and livable wage. The excellence of our research and undergraduate teaching depends upon maintaining the quality of our underfunded graduate programs. The UC Santa Cruz Faculty Association has launched a petition in favor of better working conditions for graduate students and a speedy resolution of their contract negotiations at <http://ucscfa.org/petition2/>.

- Membership and Finance

Having introduced a more progressive fee structure last year, we have continued to renew and grow our membership this past year – as many of you new recruits know! Membership dues mostly go to staff salary, but as our membership grows they enable us to undertake more projects on behalf of faculty, such as hiring an IP lawyer to consult on the issue of copyright and online contracts. If we continue to recruit more members, we hope to be able to reduce membership fees. So please spread the word and encourage your colleagues to join!

There have been many other issues that we have been monitoring, analyzing, and organizing around: the privacy and efficacy of bmail and the proliferation of other new information systems on campus, the deterioration of historic facilities on campus, strong communications with student government and staff unions, and university disinvestment from fossil fuels.

The elected members of our Board - Gillian Hart, Colleen Lye, Greg Levine, Kevin Padian, Chris Rosen, Leslie Salzinger and James Vernon - were returned unopposed on May 15. They appointed Michael Burawoy, Lyn Hejinian, Celeste Langan, and Shannon Steen to the Board for a two-year term, while Charles Hirschkind, Zeus Leonardo, and Dylan Riley have a further year to serve. Kathryn Abrams, Wendy Brown, Ananya Roy and Dick Walker continue on the Board as advisory members.

As ever we encourage members to get in touch and let us know of your concerns and how we can better represent your interests. And most of all we thank you for your continuing support.

With best wishes,



Colleen Lye and James Vernon
Co-Chairs of the Berkeley Faculty Association