

# **BERKELEY FACULTY ASSOCIATION**

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR, 2017-18**

The installation of the new Chancellor on July 1, 2017 strengthened faculty confidence in the campus administration. Chancellor Christ appears to be very different from her predecessor: she is devoted to the campus, a tireless worker, a careful listener, flexible in her policies yet persistent in her principles. She has relied on the recruitment of loyal administrators from within the campus rather than outsiders who have so often led the campus astray with their own agendas, ignorant of the ways of academia.

Chancellor Christ has shown herself to be an able and judicious executor of the policy direction enunciated by previous regimes facing budgetary crisis – cutting costs and increasing revenues. It certainly has not been easy to cut costs without impoverishing education, and allowing the further erosion of infrastructure, including libraries. Small programs and departments seem to have suffered the most.

Attempting to reduce cuts by increasing revenues is not a simple fix; as faculty and administrators focus on organizing new professional programs, concurrent enrollment, and summer teaching, non-revenue-generating dimensions of the educational mission suffer. As we devote more resources to elicit support from new and old donors, we face conditionalities that can become financial and even intellectual encumbrances. Still, success in reducing the structural budget deficit won the campus recognition from Sacramento with an unanticipated \$25 million award.

Cases of sexual harassment continue to blot our copy-book, but nothing like previous years when cover-ups dominated news from Berkeley. The conversation has shifted to the appropriate and equitable punishment for offenders, something that is still shrouded in mystery.

Undoubtedly, the most public issue that has kept Berkeley in the news has been the political contest over Free Speech. Under the guidance of the new Dean of the Law School, Erwin Chemerinsky (and no doubt influential others), the Chancellor adopted a position of free speech absolutism. The decision to allow controversial speakers on campus last Fall avoided expensive legal cases in the future, but was extremely costly – both in terms of finance and campus morale – in the short run. The consequences of this call going forward remains to be seen.

### ***1. Budget Deficit and Intercollegiate Athletics***

At the end of her term as Interim EVCP, Christ announced that the annual deficit had been reduced from \$150 million to \$110 million. In her first year as Chancellor, it was cut from \$110 million to \$57 million, and in the coming year the aim is to reduce the deficit to \$20 million. Early in the year, the Chancellor was campaigning for a tuition increase, clearly believing that the state legislature would never reverse its austerity measures. The legislature is not as unfriendly to UC as the Chancellor expected, overruling our stingy Governor, who thinks higher education should mimic Chipotle's limited menu. At the same time, what the legislature approved was far less generous than some legislators wanted. The upshot: tuition will actually fall ever so slightly (by \$60) for the first time since 1999, when annual tuition was \$3,400. More than that, Berkeley received a one-time \$25 million grant from Sacramento to help cover our budget deficit. The aim is then to break even as

early as next year for the first time in many years – although the recent decision to invest \$30 million in women’s athletics, seemingly without any faculty consultation, puts us back to where we were.

Yes, Intercollegiate Athletics continues to be an albatross around the campus’ neck. Chancellor Christ announced that the central administration would take on 54% of the \$440 million debt stemming from the renovation of Memorial Stadium – a proportion corresponding to the seismic retrofit. This amounts to an annual interest payment of \$9.5 million out of a total annual payment of \$18 million. As a condition of taking on the debt, the campus plans to turn Edwards Stadium into a new development and require Intercollegiate Athletics to break even by 2020.

In March, we learned the results of yet another costly report on Intercollegiate Athletics undertaken by “independent consultants” that didn’t tell us much we didn’t already know, and in April, Jim Knowlton, previously Director of Athletics at the Air Force Academy, was appointed to lead IA at Berkeley. No doubt about it, IA remains a sacred cow.

## ***2. Free Speech***

The school year began with a threatened replay of Charlottesville – a clash between right-wing groups and Antifa – to be played out in downtown Berkeley, August 26-27. But the event fizzled out as the Berkeley community assembled to protest the invasion, outnumbering both sides. The violence that embroiled the visit of Milo Yiannopoulos the previous February (2017) and the controversy that surrounded Ann Coulter’s proposed visit at the end of the spring semester set the stage for what would unfold in the Fall. On September 14, we had the visit of Ben Shapiro. While there were hundreds of protesters outside Zellerbach, inside the event took place peacefully.

The anti-climax came with Yiannopoulos’ attempt to organize “Free Speech Week” (September 25-28) to be held on Sproul Plaza – an event, officially sponsored by a tiny group of students, the Berkeley Patriots. It was (falsely) advertised to be a parade of alt-right speakers, including Steve Bannon and Ann Coulter. Campus administration called in police from surrounding areas to protect students from the anticipated conflagration between Antifa and right-wing supporters. Yiannopoulos flew in on the Sunday for a 20-minute speech in the rain and then disappeared, never to be seen again. In the end, Free Speech Circus never took place, but the police presence still cost a pretty penny, estimated at \$4 million.

Throughout the Fall there were a series of public debates on the question of Free Speech. It was an education for all. Following a membership meeting, the BFA wrote an op-ed, condemning the subversion of campus life by well-financed outside provocateurs, and questioning whether legal liability should take precedence over academic freedom.

The response to all this politics from the UC Office of the President was the creation of a National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement in Washington, again with little faculty input. CUCFA (Council of UC Faculty Associations) has expressed its concern that this new center has failed to make itself heard on two bills going through congress that would prevent criticisms of the Israeli State on college campuses by defining anti-Zionist speech as inherently anti-Semitic.

## ***3. Political Assaults from Washington***

Apart from Attorney General Jeffrey Sessions’ ongoing accusations that universities, Berkeley in particular, are deliberately limiting Free Speech, the year saw Washington launch other assaults on

the university – the threatened invasion of campus by ICE seeking to pick up DACA students, and the taxation of graduate student fee waivers. Neither has happened so far, but the threats are in themselves significant. The Trump administration’s attack on science led Professor Daniel Kammen, Chair of the Energy Resources Group, to resign his position as the administration’s science envoy. The BFA held a public forum on October 2 to discuss “Science in Politics and Politics in Science”, and how the university might defend itself against attacks on the credibility and funding of science. We have to expect more political assaults on the university from the direction of Washington.

#### ***4. UCOP (University of California Office of the President) on the Defensive***

The President’s office has been on the defensive this year, as it tries to recover from a highly critical report by the State Auditor – highlighting unreported assets, the admission of out-of-state students at the expense of better-qualified California residents, and UCOP’s tampering with the responses to a campus survey of relations between campuses and itself. Even though campuses, especially Berkeley with its exorbitant living costs, are already over-enrolled, President Janet Napolitano continued to project increased enrollments of California residents – an extra 32,000 by 2030. No doubt she is trying to keep the Governor at bay – the Governor who wants to reduce time to degree, and improve through-put. We’ll see if we get a different tune from the new Governor, to be elected this November.

UCOP has been threatening to go below the 70% floor in its contributions to retiree health benefits, especially as medical costs increase and the demography of retirees changes. Napolitano set up a Working Group to look into ways of making the system of retiree health benefits more cost effective. On July 19, she declared there would be no change in the university’s contributions to health care of retirees next year, but the Working Group will continue to ponder the challenges facing benefit system. All three of CUCFA (Council of UC Faculty Associations), the BFA and the Berkeley Emeriti Association have been very active in applying pressure to UCOP to hold the line on retiree benefits.

CUCFA, supported by BFA, also requested reconsideration of the new UCOP policy that gives open access to all PhD dissertations – fearing such a move will encourage plagiarism of original research, depress opportunities for publication, and entail prohibitive costs for those whose research involves the reproduction of copyrighted materials.

CUCFA, again with BFA’s support, continues to promote the \$66 fix – the income-tax surcharge that will reset state support of higher education to the level in the year 2000. BFA had its representative at a meeting with legislators to support the proposal.

#### ***5. BFA in the Senate***

As a body independent of the Academic Senate, the BFA can adopt a more critical stance toward the administration. Thus, in meetings with Senate leadership, the BFA has continued to press the question: how it is that, according to UCOP data, the number of managers has increased five-fold over the last 25 years? We have never received a satisfactory answer. We have endorsed Professor Charlie Schwartz’s examination of the administration’s claim to reduce its own numbers. Thus, last June (2017) the Chancellor claimed the campus had reduced the number of staff by 450 FTE in fiscal year 2016-17. Yet the figures from UCOP show a drop of only 211 FTE and in the previous year an *increase* of 182 FTE. When this was pointed out to Rosemarie Rae, VC for Finance and

Administration, she admitted that she had confused FTEs with numbers of actual employees, but still the discrepancy has not been resolved. Another issue that exercised BFA members was the attempt to cap the number of semesters undergraduates could enroll in the College of Letters and Science. It was an attempt to speed up time to degree, but one that worked by compounding the hardships of the most vulnerable students. The proposal was presented at the Senate Meeting of May 2 and was defeated.

The Chancellor created a joint administration-Senate committee for developing a “strategic planning initiative” to envision the future of the campus. The BFA was invited to submit its own response to the four predetermined issues: Berkeley’s signature initiatives, creating transformative student experiences, identifying optimal enrollment levels, and building a strong financial strategy. In a memo to the steering committee, we emphasized three different sets of issues that the planning process overlooked: shared governance, education and research, and advocacy for the public university. We never got an official response to our memo, and the exercise seemed to be more a ritual of affirmation than a serious engagement with faculty concerns.

While the Senate leadership has reached out to us, we are still of the view that the Senate has too cozy a relationship with the administration, with the leadership circulating from one to the other. Not surprisingly, many faculty are skeptical of the Senate’s independence, and can only be persuaded to participate when the Senate is pushed to take a critical stance – as it was forced to do in relation to the previous administration’s incompetence and malfeasance.

In addition to activities in the Academic Senate we declared our support for the Student-Workers Union who represent Graduate Student Instructors and for AFSCME who represent many of our low-paid staff on campus. Both unions have been negotiating new contracts with the university. We also wrote a letter of concern to Mills College, following the layoff of five tenured faculty.

## ***6. BFA Board and Elections***

In the elections to the BFA Board this Spring, seven people were added to the Board. So your 2018-19 Board is, in alphabetical order: Lisa García Bedolla, Wendy Brown, Michael Burawoy (co-chair), Sharad Chari, Paul Fine (co-chair), Peter Glazer, Lyn Hejinian, You-tien Hsing, Seth Holmes, Celeste Langan, Gregory Levine, Chris Rosen (Vice-Chair), Leslie Salzinger (Secretary), Shannon Steen, and James Vernon. Paul Fine from Integrative Biology became co-chair on July 1. We are sorry to see the departure of Julia Bryan-Wilson, Penny Edwards, Gillian Hart, Colleen Lye, and David O’Sullivan, and thank them for all their dedicated contributions. As ever we are heavily indebted to Executive Director of CUCFA, Eric Hays, for his knowledge of all matters connected to UC and to staff member, Deborah Rosenberg, for all the work she does for us.

We continue with our weekly news digest compiled by Tyler Leeds and our weekly commentary (*That Was The Week That Was*). We look forward to your input and to expanding our membership in the coming year.

Michael Burawoy and Paul Fine, Co-chairs, Berkeley Faculty Association