

BERKELEY FACULTY ASSOCIATION:
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020

Many events of the past year have been overwhelmed by the onset of Covid-19 and the suspension of in-person teaching in early March. From the beginning, we have been concerned to support the [health and well-being of all campus employees](#), not just ladder faculty. We cautioned that the crisis should not be used to [institutionalize online instruction](#); we opposed freezing of employment, especially of lecturers; we argued that any [furloughs should be of a progressive](#) character, protecting lower-income employees. We developed a “[Pandemic Bill of Rights](#),” and we called on [UCOP to collaborate with all unions](#) and put aside its aggressive and disrespectful negotiating tactics. We insisted that [Black Lives Matter on campus](#) and considered the [possibilities of defunding or abolishing the police](#). We discussed these and other matters each week in the BFA newsletter, *That Was the Week That Was*.

One important issue to which we called attention before Covid-19 struck was the graduate student strike for a substantial Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). It began with a wildcat strike by graduate students at UC Santa Cruz and eventually spread to all UC campuses, including Berkeley. BFA repeatedly supported these COLA demands, recognizing that housing costs in California have impoverished not just graduate students but also many workers and undergraduates. See TW3 [#136](#), [#143](#), [#144](#), and [#145](#).

In the Fall we discussed a series of issues that carried over from the previous year:

- The possibility of [discriminatory health](#) care resulting from contracts with Catholic-run Dignity Health System;
- The problematic character of [Public Private Partnerships](#), especially the one that was to turn the Upper Hearst parking lot into housing and space for the School of Public Policy.
- The importance of CAPRA’s (Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation) efforts to [introduce reviews of administrative units](#), that had been stimulated by years of complaints about the expansion of “senior managers” on campus.
- The introduction of a controversial new metric for distributing central campus funds, based on student credit hours and the number of advanced degrees awarded, as well as historical patterns. [We argued that years of austerity have already strained departments, and that any recalibration should be undertaken without further cuts.](#)

We also reported on issues beyond campus, including ongoing criticism of UCOP’s lack of financial transparency. The new Governor, [Gavin Newsom](#), marginally more inclined to restore state funding, now faces the likelihood of huge deficits. A promised increase in state allocation has been already withdrawn, and [cuts to the University of California are now anticipated](#). Meanwhile, the Berkeley administration estimates that the campus has already [suffered revenue losses](#) in the neighborhood of \$200 million as a result of Covid-19.

President Napolitano announced she would retire July 1st. and the Regents set up a search committee for a new President. The BFA held two public meetings to discuss the [criteria for](#)

[selecting the new President](#): the first was a town hall on campus that opened with an arresting [address from Chris Newfield](#); the second featured a [conversation with Chancellor Christ and John Pérez](#), Chair of the Board of Regents, facing mild interrogation from BFA Co-Chairs James Vernon and Wendy Brown. Both these meetings were well attended by BFA members and non-members.

Not long before the campus closed, the BFA hosted a [panel discussion of Raewyn Connell's book, *The Good University*](#), with Khalid Kadir from UC-AFT, Raka Ray, Dean of the Social Sciences, and Erwin Chemerinsky, Dean of the Law School, It was a spirited discussion of divergent perspectives, massively attended with active interventions from the audience.

Throughout the year, Leslie Salzinger, Sharad Chari, You-tien Tsing and Seth Holmes participated in discussions with representatives of unions on campus in the Berkeley Labor Coalition. Our support for AFSCME appeared in TW3 [# 132](#) and for the Lecturers' Union (AFT-UC) appeared in TW3 [#125](#), [#141](#), [#150](#), [#159](#).

We had two well-attended board meetings – [one in the Fall](#) and [one in the Spring](#). We were sorry to see two faculty – Lyn Hejinian and Seth Holmes – depart from the Board, but we were able to recruit two exciting new members: Debarati Sanyal from French Department and Alastair Iles from ESPM. We are back to a 17-member Board, led by Co-Chairs Wendy Brown, Celeste Langan, Leslie Salzinger and James Vernon, with Michael Burawoy as Secretary. The number of BFA members continues to increase slowly as we have held exciting events and made clear our position on important matters during uncertain times.

As ever, we are heavily indebted to the Executive Director of CUCFA, Eric Hays, for his knowledge of all matters connected to the University of California, especially budgetary and educational issues as they unfold in Sacramento. The BFA is always indebted to our staff member, Deborah Rosenberg, for all the work she does for us, keeping tabs on membership and sending out our weekly newsletter, including a weekly news digest compiled by Tyler Leeds, and a weekly commentary. We are glad to report that there has been some diversification of the authorship of the weekly commentaries, with some excellent contributions from the Board and beyond. We look forward to your input and to expanding our membership in the coming year.

Michael Burawoy and Celeste Langan