

BERKELEY FACULTY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

It has been another difficult and exhausting year of pandemic teaching, but one in which we have also reaffirmed how important it is to be with each other together. We hope to continue to defend a considered, thoughtful path to in-person teaching that retains the lessons of the recent past and that responds to rising inequality through the pandemic years. As BFA, we remain committed to the continuing struggle to defend [the University we stand for](#).

At the start of the academic year, BFA rolled out its new [website](#), with links to its social media on Twitter [@FacultyBerkeley](#) and [Facebook](#) as well as a [podcast](#) on 'How Berkeley Works' beginning with a discussion with former chair Wendy Brown on accessible, quality, public higher education. As we began to return to campus, we held socially-distanced BFA gatherings and encouraged members and prospective members to attend. We were gratified that several new members attended these events, and we hope for their continued participation in the future of BFA.

Fall 2021 was the 'Delta Semester' that saw campus responding to the Delta variant of Covid just as administration sought to shift us back into classrooms. BFA co-chairs pressed the Chair of the Academic Senate for transparency on classroom-level air quality, particularly ventilation and air exchange rate data. We tried to make public Facilities Services' campus-wide survey of air exchange rates by room the previous year. To date, this room-level data has not been made public either on the campus COVID dashboard or, as far as we know, elsewhere. We advocated for a more cautious transition to in-person teaching in response to the administration's decision to make all classrooms under 200 in-person by default. We forged an alliance with representatives from the UC-AFT representing non-senate faculty, UAW 2865 representing GSIs, and the ASUC, and wrote a collective [op-ed in the Daily Californian](#) arguing against this one-size-fits-all reopening plan.

The Fall semester also saw the continued struggle of UC-AFT, which had at that point been negotiating with the UC Office of the President for two and a half years for a fair contract with a living wage, transparent and consistent rehiring process, and an end to churning. BFA co-chairs in alliance with UC-AFT, UAW and the ASUC wrote another Daily Californian op-ed insisting that '[the working conditions of lecturers are the learning conditions of students](#),' and that is why we should all back UC-AFT's fight. Several colleagues participated in UC-AFT's online bargaining efforts. Steadfast organizing by UC-AFT comrades led to [a historic agreement](#), which shows that the fight against UCOP's intransigence over the last several years had not been in vain.

Spring 2022 was the 'Omicron Semester,' and administration was gearing towards relaxing mask mandates. The alliance forged in the Fall reconvened at the start of the semester to draft a letter to Chancellor Christ and Senate Chair Cohen about a more cautious approach towards ending the mask mandate, and we continued to press for transparency on room-level ventilation data. The Chancellor's Office responded with an extension of the mask mandate. The important thing is that the alliance forged in the Fall of 2021 was ready to come together when needed and can be reactivated in the future.

The next major issue was the California Supreme Court's ruling in support of a lower court order to freeze enrollment at 2020-21 levels, in response to a lawsuit filed by Save Berkeley Neighborhoods, a community group challenging the University's long-range development plan and specifically the Upper Hearst Project. Administration sought to pose the enrollment freeze as frustrating its efforts to support admitted undergraduates just as it was trying to diversify the undergraduate student body with more URM, transfer and working-class students. Chancellor Governor Newsom's SB118 effectively reversed the threat of an enrollment freeze, but the event highlighted the precarious nature of Chancellor Christ's financial model with its focus firmly on private sources of revenue, including raising undergraduate tuition. This episode also served to remind us that enrollment growth, up 20% in the past decade, has other costs when the numbers of lecturers have almost doubled to teach those students as faculty numbers have flatlined, and staff numbers have shrunk.

These issues were key to a BFA public event on 'The University as a Growth Machine,' with Professor [Davarian Baldwin](#) of Trinity College in conversation with [Regent John Pérez](#). Baldwin is author of *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities are Plundering our Cities*, which explores the increasingly parasitic relationship between universities and our cities, and the costs of turning universities into growth machines that gentrify neighborhoods, deepen urban inequalities, steward police forces, deplete tax coffers and exploit low-waged Black and Brown labor. The event was extremely spirited, and Baldwin's talk will be archived on the BFA website. Audience members included graduate students as well as activists from the People's Park Historic District Advocacy Group and Save Berkeley Neighborhoods. Questions posed to the speakers included how to think about the 'public mission' of the university alongside its multiple roles as educator, financier, landlord and 'growth machine.'

Co-chairs James Vernon and Leslie Salzinger worked hard to extend and expand UC fertility benefits. Improved fertility benefits is not just in the interest of equity to the broad range of faculty affected by fertility issues, but also necessary for UC to compete with its rivals. Working alongside the Chair of Senates FWEL committee, and mobilizing other Faculty Associations across the UC system, they managed to get the systemwide Faculty Welfare Committee to urge UCOP to take this up with the insurance companies in the next round of negotiations. This is a very promising development. BFA plans next year to start campaigning for more affordable childcare on campus to help offset the cost of living crisis many faculty and their families are experiencing.

By the end of the academic year, there have been shifts on the Board. You-tien Hsing has resigned, and we thank her for her dedicated service, especially on the union solidarity committee. Michael Burawoy and Leslie Salzinger have seen the end of their terms. We thank them for many their devotion to the BFA through many years and multiple crises. Thankfully, they have agreed, along with another former chair, Colleen Lye, to join the Advisory Board.

The elected terms of Sharad Chari, James Vernon and Alastair Iles have expired, and elected members of Board voted to approve their continuation as appointed members. A formal election is not required this year because we have seven elected board members who still have a year left on their terms. With the resignation of Leslie Salzinger, and Sharad Chari on leave next academic year, James Vernon has agreed to be Chair in a custodial capacity, to maintain BFA

and its alliances for the occasion that faculty activism has to be reignited in defense of our alternative vision of the public university.

Not least, we extend gratitude to Eric Hayes and Deborah Rosenberg, our extremely diligent and wise staff. Eric continued to keep tabs on developments in Sacramento as well as in higher education politics across the country, while Debi stewards the publication of our messages to members as well as documenting membership. Warm thanks to both of them for their continued labors.

James Vernon and Sharad Chari, May 2022