

Order of The Golden Bear



ESTABLISHED 1900

Temporary Meeting Location, November 6th, 2018

Items for the good of the Order:

A Fellow encouraged others to be thinking about nominations, as the Order elections are approaching. The deadline for nominations is very soon!

Another fellow urged the Order to think more critically about the policies pertaining to the nomination and induction of community college transfer students- it's tricky business because current policy requires nominees to be on campus for a semester before becoming eligible for nomination, and by that time, it's already their senior year.

A fellow emphasized that the Order should be nominating people who will attend meetings regularly.

Items for the good of the University:

The topic today is about financial wellness- this is of course and age old topic. It has always been something that undergraduates and graduate students alike have cared about. Experiences at Cal can become dramatically varied, because of the financial burden that comes along with the already-rigorous academic environment. Although some data suggests we are doing better than national norms with regard to student debt, we still have areas that need improvement when it comes to financial packages, extremely high rents, among other things.

A fellow has come with some expertise on the subject: [primarily this data deals with undergraduates] There is currently an increased alarm amongst out of state and international students. Around 65% of students receive some sort of financial aid, and student debt is lower than the national average. Financial aid is a combination of resources that comes from the federal government, the state, and the University. Each of these sources has different qualifications about what students are eligible for the different types of aid offered. Turn-around time for students with inquiries has been improved from around 2 weeks to about 2 days, which is a step in the right direction.

A fellow inquired about the numbers of students who graduate with loans, and how that number compares from years in the past. Has there been a learning curve that has made students more loan-savvy or loan-averse?

Another fellow comments on a previous fellow's topic: how is financial aid affecting the ability of people with disabilities to attend Cal? Could components of our financial aid be deterrents for people, especially those with disabilities? How much aid is being put toward allowing athletes to attend versus other students?

A fellow poses a question: how does financial aid transfer over to housing?

A fellow asks if there is an increase in work study opportunities in recent years, and if so, does it play into how financial aid packages are shifting?

A fellow comments on some questions: it's a UC philosophy to consider the full cost of attendance, including tuition and fees, and living expenses, when distributing financial aid. The UC President's office calculates costs every two years now (a change from the previous model based on a three-year cycle) to try and correct the lag when it came to the off-campus living components of the budget. As for the loan-averse identity, students are continuing to come to campus with gifts allowing them to win other nationwide scholarships and awards. Additionally, we have one of the largest work-study programs in the nation, which could very well be a factor. In terms of students with disabilities, financial strength is still a factor. But a recent shift has made it so that students may have their tuition and fees prorated.

Another fellow is curious about data regarding students from marginalized populations, who don't have a lot of knowledge about how student loans work (and may go another route, like credit cards). In terms of prorating, it's much more difficult for graduate students to be accommodated in this way. Graduate students: GSI, GSR- there is a very stark difference in what one can be paid in these positions- though the minimums for these positions are in the 40,000's of dollars a year, grad students are prohibited from working more than 50% of full time. Also, there is a discrepancy when it comes to students eligible for more high-paying positions- it tends to be more STEM students who receive these positions.

Another fellow inquires that if 40% of students leave the campus with debt, is there a demographic associated with that portion of the student body, and if so, has the demographic changed? Back when this fellow was in school, the demographic was mainly students whose parents had good income, but didn't support their student.

A fellow adds, often students with debt higher with the Berkeley average tended to be transfer students who accrued debt before coming to Cal, students who took classes in the summer every term, and students whose parents didn't support them. In terms of graduate student population, the model for awarding of grad students is much more decentralized.

Another fellow has a question: the Berkeley campus is often compared to other private elites. We have a very high population of Pell grant recipients among undergraduates,

but we also have a good chunk of students in the middle whose parents should make enough to support the student, but for whatever reason cannot. What would be the gap that we would have to fill to cover even these students?

Another fellow sheds light on the graduate division: Many students are paid via a Block grant (limited funds). In the College of Education, a \$10,000 Block Grant only corresponds to \$3,800. This creates a large issue because this aid is so decentralized, and different from department to department. How does the University better support the graduate students? Not everyone can work with the faculty who receive large grants.

Another fellow is looking for broad feedback- In the New Yorker, 6 Harvard students were interviewed about how they got in, and it came to "How did you beat the system." Is the general conversation about financial aid mentally deprecating?

A fellow adds, schools with the top 20 endowments have more money than all the other US colleges combined. Have any schools began discussing completely picking up tuitions of students? One fellow mentioned that Princeton and NYU Medical School may have policies like this. Another fellow comments that this may be true, but NYU still has one of the steepest tuitions in the country.

A fellow comments that up to a certain family income, some of the elites like Stanford, Harvard, Yale, et cetera do cover full tuition for some students. What would the capital program have to do to meet the unmet need in terms of financial aid packages? The state has not been taking proper care of the UC- they want us, but they aren't willing to provide to us.

A fellow adds that it's estimated that more than a billion dollars would need to be raised to cover tuition for all graduate students at UC Berkeley. The endowment is just so low, it's difficult to match the need.

The Undergraduate level would be much greater, according to another fellow. There is a push at the federal level to provide more grant money for students. However, at the state level, there is talk about reducing the state money going toward the CSU and UC schools. In terms of scholarships, instead of a few students being awarded more significantly, now there tends to be a spreading out of scholarship money.

Another fellow mentions that even FAFSA is a very tricky platform to navigate. It's hard to know how to even apply for different resources. Is there conversation about making the ways to access the available resources easier for the students who need them?

A fellow adds that there is pending federal legislation that may affect the ability of grad students to take out loans- if it ever appears, it could stop grad students from taking out loans. PDST (for grad students): an additional fee for professional schools. All

professional schools across campus are starting to implement these, and they add costs to the money that grad students already have. SSGPDP (also for grad students) are not state funded. Only funded by the individual paying tuition.

Another fellow said that often, departments don't even know what resources are available to give to their graduate students! There are a number of fellowships and scholarships that students may not even be aware of. Maybe a database should be put together, that gets released in the spring, that compiles a lot of these, not affiliated with the actual University.

A fellow provides more information on context for PDST and SSDP: Big ones are Law and Business. Their supplemental tuitions were the highest in the entire UC system! The need for the supplemental tuition- about maintaining a quality program that the levels we expect to be maintained at UC Berkeley (it's also about competition for faculty salaries). It's also in the face of dwindling (or lack of) campus/state support for these programs. Since these two entities don't contribute money, the colleges are forced to tax their students. The fees are enormously high, but there's a reason.

One fellow provides a positive view: this fellow doesn't receive any financial aid from the University, and they're out of state. Regardless of the high fees for out of state students, it is more affordable than other schools for out of state students.

As for the student work situation, a fellow wonders if there is data about undergraduates and how much they work (outside of work study)? There are students who are working two or three jobs, and what students are working what kind of hours?

A fellow comments: on campus, disregarding tuition, costs seem to be rising when it comes to participating in different on-campus activities. Clubs and other organizations are becoming more expensive for students to take part in, which is really detrimental. There are invisible price tags that are forming a barrier for students to experience campus, or graduate students to do their work. For example, for a professional organization on campus, it can be around \$30 of just application fees. After you join, you may have to attend other events where it's required to pay for other social goods. "Pledging" an organization is a huge investment of time, to say the least. This adds on top of the money that is needed to put in.

A fellow confirms, and adds that grad students are also hit hard by additional fees- joining clubs in the business school, for example, can cost up to \$150. Sponsoring and funding organizations like SUPERB also costs money, and grad students are not always able to take part in these sorts of activities.

Additionally, fees are being required of students for simple needs and resources that are expected from the University (such as additional counselors at TANG). Even simple

things like parking fees in the UC village. Housing costs are increased for places close to campus.

A fellow adds insight in the conversation about professional schools that charge high fees: there are a few lucky schools on the campus that are so well-regarded, a degree from them is enough to “write your own ticket,” so that a potential employer may wipe out that debt. On the other hand, there may be some programs that never allow students to pay off that debt.

In addition, one fellow says it’s even worse if you’re a grad student in the humanities going into the workforce. Even after doing a PhD program in the humanities here, you may have a long-term problem about how to pay back that debt. In terms of incidental fees- back in the day, the state picked up a lot of fees for student activities. What has been happening in the last several decades, if students wanted various services, students would have to pick up the tab for them. For example, when students built the RSF, they built it with their own money. But now, not all students get the access they want to these services. A lot of student activity fields have been turned over to intercollegiate athletics, with no compensation to the students. The campus has a lot of looking in the mirror to do, about how it marginalizes and forces additional costs to students.

