

Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

September 14, 2021

The meeting was convened at 6:00 pm.

Items for the Good of the Order:

- Senior Hall is back open! Special thanks to the Alumni Secretary for all their hard work during the process of reopening the building.
- Order Council Meetings will be held on the off-Tuesdays at 6:30 in Senior Hall, all Fellows are welcome to attend
- Arleigh Williams Forum - Friday, October 1, looking for a few more panelists to participate during the Forum
- The Warden is welcoming discussion topic suggestions, particularly from students, but all Fellows are encouraged to submit ideas
- The Nomination Committee - still a work in progress, but will be discussing more in the upcoming Order Council Meeting

Items for the Good of the University: The First Year Experience at Cal

Prior to the meeting, the Warden prepared a set of questions and resources for the Fellowship to inform our conversation of the topic:

On the topic of The First Year Experience at Cal, here are some questions to consider:

- A Fellow begins with detailing their experience as a Junior Transfer
 - GBO Leaders for Junior Transfer groups are usually people who came in as first years, did not have the transfer experience
 - Alumni Events
 - Effects of starting college with no GPA, could limit scholarships
- A Fellow states that they think of first years as those who have never been on this campus before, extending past the traditional first year/transfer definition

Order of The Golden Bear

ESTABLISHED 1900

- What to do about those who have had a full year or year and a half online
- 2-2.5 full classes who have little to no experience of being present on this campus
- A Fellow builds upon the transfer student experience:
 - In the past, there were very few resources for Transfer Students
 - The availability of childcare helps many transfer students who are also parents
 - Humbling experiences for transfer students who did not have the large, intimidating lectures of Berkeley at their community college
- A Fellow explains that many transfer students might not be aware of the expectations that they face
 - The campus can do more on the academic side of things to prepare incoming students who have a different set of academic expectations
- A Fellow discusses their experiences with the variation of grading schemes throughout the Pandemic and how they will be affected with the return to campus
 - The Fellow asks if the playing field is level this year, and they suggest that it might be a bit more even since you have a range of students who have not experienced campus thus far
- A Fellow points out that it is difficult for Transfer students to reach positions of leadership, since they have a much shorter amount of time on campus
 - ASUC/GBO and other organizations require many years of experience, prior to reaching the top leadership positions
- A Fellow mentions that even as a first year, imposter syndrome hits, so this feeling is present both at the first year and transfer level
- A Fellow points out regardless of how far away a student is from home, it is important to pay attention to the mental health aspect of student life
 - The mental health services offered on campus should be ramped up
- A Fellow highlights a video from Chancellor Christ:
 - Metaphor with Cal as a huge city, need to find your neighborhood in the large city
 - Follow up with this metaphor, and how students are able to find their groups
- A Fellow mentions that first year students have to adjust to both the academic and social aspects of the campus

Order of The Golden Bear

ΔΙΩΚΩ

ESTABLISHED 1900

- Many first year students face rigorous interview processes to join clubs
- Many face a lot of rejection, despite a great effort put into the process
- This process takes away from the academic and social experiences
- Even more of a toll on students who work to support their education
- A Fellow notes that the campus has grown by about 10,000 students in the past decade
 - Was the campus designed to hold this many students?
 - There are many, many people on the Berkeley campus who are very driven and are used to being “the best”
 - But not everyone can be the best
 - Tendency to sign up for overbooking themselves this year to compensate for the lost year (online 2020)
 - Students might have an awakening and realize that they should not bite off more than they can chew
 - While it is important to find your community, it is important to not get buried too deep into where they are
 - Organizations with large breadth of variety are few and far between, but it is important to explore this more
 - This Fellow was an FPF student, push for smaller class sizes for the Fall semester to help build community in the first year
- A Fellow mentions that the year on Zoom made it easier to open themselves up and participate, but now that they are in a real room, it is more intimidating
 - The expected participation from courses hits hard for students experiencing in person for lectures for the first time
 - Smaller class sizes can definitely help reduce this effect
- A Fellow follows up on a previous speaker’s point about participation
 - The definition of participation changed during the pandemic
 - Posting a note on a discussion board, emailing a question, etc.
 - All forms of participation should count, not just verbal participation in lecture
- A Fellow notes that an interesting result of the pandemic - some students have become too involved
 - It was easy before to switch zoom rooms back-to-back, but now they would have to meet on campus

Order of The Golden Bear



ESTABLISHED 1900

- Conversely, many students might have been scared to get involved during the Zoom Year
- Online classes were already draining as is, having many club events after could also take a greater toll
- A Fellow suggests discussing the topic of “Burnout” more
 - Students have been so used to pushing themselves to the limit, but that might not always be the case for College
 - You never know when burnout will hit you
 - We should have more discussions about this, especially for incoming students
 - Students shouldn’t be penalized for experiencing burnout
- A Fellow states that transfer students in particular often face different challenges from other students
 - This is not a case about lowering academic standards, but more about increasing understanding and flexibility for those who face unique challenges
- A Fellow, a student GSI, notes that there is not the bandwidth available for GSIs to be flexible and more supportive of students
 - From the course staff perspective, departments should allocate hours to handling specific logistical issues
 - TAs want to be helpful and accommodate students, but it is not in their control
- A Fellow touches on a previous topic of incorporating into student groups
 - This Fellow knew a previous student who was about 12 years older than the average student age at the time
 - Being a part of a good social group can give you a solid foundation for other aspects of the Cal experience
 - If you know a student who is not experiencing the “general” experience, it is beneficial to reach out and provide some social structure
- A Fellow mentions that some clubs do not have any application processes, anyone can join
 - This Fellow also notes that there is still a lot of negative rhetoric present, especially in STEM courses
 - They should be able to make space and support everyone

Order of The Golden Bear



ESTABLISHED 1900

- Professors should not come out of the gate with expectations about failing a certain percentage of the class
- A Fellow stresses some of the comments about difficulties joining clubs
 - Although there are many clubs that do not have requirements to join, there needs to be a better system of finding these clubs (make them more well known)
 - There needs to be an easier way for students to find clubs which they know they will be able to join
- A Fellow recalls the topic of Burnout
 - This Fellow points out the importance of RAs, especially for the first years, and RAs are the first point of contact for a lot of students in the dorms since they are usually older
 - This Fellow touches on the importance of differentiating between students who need extra support
 - Possibly an issue with a lack of funding, not able for professors/GSIs to sift through and differentiate their entire course roster
 - High number of students failing Science/Math/History in the Cal State system
 - Reflection on K-12 education?
 - Prioritize hiring tenured faculty who are dedicated to solely educating undergraduates, and not turn into someone who will abandon the students for research
- A Fellow states that many of the “neighborhoods” at Cal are “gated”
 - Cal is made out to be competitive
 - This Fellow mentions that Transfer Students do not create a competitive environment, where as 4-year students tend to be more competitive
 - Transfer Students orient to Transfer Student things, but it is not good to be boxed in based on one aspect of your identity
 - Little bumps that you run into throughout your experience, but not everyone understands or are aware of
 - This Fellow claims that if you mess up academically even once during your first semester, you are not eligible for about 70% of scholarships on campus
- A Fellow notes that Berkeley prides itself on having over a 1000 students groups

Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

- The search engine is not robust enough, and it is hard to find exactly what you are looking for
- Sort alphabetically
- Participation on campus - If we ever go back to zoom, it is hard to feel connected to all the black boxes on the screen
- Walking through campus, you recognize people you had in-person lectures for
- A Fellow questions if we work against ourselves on some of the ideas presented this evening
 - This Fellow states that GBO is good at keeping people occupied and introducing students to campus
 - However, it restricts students from exploring student groups on campus due to the rigidity of their schedule
 - Per student testimonies, by day 3-4 of GBO, they are not going to many of the GBO activities
 - There are student groups that could provide students with a source of community if they are allowed to reach out to students
 - A Fellow notes that the online resource to help people find student groups does not have a robust search system or full details
 - Possible contact for the Dean of Students to present some solutions from tonight's discussion
 - Present a platform to provide students with a source of community for all students
 - A Fellow suggests a "training" for the faculty as well as the students
 - There appears to be more Faculty who are more interested in research rather than teaching students, particularly undergrads
 - This Fellow, a Faculty member, notes that only once in 27 years had a tenured faculty member sat in and evaluated them
 - It would be great for faculty members and students to feel more comfortable together
 - There needs to be more guidelines for faculty members on campus, as there seems to be a lack of evaluation systems for faculty members
 - This Fellow mentions that there has been a considerable amount of pushback from faculty members against evaluations
- A Fellow notes that other barriers in addition to application processes exist

Order of The Golden Bear

ΔΙΩΚΩ

ESTABLISHED 1900

- The financial barrier is a barrier to entry for a lot of students, as they might not be able to stay engaged
- How do we create spaces where students of all years are able to join and participate for their entire time at Berkeley
- A Fellow suggests giving the clubs who accept everyone a different recruitment timeline, so that they do not conflict with the clubs who are competitive in their interview process
- A Fellow touches on the lack of club recruitment periods throughout the mid-late weeks of September
 - Extending the recruitment period will increase the visibility of these clubs for all students
- A Fellow details their experience during their first year
 - The first semester can be very rough for a lot of students who do not come from uber-competitive high schools
 - It can be a wakeup call for a lot of students, but there needs to be support from professors/GSIs to help these students who are struggling with the culture shock
 - This Fellow asks what happens to the evaluations that students do at the end of the semester
 - Sometimes, it seems as though these evaluations have no effect on professors in future semesters
- A Fellow points out an emerging element of community:
 - Cohort Programs
 - Berkeley Changemaker Programs
 - Narrative based Cohort programs which bring students together around shared interests, this could be a point of optimism moving forward
- A Fellow follows up on the opportunity to pushing recruitment deadlines:
 - Many students respond with “they are already busy with other groups”
 - How do we strike the balance between being more accessible while also recruiting a good number of students
- A Fellow states that evaluations go straight to faculty members, and it is up to the faculty members themselves to adjust and implement changes
- A Fellow suggests the possibility of extending rather than shifting the recruitment timelines, so that people have the flexibility to join when they are available to

Order of The Golden Bear



ESTABLISHED 1900

The meeting closed with song and was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Meeting Minutes taken and compiled by the Chronicler for the Order.