

Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

September 28, 2021

The meeting was convened at 6:07 pm.

Items for the Good of the Order:

- A Fellow plugs an upcoming event at the Berkeley Lions Club, which comes with personal significance.
- The Warden reminds the fellowship of Order Council Meetings happening in the off-weeks
- The Warden advertises the open OC Position of the Scribe. Email the Warden if interested.
- Arleigh Williams Forum happening in Alumni House on 10/1, this upcoming Friday
 - Also still looking for AWF panelists
- The Alumni Secretary reminds fellows about the sign-in sheet for meetings

Items for the Good of the University: Discussion on Recent Rankings (#1 on Forbes) and Equity in Admissions Policies

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

- Why were we ranked as the best? Do we, students and associates of UC Berkeley, agree with this ranking?
- What are we doing well and how do we continue to do these things well?
- Why does the UC system not factor in legacies, donations, etc. in admissions?
- What do we look for in applicants in such a competitive pool?
- How does the quota system play a role here?
- How does the removal of the ACT/SAT requirement affect our newest class of admits?

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On the topic of Discussion on Recent Rankings (#1 on Forbes) and Equity in Admissions Policies here are some questions to consider:

- A Fellow begins with thinking about this ranking in its totality - Cal does seem to have a good equity-based approach
 - Fellow suggests that there is a lack of diversity in tenured faculty, could make it difficult for some students to connect with them
 - Is it harder for some professors/lecturers to access the resources that they need in comparison to other faculty members?
- A Fellow poses the question of how well the University does with recruiting and maintaining members of the community with disabilities
 - The Fellow also points out that graduation rates for athletes have increased under the tenure of AD Jim Knowlton
- A Fellow notes that rankings of colleges are biased in one way or another
 - This Fellow notes the differences in factors taken into consideration when determining rankings
 - Forbes' rankings included contributions for betterment of society and equity in admissions practices
 - The world may not be equal before or after attending Berkeley
 - Are we a stop in the middle of many social issues before and after this timeline?
 - How do we help students enter into the University despite the challenges faced along the way
- A Fellow points out that Cal does so much with so few resources - including from state funding and alumni donations
 - This Fellow postulates that there is a distinct difference between those who come out of Public Universities and those who come out of Private Universities
 - A key difference is that here at Cal, you have to be proactive in seeking out the resources that you need
 - There are a number of ways to increase accessible resources for students to help them along the way
 - The Fellow suggests that the rankings are a strong reflection of our students and alumni
- A Fellow calls to attention some admission policies:

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- The Fellow suggests that the University should reflect the demographics of the state, which right now, Hispanic students are underrepresented
- The Fellow notes that the University should help students cross the finish line at a sprint, rather than fully exhausted
 - The Fellow reflects on personal experiences with students of color who chose to attend other private universities because there were more resources available for them at the other schools (scholarships, counselors, etc.)
- The Fellow calls to attention a previous conversation with a faculty member who made negative comments about the representation of Hispanic students on campus
- The Fellow points out that we do lose a good number of exceptional students to other universities
- A Fellow notes that this is not the first time that our campus has been ranked #1 in the world
 - The Sunday Times of London, separate, independent body used similar metrics to the Forbes Ranking
 - The previous ranking had Berkeley at the top of many rankings except in the area of resources
 - The Fellow points out that we do have a lot of work to do, despite us being recognized
 - The Media uses rankings to sell magazines, newspapers, content - they often change up rankings year to year to cause disruption and sell more content
 - USNWR - based mostly on academics, but does not factor in other aspects which contribute to the quality of the university overall
 - This Fellow points out that even though they claim to change up the criteria used to rank schools, the general placement of schools does not really shift up
 - Forbes has hit on the right aspects of the criteria to focus on what students deserve
- A Fellow calls to attention the removal of the SAT requirement for application to the UCs
 - Given our prestige, this could set a strong precedent for other schools across the nation to also drop the SAT

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- This Fellow highlights the Admissions practices:
 - The Admissions officers read the essays first, including the “landscape” of where the student came from, and then they look at the grades afterwards
 - This specific order is unique to Berkeley
- The Fellow also calls to attention the importance of retention and admission
 - How welcoming is the campus? Can it continue to improve?
- This past year, there was an increase in the number of Native American students admitted, but a significant amount of them did not accept
- For Transfer Students:
 - The typical rule is for every two first year students admitted, one transfer student is admitted
 - However, this does not apply to out of state or international students
- A Fellow highlights the accessibility of the path to a UC, State School, or community college (Clark Kerr Vision and Plan for Higher Education)
 - Certain percentiles of students across high schools are guaranteed admission to UCs, CSUs, or CCs
 - Could California’s higher education plan spread to other states?
- A Fellow recalls that previous rankings had factors that favored smaller, expensive schools with smaller student bodies
 - Cal has always prided itself on bringing in first-generation students
 - Cal had fallen in rankings in previous years because they were making more social change in admissions policies
 - What Forbes was basically highlighting → The University of California is an engine for social change
 - People who came to Cal wanted to be here - including both Students and Faculty
 - Most students and faculty at Cal are not satisfied, always wanting to be doing something more
 - Also have focus on societal impact - not just in it for themselves
 - There is a lot to be changed - but the drive of students allows them to highlight what needs to be changed

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- A Fellow reflects on the student experience and what we can do better as a University
 - There used to be more activities on campus to bring people from all walks of life together
 - Create a larger sense of community, rather than create very small, niche communities (also still important though)
 - This Fellow, a high school teacher, reflects that many of their students, of whom a majority are below the poverty line, would prefer to go to another school that could provide them with more resources and support
- A Fellow recounts their initial reaction on the release of Cal being ranked #1
 - This Fellow reflects on the initial perception of what UC Berkeley has the potential to be
 - This University may fall short often, but there is still a lot to take away from here
 - This Fellow describes the differences between Harvard (Old, Hallowed Ground, with each school is its own Fiefdom, couldn't even go into the undergrad libraries), MIT (Could go anywhere, more open campus, but lacked the culture and diversity that Berkeley has), Berkeley had the best of what many other universities have to offer
 - This Fellow, an adjunct faculty member at DVC, notices that Diablo Valley College is the primary transfer feeder school to Berkeley.
 - The Fellow notes that Berkeley is not perfect, but it definitely does try
 - The Fellow poses the question: What is the university trying to do to capitalize on this recognition?
- A Fellow highlights some of the history of the University:
 - The initial charter of the University was aimed to educate those from the “mechanical classes”, those who would have been excluded from the universities on the east coast
 - Many state colleges across the nation are controlled by their state governments, but the University of California faculty and staff members demanded control and independence from the government
 - Many other state school systems have 1-2 elite campuses in their system, but the UC system has a more significant amount
 - Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Stanford do not have to admit students paying tuition, given the size of their endowments

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- Berkeley admits more students on Pell Grants than the entire Ivy League
- The Fellow suggests that we recognize the commitment from Berkeley to continue the legacy of providing for all students
- A Fellow poses their thoughts on tonight's topic:
 - In response to how to capitalize on this ranking - how to help people understand who we are as a university and what we are all about
 - Ways to increase engagement in all individual departments?
 - Response to a previous speaker's comments on how we are enacting change on campus
 - We are changing and adapting as society is changing
 - The nature of the students - The Fellow points out that every student that they have interacted with have a strong integrity, heart, and soul
 - This Fellow states that every student they meet reflects the heart of soul of the university
- A Fellow touches on previous comments:
 - The Fellow recounts that students, faculty, staff choose to be here at Berkeley
 - With Faculty, many other universities are waving much more money at them in hopes to draw them away from Berkeley
 - The university has struggles retaining faculty, we can't remain as competitive as other universities
 - There are caps on faculty salaries here at Berkeley
 - Some senior professors here at Berkeley are being paid the same as junior professors at other universities
 - We need to continue to increase the diversity of our faculty, just as we strive to increase the diversity of our student body
 - We do a solid job in diversity with admissions, but not with enrollment or retention
 - In light of the previous rankings, the Fellow suggests an option on how to capitalize on the rankings
 - Now we have people thinking in a different way, people thinking about what they want us to be
 - Forbes shows that what we are doing and what we have achieved is more in line with what the population wants us to do

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- A Fellow recounts the experience of a friend who attended Berkeley for Economics in undergrad, then went on to graduate school at Stanford
 - Comparison in similarity of Economics programs at both schools
 - Challenge the premise of being #1: Participating in a system where there will be winners means that there will also be losers
 - Coming out of a dark era of US History, dominated by negative consequences of someone who wanted to be #1
 - There is no place to go for someone who is #1 other than down
 - Presupposes that everything is about defeating other people, not uplifting other people
 - A decade ago, it was inconceivable that admissions tests would not be factored into admissions
 - What else can we question right now about the system now that we have the recognition?
- A Fellow responds to the underpayment of faculty members
 - The top-two highest paid members in the UC System are football head coaches
 - What are we doing if we want to be an academic institution
 - Quality of experience and Change Agent for Society
 - How can we be a change agent for individuals?
 - How to provide the undergraduate experience that we used to provide?
 - Are we doing right by our own students?
- A Fellow follows up to a previous speaker's comment about changing what you do not like about Berkeley as a student
 - We have a hybrid system at Berkeley, not small, isolated college system, but individual pockets at each college
 - Groups of majors in L&S to make things smaller?
 - It can be unwelcoming if communities are very large
 - One thing that we don't leverage enough - Alumni Participation, not in financial ways
 - Alumni Mentorship?
 - How can the University be proactive in engaging alumni in ways other than their checkbooks?
- A Fellow poses the question of why students want to come here?
 - Do rankings have an influence on students' decisions to be here?

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- This Fellow, a campus tour guide, tries to bust the myths and provide inspiration to try and persuade prospective students to attend
- A Fellow returns to a previous comment about striving to be #1:
 - The pitfalls or folly of striving to be #1 - do they apply to the University of California
 - We are #1 not because we tried to be there, we are #1 because we are striving to change society for the better
 - The rankings follow our accomplishments, they don't drive us
- A Fellow rediscusses the Hispanic Serving Institution conversation
 - How to convince people to provide financial support to various areas of the university?
 - How do we handle the issue of priorities?
 - Why is UC Berkeley seeking to be a Hispanic Serving Institution?
 - Our student body does not reflect the demographics of our state
 - It is a privilege to be here at Berkeley, but we do need to continue to improve
 - Are we a welcoming campus?
 - There does seem to be something for everyone here?
 - How do we provide resources for students to pursue undergraduate research in topics they are interested in?
 - Some student clubs do not recruit from all walks of life on the campus
 - How can we be ambassadors of goodwill to welcome those who don't necessarily
- A Fellow suggests some possible discussion topics:
 - What have we not heard before or what have we not expected to hear?
 - What is the bigger picture?
 - How sustainable is higher education as we have done it in the past?
 - How did remote learning impact Berkeley?
 - Are we going to be having a lot of these same conversations again in the future?
 - How do we want Berkeley to be down the line? Think big picture moving forward?
- A Fellow speaks about comments made about outreach:
 - How to expand outreach and communicate with all communities and bring them to Berkeley?

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- How can the campus as a whole engage in large scale outreach to connect with all types of potential students?

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

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