

October 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Topic: The Affordability of Higher Education

Meeting Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Items for the Good of the Order:

- A Fellow remarks about the new Interlocutor position, asking for suggestions and assistance.
- A Fellow remarks about building security, asking Fellows to please keep the front door closed while we are in session.
- A Fellow remarks about the upcoming Arleigh Williams Forum.
- The Acting Warden acknowledges that he is substituting for the Warden today. The Acting Warden mentions that the Arleigh Williams Forum is on Friday. The speaker will be the Vice Provost Lisa García Bedolla, with the topic of challenges facing higher education today.

Items for the Good of the University:

- [None]

On the topic of: Higher Education Affordability

- The Acting Warden suggests potential talking points for tonight's discussion and opens the floor.
- A Fellow opens the discussion about the difference in tuition between in and out-of-state students.
  - They welcome comments how students may be balancing coming to school and entering the workforce.
- A Fellow discusses the thought process of students from their rural town and how their decision on whether to attend University depends on housing affordability. Many of them live with their parents.
- A Fellow mentions their plumber who did not go to college. Rather, he graduated high school and went to trade school and now charges \$200/hr. He works hard and lives in a nice area and supports a family.
  - The Fellow considers this as evidence that one does not need a college degree to be successful in life.
  - The Fellow contrasts this with a hypothetical Berkeley graduate with a degree in English with no aspirations of graduate school who has a low earning potential.
  - The Fellow remarks about how someone could go to a much less costly institution, major in English, and have a very similar earning potential to someone who obtains a Bachelor's in English from UC Berkeley.
  - This fellow suggests focusing on the potential *outcomes* of one's degree, not what they put in to get it.
- A Fellow mentions how degrees are not worth as much as they used to be.
  - As a business major, this Fellow recognizes that the name "Haas" has more value than the actual content of the learning.

- The Fellow agrees with a previous Fellow that thinking about the outcomes is critical.
  - The benefits of network and prestige is where the cost is justified.
- A Fellow recalls their reasons for coming to Berkeley. As a political science major, this Fellow's decision was impacted by the fact that they could study from professors who've been in a political cabinet.
  - This Fellow brings up having a degree as a benefit vs being a necessity. They suggest that in some contexts, it is necessary to have a degree.
- A Fellow emphasizes the importance of certifications. For example, the certification through Berkeley's Sutardja Center can be very valuable to an employer.
- A Fellow recounts their experience originally being rejected for having a disability. They reflect that Berkeley was responsible for their transformation from being a raw human into being a more developed and complete citizen.
  - This Fellow emphasizes the importance of higher education in developing citizens as the thinkers and doers of the nation-state leading us to a better tomorrow. It's not "what can education do for me" but rather "what can I do with my education for the better of mankind?"
  - They acknowledge the multiple capacities in which they've been involved with the university.
  - This Fellow remarks about a sense of being on the same frequency as other Berkeley graduates. It's about buying into an ecosystem of refined, selected people who have a unique privilege. Used responsibly as stewards of the state of California, we can be agents of change.
- A Fellow compliments the previous speaker's eloquence.
  - They reflect that there is a premium on learning how to think critically and not just simply be mechanical.
  - This Fellow remarks about how the University of West Virginia has had to cut some of their programs. Whereas at Berkeley, our donors and the State of California have helped support us in keeping them.
  - They suggest that the arts are at higher risk than the sciences.
  - This Fellow concludes by reiterating the importance of critical thinking.
- A Fellow begins by disagreeing with the previous Fellow, saying that the University of California, let alone the University of California, Berkeley is not the *only* place one can learn critical thinking.
- A Fellow agrees that there is a level of elite-ness that comes from having a higher education.
  - They pivot to discuss housing and the things Berkeley is doing to allow people from all over the globe to come here.
  - They also comment on creative thinking. They suggest that we are in a system, a "machine."
  - They acknowledge that those who go straight into a career from high school can also be at an advantage to those who go to four years of university in that they have developed a deeper level of critical thinking.

- A Fellow qualifies their previous statements. They agree that there are skills and knowledge that one can gain without going to university. However, there are things one gains from going to university – a breadth of knowledge and skills.
  - This Fellow clarifies that they did not mean to suggest that the University of California is the only good university in the world, but surely is *one* of them.
  - This Fellow compares the out-of-state student percentage at Berkeley versus, say Michigan and says that ours is much less. At close to 10% out-of-state, we have so much demand right here in California, we can barely accommodate it with all our UC campuses.
  - We provide some of the greatest benefits at the lowest cost, as compared to other universities.
- A Fellow brings up some statistics from their hometown. Their hometown’s average annual salary is somewhere between \$25000 to \$40,000.
  - They reflect that had they not come to Berkeley, they would likely have gone to a two-year college and moved back home with family and continued working at Little Caesar’s like they did in high school.
- A Fellow agrees about the high value of a Berkeley education.
  - They suggest that their *family members* see the transformation they’ve undergone; their family would agree that this Fellow takes a different approach to problem solving as a result of having attended at four-year university.
- A Fellow remarks about how as a public university, we are less able to compete with top elite universities in that we cannot throw as much money into scholarship as they can.
  - This Fellow mentions that some of their peers in the middle class are taking on a ton of debt since their family makes enough not to qualify for financial aid, but not enough to support them through college.
- A Fellow agrees that they have undergone a personal transformation too.
  - This Fellow considers their perspective as a first-generation student.
  - They raise that their little brother wishes to come to Berkeley for engineering, and they are giving him class suggestions to take in high school, yet this Fellow worries that he will not be able to get in as even those with the highest grades and many AP classes don’t make it into Berkeley.
- A Fellow speaks about the holistic review process of applications and that the admissions office considers the context of the opportunities one is afforded in their prior experiences.
  - This Fellow recalls the experience of People of Color (POCs) trying to navigate Berkeley. This Fellow reflects that if they were to make the decision to stay today, it would *not* be based on the prospect of learning critical thinking, but rather the network and connections one gets from being here.
- A Fellow shifts the conversations to discuss the California Community College (CCC) transfer experience.
  - This Fellow considers their perspective as First Generation and Low Income (FGLI)
  - The California Promise Grant is a great way for students to be able to afford to attend Berkeley.

- They mention that some CCCs have less resources for their students looking to transfer. Some CCCS like De Anza and Diablo Valley have more resources for this, including dedicated advisors who are very familiar with the transfer process.
- This Fellow speaks on the experience of Junior Transfers in applying to student organizations. They feel they are sometimes rejected for being too old to be mentored.
- A Fellow recalls their prior experience as a GSI in data science. They express that there is a dichotomy between prioritizing the people who are here now versus those who will be attending here.
  - They raise the advice they gave their younger sibling who was applying here for engineering.
  - They question where the line should be drawn to still increase social mobility.
- A Fellow recounts their experience getting into Berkeley on a scholarship of about \$20,000. They lost the scholarship when their tuition was switched to out-of-state.
  - They suggest that out-of-state students have fewer scholarship opportunities. Out-of-state scholarships are effectively limited to the Pell Grant.
  - This Fellow gives the example of an out-of-state student coming to Berkeley to try to study business. Before the program switching to direct admit, out-of-state students might come to Berkeley and spend \$140,000 only to not be admitted to Haas and then be forced to pivot to study Economics which they may not wish to.
- A Fellow mentions that the conversation of affordability must be considered in the context of the regulatory requirements/standards of scholarships.
  - They provide a personal anecdote about receiving a merit-based scholarship. They suggest that this conversation should shift to consider the outside resources we can provide to students.
- A Fellow questions whether it is right for in-state students to have such a discount on UC tuition. They contrast with the other 49 states that don't have opportunities similar to those of the UC system. They pose the question of establishing a federal university.
  - Different states put different amounts of money to their universities. They raise the question of why students from other states should have less opportunity to pursue an education at a UC school.
- A Fellow suggests that elite private universities don't even need to charge tuition. They have so many resources and so few students, yet they do charge tuition to continue to provide for their students.
  - In response to the previous Fellow's comments, this Fellow argues that we can't solve the problems of other states' universities. They add that other states have just one flagship university.
  - California has been diminishing its support to higher education.
  - UC provides Pell grants and tuition remittance which cover tuition but not housing.
  - We generate about \$415 million per year in fundraising. Our endowment is \$4B, whereas some private elites have \$30B or \$40B.

- This Fellow closes by re-raising the issue of POC students not feeling welcome on the campus.
- A Fellow recalls their experience as a first-generation student.
  - They wish to study business. Business is cutthroat here.
  - They provide an experience of feeling tokenized when applying to clubs. They noticed there were not a lot of people like them in the club's demographic. They were scapegoated for things that went wrong in their student organization.
  - They recognize that there are student organizations working to improve this, but they're really small.
- A Fellow re-raises the experience of POCs on campus. They recall their personal experience considering joining the Women in Business club.
  - This Fellow finds that as a POC they have to be the first to reach out to non-POC students. Otherwise, you can go the whole semester without really meeting your fellow classmates. The interactions with non-POCs are often transactional such as "did you do the homework yet?"
  - They eventually settled on wanting to find clubs that weren't as diverse but didn't make them work.
  - This student wanted to meet diverse people from different backgrounds but they weren't able to. This Fellow ends with a metaphor: There isn't an open door, there is more of "knock if you want to come in."
- A Fellow raises that the FAFSA is changing. It is supposedly being simplified, but of course there are nuances with that. It will now consider parents' taxes up to two years back.
  - This Fellow urges people to talk to their representatives.
  - This Fellow provides an anecdote of how they were able to earn \$10,000 for 450 hours of community service through a government program.
- A Fellow considers their experience as a student with a twin who also attends Berkeley.
  - This Fellow remarks how they each get *different* amounts of financial aid.
  - This Fellow contrasts the cost of attendance at Berkeley with the cost of attendance for European universities.
  - This Fellow mentions that they and their twin both work 25 hours per week and it is having an effect on their academics.
  - This Fellow has hesitations about pursuing graduate education considering their current debt and the high cost of further education. They question: without pursuing a graduate degree, will they even be able to pay off their undergraduate degree?
- The Acting Warden acknowledges the waning remaining time and encourages the remaining comments to be focused on actionable items.
- A Fellow raises the question of belonging and whether more GBO events could help students find their community here.
- A Fellow recalls that the University is attempting to become a Hispanic Serving Institution. Yes, the LatinX Student Resource Center has been opened, yet there are hardly any resources there. It is mostly just studying.

- The university has said their hands are tied and nothing can be done this semester.
- A Fellow mentions their involvement Stiles Hall as a tutor for underrepresented students. They wish they had something like this as a high school student.
  - This fellow provides the following advice and inspiration to students: “If it doesn’t exist here, create it.” They give an example of something they have done in this vein.
- A Fellow considers young alumni student giving. This Fellow gives back to the Student Leadership scholarship which helped provide for them for four years. Other young alumni don’t want to give back – there are many poor attitudes around this.
  - This Fellow questions whether we have an endowment which could help to provide a scholarship for a graduate student, of which we have about 12,000.
- A Fellow urges us to find more opportunities like GBO to help students make connections. They praise GBO for helping to do this well.
  - The more we can get students to enjoy their time here, the better.
- A Fellow mentions the state legislature and how the young generations need to vote to support the types of legislators that will enact what they want to see.
  - Our votes do count!
  - One potential means could be rewriting the tax code.
  - Will require hard work and time.
- A Fellow raises that there is a bit of a culture of “I’m more stressed than you are.”
  - This Fellow sometimes takes a stroll down Sproul just to listen to what people have to say.
  - The pessimistic culture of “I’m too busy, I can’t do it” is detrimental to fostering a community that supports students.
- A Fellow offers some parting thoughts:
  - This Fellow feels that they got more than education here, but rather an *experience*. In the Cal Band, they got daily lessons in leadership and organizational behavior.
  - They recount their time in the Latino business student organization. They were never asked their Latin background.
  - This Fellow contrasts what they thought they wanted to do with their life at different points in their life.
  - This Fellow mentions the POC they met in Cal Band.
  - This Fellow recalls three things that make Cal unique to them that they would tell to others when they led tours.
    - Excellence
    - Diversity
    - Education
  - They conclude with a remark about this being the “Berkeley Experience.”

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31PM.

The meeting closed with song, and notes were compiled by the Acting Chronicler.