

October 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes  
Topic: Wellbeing and Balanced Health  
Meeting Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Items for the Good of the Order:

- A Fellow speaks about the Big Game. This Fellow is buying a bloc tickets (\$60 each). They are \$70 each otherwise. Contact this Fellow if you wish to purchase one.
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Items for the Good of the University:

- [None]

On the topic of Wellbeing and Balanced Health:

- The Warden introduces the topic. Some potential talking points include:
  - Stress and mental health
  - Coursework/academics
  - Club leadership
- A Fellow poses the question: what do students consider to be a balanced and healthy life?
- A Fellow responds, saying that for them, a healthy schedule looks like having four-day weekends by loading up on Tuesday/Thursday classes, working with others on projects so as not to get stuck on them alone, and staying on top of their work. They appreciate a balance of work and free time.
- A Fellow references the breadth requirements from the 60s when they were a student here. They ask whether these are still in place.
  - This Fellow voices their belief that a balanced swath of courses (a mix of science and liberal arts courses) is key to being well-rounded.
- A Fellow recalls their experience applying to colleges. They found that different universities had very different sets of requirements. Some were very freeform, whereas others were more strict.
- A Fellow states that they like the breadth requirements. It is the 120 unit requirement that is higher pressure. Some students may need to take 16-20 units some semesters to reach this.
  - They suggest loosening the 120 unit requirement for some majors that have fewer requirements.
- A Fellow mentions that they'll be graduating having taken 210 units. Their program, which combines biology and business, has a lot of requirements. This student feels that the university requirements are sometimes too strict, disabling students from having a work-life balance. They distinguish that some degree programs are not this way, but some are.
- A Fellow poses a question to student Fellows, especially new grads. They question how students decide which curriculars to dedicate their time to.
- A Fellow mentions that they are involved in 11 different student organizations, having held leadership positions in six of them. This Fellow recalls their experience being

rejected from clubs as a Freshman and feeling discouraged from applying to others for the rest of their Freshman year. The share that in one interview cycle they took part of for a club, there were over 80 candidates, of which six were chosen. Now as a leader of one of these organizations, they see the other side of it. This Fellow switches to discussing the stereotype of Berkeley students in that they are depressing. Some students are able to find a good balance of work and free-time. Others are not and become depressed.

- A Fellow talks about the competitive club culture. They share a personal anecdote about the very lower acceptance rates for the internships they landed. They feel that Berkeley prepared them for the rejections they received on the way to their ultimate offer(s). This Fellow shares that they heard a story where a Berkeley student was not hired due to the stereotype of being “vipers,” i.e. hypercompetitive.
- A Fellow discloses their cancer diagnosis from four years ago. They believe it was a result of poor diet and lifestyle. They did not sleep enough in high school and in undergrad. If they could go back and give advice to their 16 year-old self, they would tell themselves not to cut sleep. They recount that they had a high level of stress. At the time, they thought this was a good thing since they could do well under stress. But now, they believe that stress is one of the biggest killers. This Fellow finds that meditation is a great way to reduce their stress.
- A Fellow shares their experience having a “low-maintenance” Cal experience. They recall choosing to have a more “chill” freshman year, not overloading themselves with clubs right after Covid ended. This Fellow chose to do this since they know that they are prone to getting overwhelmed. This Fellow says that the Order was the first club they really committed to and they are grateful for having been chosen and for choosing to embrace it. This Fellow appreciates that although attendance is encouraged, the Order does not require attendance at every meeting. This Fellow thinks students would benefit if other clubs were more like this.
- A Fellow suggests that community and building health into community can be really beneficial. They share a personal anecdote about their club that would remind students to go for a walk, take breaks, etc. This Fellow appreciated that their club cared about its members’ wellbeing.
- A Fellow agrees with the previous fellow about finding community. They share that they have learned a lot of life lessons from their college life outside of classes. For example, this Fellow joined a fraternity, which they never imagined they would, and this helped open them up to other opportunities like student government and sports. They appreciate that this community helped remind to take care of themselves.
- A Fellow recalls their experience a freshman whose older brother was attending Berkeley as a senior. Their brother’s advice was to find community, and this was a great piece of advice for them. This Fellow shifts to discuss how special Cal students are out in the real-world. This Fellow was shocked to hear the previous comment about Cal students being like “vipers” as this does not match their experience and idea of others’ perceptions of us. This Fellow suggests that one’s connection to the university will depend on how much they do to get involved on campus.

- A Fellow also disagrees that Berkeley students are viewed as “vipers.” This Fellow suggests, rather, that we are seen more as overachievers.
  - Graduate student scholarships are considered as “income.”
  - Students lack a bereavement policy whereas staff have a 5-10 day bereavement policy. Students have to “suck it up.”
  - There is a fund that students pay into. If students didn’t pay into this, we would not have access to the RSF. Another place these funds go are to extended hours at UHS, which we often see as the bare minimum hours to support students’ basic needs.
- A Fellow talks about alumni involvement. This Fellow believes that with some input from alumni, they would have made some different choices as an undergrad.
- A Fellow suggests that one of the reasons that Berkeley students feel so compelled to overachieve is due to the faculty. This Fellow recalls that back when they were a student, they had the chance to have lunch with a previous Alumni Secretary of the Order, and found that they were very welcoming and willing to listen to this Fellow’s struggles. They yearn for the days when faculty would be more like this and help remove pressure from students.
- A Fellow mentions that some students are not great test takers. Some courses have exams worth 40%, whereas homeworks that are done every week are only worth, say 10%. Reducing the weight of exams down to be closer to that of other assignments would help reduce stress from students. This Fellow shares that some students often look for “GPA booster,” “Easy A” classes just to try to increase their GPA.
- A Fellow shares that they had to drop a class since they had to miss a mandatory exam that the professor would not accommodate, despite was traveling in pursuit of a job opportunity. While this Fellow’s accommodation was denied, their student athlete classmates were able to get an accommodation. This experience of having to drop the class put their major and minors in jeopardy.
- A Fellow suggests that there is a lot of “administrative bloat.” Perhaps we would benefit from having a larger proportion of teaching faculty.
- A Fellow speaks about accommodations for student athletes and how there is conversation around changing it.
- A Fellow desires more courses to record their lectures. This can help students greatly.
- A Fellow suggests that it would be good for all lectures to be recorded and for classes that need active participation, there can be a class policy on when to allow students access to these recordings. Two of this Fellow’s classes does this already, and this Fellow finds that it works quite well.
- A Fellow suggests that the faculty have an obligation to make it as easy as possible for students to succeed in their class. There are all kinds of possible reasons a student will struggle in a class. This Fellow acknowledges that some students will take advantage of the system, but it is better to air on the side of helping students than not.
- A Fellow feels that the topic of wellbeing is taboo at Berkeley. They pose the rhetorical question of whose obligation it is to start a conversation when a student is not taking care of themselves.

- A Fellow shares a personal anecdote where they reached out and spoke with a mental health professional through a school resource. At the end of their talk session together, this Fellow asked when they could meet again and were told that they couldn't. In order to meet again with a professional, they needed to set up a recurring meeting and start paying. This Fellow also mentions how the Fall semester has no Fall break, which can make the fall semester a bit of a marathon for students. This Fellow believes Homecoming should be moved to avoid midterms.
- A Fellow mentions that at Berkeley, midterm season does not end. It lasts the whole semester. Perhaps it would be nice if there was a window in which midterms were guaranteed to lie. They also suggest that Homecoming is at the mercy of the Football schedule.
- This Fellow believes that some resources, such as psychiatric services are inequitable. Some students can repeatedly get access, whereas others are turned away after one visit.
  - This Fellow has a letter from a Dean stating that they compete in an external competition on behalf of the university. Presenting this letter has opened up a lot of doors for them, allowing them to get lots of accommodations from professors.
- A Fellow shares that as a legal studies major, their professors have been very accommodating. Whereas in high school they almost failed a class after having the flu, professors here are much more willing to accommodate when situations arise.
- A Fellow believes that the mental health resources here are very spread out and attributes this to the fact that the ASUC has status as a 501(c)(3). They believe that this, as opposed to funding, is the reason some resources are less accessible. This Fellow considers "healthy companies" that take care of their employees as humans first, and desires the university to take a similar approach, considering students as "pre-professionals."
- A Fellow strongly suggests students to check out the Cal Alumni Association, ask about the benefits of membership, and seek out ways for students to get connected with alumni.
- A Fellow mentions a mentorship program where alumni mentor students for 2-4 years.
- A Fellow builds on a the previous point about inequitable access to resources. Some students are unable to pay for ongoing mental health support.
  - This Fellow also touches on the independence of the ASUC and CAA. It is and should be the campus's job is to work collaboratively with these organizations.
- A Fellow suggests one possible solution: Have professors project things on the screen before class like "Stressed out? Check out X resource."
  - This Fellow suggests another possible solution: there may be some alumni who are therapists that are more than willing to volunteer some time to work with students. Perhaps an hour per week to meet with a group of ten students regularly.
- A Fellow mentions that some resources need to be demystified for students to be able to know about and take advantage of them.

- A Fellow agrees that the health and wellness resources are mystified. The policies have changed since this student was a freshman. This Fellow also mentions that our counselors have a high load. We have a low counselor to student ratio. This Fellow believes there are some professors who cause a lot of undue stress to their students but are allowed to continue teaching since they're leaders in their field.
- A Fellow recounts an experience trying to access a group mental health session and being told it was full. They had just lost a parent and were turned away from getting help. Plus, students don't have bereavement days, so this Fellow was just left to struggle with the situation on their own. This Fellow poses the question: Why doesn't the university treat students like people first?
- A Fellow recalls their experience in an identity-based on-campus housing setting for POCs. In this setting, they were given a lot of support where they were encouraged to build community and use mental health and other resources on campus.
- A Fellow shares their experience as a TA for a class. They feel like there is a lack of guidance as to what to do when students come with issues. This Fellow believes that small-group introductions can be really helpful for students to build connections and find people upon which they can lean in times of need.
- A Fellow believes that there should be standardization across departments. They share a personal anecdote about being denied an accommodation from the Sociology department, despite having a DSP letter. They were denied since the language did not match exactly what was needed to grant the accommodation.
- A Fellow believes that implementing suggested solutions should not be left to the administration. We, as individuals in the greater campus community, should support one another. This Fellow believes we should get the word out at the dorms, not just in classes, and use that as another conduit for checking up on students.
- A Fellow suggests "sticker events" where stickers are posted in libraries around campus and students can take stickers with references to resources they can use. This worked especially well at this Fellow's high school.
- A Fellow believes that the DSP accommodation process should be streamlined. They claim that there are broken links on the DSP website, which hinders students from being able to get the accommodation they need.
- A Fellow believes that giving out compliments to others is a great way to uplift one another. We should all be more positive with one another.
- A Fellow agrees with consolidating the times at which exams occur. When they were a student in the 60s, there was one week of midterms and one week of finals. This was much more streamlined.
- A Fellow recaps some of the great potential solutions including putting up "advertisements" of campus resources on projector screens in between classes. This Fellow also highlights the value of the RSF.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 PM.

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