

Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

The meeting was convened at 6:02pm.

Usual Place, November 12th, 2024

Items for the good of the order:

- A Fellow shares that the University of California Rally Committee will host a card stunt show on Thursday, November 12, from 2-3 pm at California Memorial Stadium for a card stunt, which will be recorded and shown for the Big Game next week. UCRC will have Bonfire Rally t-shirts and gift cards for the Berkeley community.
 - Another Fellow ask about accessibility into the stadium. A Fellow answers to enter from North Gate 1 and notify UCRC members once they arrive.
- The Steward encourages all Fellows to consider running for the positions of Scribe and Steward for the next semester.
- A Fellow states that the entire fellowship should begin thinking about The Order's leadership that will take place in April of next year.
- A Fellow shares that through a labor of love, a few Cal Alumni have started a podcast about the University of California. They co-founded the Cal History, Spirit, and Traditions DeCal at UC Berkeley. They believe there is a way to leverage the community and share experiences. The podcast is called "Tell the Whole Damn World" and is inspired by Ahmad Anderson's Bear Territory chant. The podcast aims to spotlight researchers, professors, and other leaders who have given their lives and are passionate about UC Berkeley.
- The Warden shares that Nominations are due next week, November 19th, by 11:59 pm electronically or turned in person during the Order Council Meeting. During the Order Council Meeting, we will begin planning for the Order's Birthday celebration next semester and encourage ideas to be sent via Google Form attached to the email.
 - The election meeting will be held on December 3.
- Another Fellow shares that next week is the Big Game on November 23rd. The Bonfire Rally is an annual event at the Greek Theatre at 7 pm. They invite everyone interested, students and faculty may bring their families to celebrate the end of Big Game Week and get excited about the Big Game.
- A Fellow shares to keep a look out on November 18th, Oski will ring the NY Stock Exchange Bell.

Items for the good of the university: Navigating Financial Sustainability in Higher Education

- *How can we improve the student experience from the very beginning through after graduation*
- *How can the relationship between students and the campus be improved?*
- *What stands in the way of a personal and meaningful relationship between a student and the campus?*
- *Grad Student Experience*

- *Graduation Experience*
- *How can we ensure that each student finds a community that makes Cal feel smaller?*
- *How can we encourage participation in student activities when it is so competitive to get in?*
- *What can we do to encourage community, positivity, and kindness in a competitive and busy environment?*
- *How are cultures of help and support created?*
- *How can the campus support students' needs and goals?*
- *Berkeley Residential Life/Dorm Experience*
- *Registered Student Organizations*
- *Life in the classroom*

The Warden opens the floor for discussion.

- A Fellow shares that one of Chancellor Christ's legacies is increased student housing, with many new beds available within the next five years. This expansion is significant compared to previous years, and many more students will have access to housing. New residential spaces will provide a great opportunity for freshmen and transfer students to create new traditions. Residential and campus leaders will have the chance to reach out to first-year students and those on campus for the first time, fostering connections from the beginning in the places where students live.
- Another Fellow discusses a conversation with a student from the College of Natural Resources about the importance of adopting and maintaining university traditions to ensure a positive experience. Ensuring students have a roof over their heads and food on their plates is essential; without it, students will have less time and energy to worry about the classroom and grades. The student experience should be a priority, and listening to students' needs is critical.
- A Fellow highlights how housing impacts the student experience, recounting an incident where friends were placed in quads within Unit 2 lounges due to limited housing. These students faced multiple relocations, being moved from lounge to lounge for consolidation purposes, and were left uncertain about their placements. They were baffled by this experience and wondered if these disruptions could be avoided in the future, especially with new housing developments. They are curious about how changes in traditions must be in place, for example, it is tradition on the first night in the dorms that Cal Spirit groups travel to the residence halls for the Night Rally. They suggest changes in Night Rally maps and welcoming traditions for new students might look like with these new housing arrangements.
- A Fellow emphasizes fostering a strong "Bear Territory" spirit in residential halls. They recall that in the 1960s, there were disparities in who received housing, with many men staying in dorms for 2-4 years. Traditions like the one at Deutsch Hall, where residents stole the goalpost from the Big Game every year, helped foster a sense of community. They see a critical opportunity for all residential spaces, such as Units 1, 2, 3, and others, to build similar traditions.
 - They suggest that residence hall associations could organize events and compile a list of traditions from past decades to strengthen student engagement and experience.
- Another Fellow is baffled over the limited capacity of registered student organizations (RSOs), which restricts student engagement and leads to a competitive Berkeley environment. They note that some RSOs, like the Cal Band, have a limited number of spots, but they question why there isn't more encouragement for RSOs to grow and accommodate more students.

- In response, a Fellow states that in one RSO, Fashion and Student Trends (FAST), 250 students are in FAST, yet it receives 500 applications. They note that at application cycles there may only be 15 available spots and 100 applications. The Fellow acknowledges that RSOs, led by students and for students, are often at full capacity and need to manage schedules and weekly meetings to ensure productivity without overwhelming members. There is intergroup collaboration, which becomes more tricky with more students when deadlines are made. They do not want to give busy work to others just for the sake of accepting more. There are similar capacity limitations in other RSOs, which is the case for “competitive” RSOs.
- A Fellow shares an idea regarding the long-standing issue of students being housed in unit lounges while awaiting available beds. For decades, more students were placed in the system than actual beds available, creating challenges. They suggest exploring ways for students to connect, possibly by creating “loungemen” programs within the Unit lounges to foster community among those in temporary housing situations. They wonder if traditions around specific Units, such as referring to Bowles Hall residents as “Bowlesmen,” could help build a sense of belonging.
- Another Fellow reflects on their experiences living in International House, the dorms, and a year in co-ops, noting that students in the Disabled Students’ Program (DSP) often face even greater challenges in finding accessible housing. They add that, for some students, living in lounges would be physically unable due to accessibility needs.
 - They reflect on their experiences in student government and on the Co-op Alumni Board, where they empathize with all students, disabled or not, who face housing challenges. How do we house the unhoused student population? Do we encourage a family house program like the International House? They highlight the need for better connections with the Dean of Students, Berkeley Housing, Berkeley Dining, and Co-Op organizations to support students in need. They encourage fellows to consider mentorship roles to help students find appropriate housing options.
- A Fellow notes that Bowles Hall residents are still called “Bowlesmen” and that participating in summer programs at Berkeley provides foundational experiences. While they aren’t as involved in Bowles Hall, they still foster a sense of community where students can freely converse and build connections. They also hope that this sense of community can be replicated in the new units. The Fellow discusses the “Blue Heart Initiative,” found on CalLink, where some RSOs have open membership and accept all students. They mention work with OASIS, noting concerns about over-advertising by competitive consulting organizations, and question whether there may be biases within these competitive groups.
- Another Fellow shares three strategies:
 - They observe that Golden Bear Orientation (GBO) does not invest students in the full history of UC Berkeley, focusing primarily on campus history. They note that students are unaware that UC Berkeley is the first UC, the university was founded in 1868, and in 1916 our agricultural department was extended into Irvine and Davis. They note that at other institutions like Harvard or Yale, there is a strong emphasis on university history as part of student identity.
 - In the ASUC, students voted to fund various resources like the RSF, Class Pass, and UHS but have yet to vote to support RSO funding. They suggest that if students contributed through a small tax, it could alleviate funding issues for student organizations.

- The Fellow highlights activities in Unit 2 that build camaraderie, such as hosting dances, mini-golf, coffee hours, and formal dinners where students learn dining etiquette. They reference traditions among groups like the "Men of Deutsch," who were champions in Intramural (IM) sports and created a sense of community through recreational events. They emphasize that leadership and university investment are needed to sustain these traditions. They propose starting each class with a brief history anecdote about UC Berkeley to instill meaning over time. "Did you know that UC Berkeley...?"
- A Fellow shares ideas for fostering more Cal traditions and camaraderie. They encourage dining areas between units where students can meet, similar to the role Crossroads played as a central hub. They note that clubs have become more career-oriented, yet students also need social spaces to just hang out. They point out that, as the student population grows, solutions are needed to support this expanding infrastructure and create meaningful connections.
 - Another Fellow agrees with strategies to strengthen and share traditions with new students. They note that students in Albany Village never saw Oski there and suggest that new students, along with their financial aid packages, should also receive mail packages about UC Berkeley's history and traditions. This narrative could become mainstream information to enrich the student experience from the start.
- A Fellow suggests that students, rather than staff or faculty, should lead the preservation and sharing of Berkeley's history. They share that while working at the library, they saw a plaque about Berkeley's and the National Park Service's role in forest conservation—a piece of history that could be more widely known. They also mention the importance of the Axe (awarded to either UC Berkeley or Stanford after the Big Game) being displayed in the MLK Student Union. In their latest visit, the Axe was not in its case. They encourage the possibility of alumni donations to support and share the history of the Axe, as it has been previously achieved in building the cannon platform above California Memorial Stadium.
 - Another Fellow notes gatherings with professors to discuss past campus issues and proposes that a podcast could capture these historical perspectives and share them with a wider audience.
- A Fellow appreciates the conversation on tradition, emphasizing that, as a student, they believe tradition fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens alumni connections. They raise concerns about the experience of commuter students, who often live five miles or more away and primarily come to campus for classes. The majority of transfer students are commuters, yet there seems to be limited focus on enriching their experience.
 - The Fellow notes that students' experience living in co-ops has changed significantly. There's a growing lack of responsiveness to issues, leading to more student complaints and high living costs due to poor living conditions. They question whom the co-ops truly serve, given they are unaffiliated with the university, and point out that students often settle for substandard conditions. Settling for these conditions is unsuitable, and they stopped recommending co-ops as a housing option. In response to vacancies, one co-op recently increased the mandatory weekly work requirement from 5 to 6 hours.
- Another Fellow mentions that newer buildings don't facilitate student bonding. In Blackwell, for instance, rooms are narrow "hallway"-type layouts, making socializing difficult. Heavy doors that don't stay open and limited common spaces make it impossible to create a college, dorm environment.

- When entire floors are filled with specific groups, like athletes, it becomes harder for other residents, stragglers, to build community. The Fellow is uncertain who is responsible for creating a more inclusive design for the 6,000-7,000 students in residence halls.
- A Fellow observes that students have varied perspectives on tradition; some are deeply interested, others indifferent, and some are in between. They believe that Cal lacks a comprehensive history, especially regarding its impacts on minority groups. Students want to learn about Cal's history from multiple perspectives, including those of indigenous and minority communities who may have been historically excluded.
 - Another Fellow highlights that UC Berkeley's history, such as Ishi's contributions to the Hearst Museum of Anthropology. They argue that Cal has a complex and sometimes "ugly" history, including issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community, which is worth understanding for future growth. They mention learning about "The Football Players" statue, near Valley Life Sciences Building. In response to another Fellow, they shared how the heavy doors in Blackwell are for fire safety.
- Another Fellow shares personal experiences living in Priestly Hall in Unit 3, where they formed lasting friendships. The lounge area was essential for building connections despite cramped triples and unpleasant conditions. During Golden Bear Orientation (GBO), they joined the UC Rally Committee, as introduced by their orientation leaders. During GBO, they found diverse interests and backgrounds among peers. They suggest that GBO groups should be organized more carefully, considering students' backgrounds and hometowns and that GBO should touch more deeply on Cal's history. They note that creating and sustaining a new club is challenging due to limited resources, financial constraints, and a lack of ASUC and faculty support. They describe GBO as rich in resources but with students often left to "fend for themselves" in navigating the process.
- Another Fellow shares the acronym "WAGS", "What about graduate students?" They point out that with 13,000 graduate students across 125 programs, the focus is often on undergraduates, even though graduate students play a significant role at Berkeley. Graduate students, especially Ph.D. students and postdocs, often feel isolated. They recall a conversation with a student that may skip graduation due to hardships and hazing in their program. The fellow believes that while rigor is essential, there should also be care and support for these students, who are potential Nobel laureates and future thought leaders. The lack of support for those who leave Berkeley feeling depleted is a serious concern, as they feel graduate students are not discussed enough.
- A Fellow is impressed with the depth of thought expressed, emphasizing the importance of reaching freshmen early with information on Berkeley's history. Suggests including a snapshot of university history with enrollment documents to highlight the richness of Berkeley's traditions and foster a sense of community. While some may not be interested, understanding the university's culture can help students feel less isolated and more connected.
 - They propose a questionnaire for incoming students to capture interests and match them with relevant campus opportunities. Recommends this to ensure students from minority and diverse backgrounds can easily find communities and activities aligned with their interests. Notes that some dorms feel restrictive and isolating, and suggests Decal courses on diverse topics as a potential solution for fostering connections.

- A Fellow discusses the hyper-competitiveness of campus life, including enrollment, classes, and club activities. Notes that resumes alone are insufficient; students feel pressured to have extensive involvement and connections to secure future opportunities, creating stress and overwhelming commitments. They observe that students aren't taught these networking skills in class, so the burden falls on them to balance social, volunteer, and professional engagement.
 - This pressure can cause students to feel lost, with little time for relaxation, leading to burnout, especially among low-income and first-generation students who could benefit from incentivized, accessible community involvement. Mentions the need to address the mental health crisis on campus, suggesting more accessible ways for students to engage in community without jeopardizing their future. Reflects on the importance of "white space" in post-grad Google calendars and the difficulty students face in managing economic pressures and finding career opportunities.
- A Fellow expresses that Cal Alumni are often unaware of current student issues and the impact of campus design on the student experience. They believe that sharing these stories with alumni would help improve their understanding and support for the university. As a top university, Berkeley has a responsibility to foster a broad and inclusive sense of tradition and community that resonates with its diverse student body.
- Another Fellow highlights the importance of eating together to build community. They recall a late-night dining program at Crossroads from Sunday to Thursday, where students could use flex dollars to order the best foods. They mention that Berkeley Dining has not been responsive to bringing back Late Night, possibly due to food service worker constraints, but suggests reviving an epic dining program for community-building.
- A Fellow reflects on ideas that used to exist and can again. Although, new ideas have a price tag attached to them. There is an economic factor here. For a campus as challenged as ours is, the Berkeley community, graduate students included, lacks connections and opportunities for connections. The campus emphasizes more programs that encourage opportunity but where are your priorities? Administrators must come up with the money to support student programs rather than students. Is your priority for the community high enough?
- Another Fellow acknowledges that Berkeley's history includes aspects that are not inclusive and suggests the importance of recognizing these issues. They note that influential figures, such as a former president of Mexico, attended UC Berkeley, which highlights the university's impact. Mentions that Cal Fire, which fights wildfires, was created at Berkeley and that the National Park Service was founded in Wurster Hall. They emphasize that while there are economic costs to sharing this history, utilizing tools like QR codes could help disseminate information affordably and enhance the student experience.
 - They believe investing in student experience could turn students into future donors, similar to private institutions, which could alleviate Berkeley's budget challenges.
- A Fellow notes that Stanford University offers late-night specialty meals until 3 a.m., including milkshakes and fries and on-call dormitory activities like movie nights, craft sessions, and cultural conversations. They highlight that these activities foster community and that creating interest-based listservs (e.g., Indigenous studies, best Berkeley cafés) could further help students connect. This responsibility, for example, may belong in the department to encourage events and community building.

- They currently live in xučyun runway Apartments, graduate student housing in Albany. They reflect on the isolation as no one talks to one another, with little community interaction, creating a disconnect that restricts community-building opportunities.
- A Fellow observes that Berkeley students are highly goal-oriented and competitive, mentioning UCLA's program that started in 2011 to encourage student engagement through a series of campus activities. They suggest Berkeley could implement a similar program, where students could earn a medal for attending various campus events, which could then be worn at graduation to symbolize their involvement. You can attend a women's sports game, hike to the Big C, swim at Strawberry Creek Pool, eat at Top Dog, etc. This would incentivize students to become more involved in aspects of campus life they otherwise would not be.
- Another Fellow shares that the International House Council has traditions like "student suppers" and a residential lottery. They note that these programs showcase different cultures and that, historically, students from various backgrounds (e.g., Arab students during the Gulf War) engaged in meaningful debates during these gatherings. They add that Berkeley Hillel provides Friday night dinners for Jewish students, which helps build community. However, they observe that students who are not part of faith-based or identity-based organizations may struggle to find similar spaces for connection.

Discussion Adjourned at 7:30 PM. The Meeting closed with Song. Notes were compiled by the Chronicler.