

September 8, 2025

Megan McEvoy, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate  
Professor Kathy Bawn, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Academic Senate  
April de Stefano, Executive Director, UCLA Academic Senate  
Tim Groeling, Vice Chair/Chair Elect, UCLA Academic Senate

Dear UCLA Academic Senate Leaders,

This letter responds to the Academic Senate’s “2024–25 State of Shared Governance at UCLA,” dated August 28, 2025. The record it attempts to create – of persistent administrative disregard for Senate input – requires correction. This response is direct and detailed, because the claims presented publicly in your letter are serious and, in many cases, inaccurate. A fair and factual account of shared governance must reflect the complexity of roles, the urgency of recent challenges, and the reality of how decisions are made in a large public research university.

## **Shared Governance: Respecting Distinct Roles**

Shared governance is a foundational value of the University of California, and the Administration remains committed to its principles. But shared governance is not unilateral authority. It is a framework of collaboration that depends on mutual respect, clarity of roles, and realism; especially amid the extraordinarily complex financial and operational challenges facing the University today. The reality is that we are experiencing an existential crisis driven by external forces. Business as usual is not an option.

Under UC Regents Bylaw 40.1, the Academic Senate is granted authority over admissions, curriculum, degrees, and educational policy. In other areas – including the budget, administrative operations, emergency management, and space planning – the Senate’s role is advisory. These distinctions matter. The Administration is responsible for daily operations, long-term planning, and crisis response. That responsibility requires timely decision-making and, at times, confidentiality. Respect for shared governance also requires respect for that role.

We remain committed to partnering in good faith to strengthen shared governance and develop more effective models of engagement. Our suggested next steps for a path forward can be found at the bottom of this letter.

## **Budget Consultation**

The letter claims there was no meaningful consultation with the Senate on the 2025–26 budget. That is incorrect. Senate representatives had multiple opportunities for engagement with the

EVCP, CFO, and Academic Planning and Budget. The absence of a formal budget memo to CPB does not equate to exclusion from the process.

The suggestion that strategic workgroups represent a breakdown of shared governance mischaracterizes how institutions function in periods of fiscal instability. Administrative working groups are standard practice. They are necessary for timely and coordinated planning. They do not replace consultation, but they are not subject to it either. As made clear in University policy, the Senate does not have budgetary authority.

## **Graduate Education**

The implementation work on graduate education referenced in the letter followed a joint Senate–Administration task force and included more than 50% Senate faculty, and its draft recommendations were shared with the Senate on July 9, 2025 for initial discussion. Detailed action items associated with these recommendations will be shared with the Senate for consultation as they emerge in the coming weeks and months.

The letter omits the Senate’s historical delays in responding to consultations – delays that have, in some cases, stretched to six months or more. The Senate has recently indicated interest in improving these timelines, which is welcome progress. A more responsive consultation process is essential to effective governance in a time of institutional urgency.

## **Instructional Modality and Emergency Response**

The letter criticizes the Administration’s decision to shift to remote instruction during the protest and fire events. These decisions were made in coordination with campus safety officials and emergency services and based on the obligation to protect life and safety. The claim that they were made for administrative convenience is not accurate.

Emergency response is governed by legal, regulatory, and operational requirements that cannot be paused for full Senate consultation. Instructional authority resides with the Senate in normal conditions. In emergencies, the Administration must act.

To support clearer processes going forward, the campus has adopted a new **operational category framework** to guide decision-making in emergency situations. Each category reflects defined levels of campus impact, from minor disruptions to full-scale emergencies, and includes clear protocols for assessing risk and determining instructional modality. To test and refine this system, we will hold a **single-purpose tabletop exercise** focused on simulating a shift in campus operational category and assessing instructional responses. This exercise will include both administrative and Senate leadership and is intended to ensure we are aligned and prepared.

We are encouraged by the productive collaboration that has taken place to develop a joint emergency protocol. We welcome this as a shared tool that strengthens our capacity to respond swiftly and in coordination during future events, balancing academic integrity with our fundamental duty to safeguard the campus community.

## **Trust, Transparency, and Responsibility**

While the Senate continues to call for greater transparency, it is helpful to remember that consultation is not about control, but about offering thoughtful input that strengthens decisions. Shared governance works best when all voices contribute to shaping outcomes, without the expectation of unilateral authority or veto power.

Trust in governance is built when we engage each other with consistency, reciprocity, and a spirit of collaboration. Together, we can move beyond looking backward in critique and instead lean into the complexity of decision-making as shared work. By doing so, the Senate can play an essential and constructive role in guiding the university forward.

## **Representation and Evidence**

Your letter includes broad references to “faculty opinion,” “widespread concern,” and “erosion of trust.” These assertions, presented as fact, are unsupported by data. If Senate leadership wishes to speak for the broader faculty body, it must ground such claims in evidence – surveys, participation data, and transparent methodologies – not anecdote or presumption.

We ask that future statements claiming to reflect faculty sentiment be supported by verifiable data. Doing so will strengthen the Senate’s voice and ensure that it accurately reflects the diverse views of the faculty it represents.

## **Moving Forward**

As part of our continued efforts to strengthen shared governance, Jeff Lewis, in his role as Special Assistant to the EVCP, will focus this year on deepening the Administration’s relationship with the Academic Senate. He will work to support the development of consultation models that are nimble, collaborative, and bidirectional – responsive to both the pace of institutional decision-making and the need for meaningful faculty input. He will also continue to contribute a faculty perspective to budgetary and strategic planning processes.

We recognize the Senate’s stated commitment to collaboration and shared governance. At the same time, the letter’s characterization of the Administration as routinely violating protocol,

excluding faculty, or prioritizing convenience over mission stands in tension with that commitment. Such framing risks overlooking the efforts of the many faculty, staff, and administrators who are working tirelessly, often under intense pressure, to uphold UCLA's mission and respond to extraordinary institutional challenges.

We welcome the Senate's partnership. But let it be based on:

- Respect for the distinct roles and responsibilities of governance partners;
- Data-informed perspectives rather than anecdote;
- Professionalism and solution-oriented engagement;
- And a shared commitment to UCLA's mission and future.

If those principles guide our interactions, meaningful collaboration is not only possible, it is inevitable. Now more than ever, our ability to work together in a spirit of mutual respect and shared purpose will shape our ability to meet the challenges ahead and preserve the excellence that defines UCLA.

Sincerely,

**Darnell Hunt**

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

cc: Julio Frenk, Chancellor