

UC regents ban quotas, allow investment in UC Berkeley research patents

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Body

On Thursday, the UC Board of Regents' last public meeting of the month largely focused on the promotion of equity and innovation, as it was dominated by a discussion of supporting affirmative action and investing in UC research and ideas.

The board meeting began with public comment, which included concerns about worker layoffs. Employees from various campuses and several unions, including Teamsters Local 2010 and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3299, shared their worries about job security and retaining health insurance amid the pandemic.

After public comment, the regents heard a presentation on the UC Office of the President, or UCOP, UC Health Division Strategic Plan, which includes a proposal for a UC systemwide telehealth group to increase access to and improve psychiatric services.

According to UC Health Executive Vice President Carrie Byington, the proposal has already been approved by chancellors and will be voted on by a UC student health insurance board in October.

The board then discussed the 2020 UC Accountability Report and its goals for 2030 in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. The regents discussed improving graduation rates, as well as increasing the number of undergraduates who enroll in graduate school.

"We know we have to bolster the support we're giving our students, the availability of courses, enriching our academic environment," said UC Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Brown at the meeting. "This can happen if we can maintain pace."

Later, the regents discussed the effects of Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in California, and how they could better support Proposition 16, which, if passed in the November election, would reinstate affirmative action.

"I don't know that there is any greater conflict in this system than our highest goals of inclusion and compliance with Prop. 209," said California Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis during the meeting. "To be inclusive and find those underrepresented groups in order to increase representation, we have had to work around a law that is intended to stop us."

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In compliance with past Supreme Court rulings, the regents unanimously approved a policy that would prohibit the use of quotas and caps in the UC system.

Before approving committee reports from previous meetings and moving into closed session, the regents granted UC Berkeley and UCLA approval to join a new company with 13 other research institutions to pool and subcontract out the patents they hold to make profits.

"This is something that I have wanted for as long as the first year I started. I feel that we have missed tremendous opportunities in not controlling our destiny and not investing more in our own products and not controlling our intellectual property," said Regent Sherry Lansing at the meeting. "This is fantastic."

The next UC Board of Regents meetings will take place Nov. 17-19.

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