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May 31, 2017

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Susan Ebeler, Professor, Viticulture & Enology
Beth Floyd, Director, Undergraduate Education and Advising
Susan Keen, Associate Dean, College of Biological Sciences
Elias Lopez, University Registrar
Karl Mohr, Assistant Executive Vice Chancellor, Offices of the Chancellor & Provost
Daniel Potter, Professor, Academic Senate Representative
Walter Robinson, Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs
James Schaaf, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies, College of Engineering
Carolyn Thomas, Vice Provost & Dean, Undergraduate Education
Steve Weisler (Chair), Chief Data Officer, Budget & Institutional Analysis

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to let you know that UC Davis has joined the American Talent Initiative (ATI) - a consortium of public and private colleges and universities with the highest national graduation rates that aims to increase access and promote academic success for lower-income students across the United States. The Initiative intends to distill the practices that top universities like UC Davis employ to promote equal access and opportunity, and to share these successful approaches through publications and participant meetings to create and disseminate a new, national model. We also hope to learn from other institutions' strategies to enroll and graduate lower-income students in ways that may inform our own practice. The Initiative is supported by the Bloomberg Philanthropies and coordinated by the Aspen Institute and Ithaka S + R, in collaboration with 30 founding member colleges and universities (including UC Berkeley and UCLA); you can learn more about it at <https://americantalentinitiative.org>.

The tripartite goals of the American Talent Initiative - to enroll, support, and graduate lower-income students - correspond well with UC Davis' commitment to access and equity. Indeed, we are already hard at work, and often quite successful, in promoting the outcomes of the Initiative. For example, we do an admirable job of recruiting and enrolling an economically diverse pool of students, and we work exceptionally hard across the institution to support the success of the diverse students we enroll. In both of these regards, we have much to be proud of and much to share.

The third goal of the American Talent Initiative - that of graduating an increasing number of lower-income students - is perhaps the area where we may have most room for improvement. It is striking to me that even as our efforts to improve the graduation rate at UC Davis have begun to be successful (for example, the four-year rate has improved from 43% to 61% since 2000), the

Working Group – American Talent Initiative

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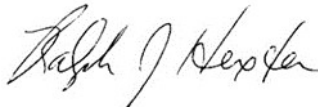
differential in the graduation rate between lower-income and higher income students has stubbornly persisted at around 12 percentage points.

As we begin our involvement in this new collaborative I would like to ask a small working group of faculty and administrators to come together, look across the institution, and draft a document that systematically articulates the ways in which we currently strive to ensure access and success for our lower-income students. Your suggestions for opportunities we should consider to enhance these efforts, particularly with an eye to equalizing student success across economic subgroups, are also strongly encouraged.

We look forward to a long and fruitful collaboration with the American Talent Initiative and its other member institutions. As one of the national leaders in enrolling and graduating promising students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, we have much to contribute to this shared work. There is also much to gain in developing strategies for even more inclusiveness and more equitable outcomes for all student constituencies.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph J. Hexter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" being the most prominent.

Ralph J. Hexter
Interim Chancellor

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