

Press Release

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New Report Calls for Reforms in Structure of University of California Governance

A new report and campaign are calling for major changes in the way the University of California is governed. Amidst the proposed changes are elections of Regents by faculty, citizens, staff and students, and new term lengths and eligibility requirements for Regents appointed by the governor and legislature.

The Campaign for UC Democracy has published on its website (<http://ucdemocracy.org/>) an independent 56-page report arguing for structural reforms to the 26-member Board of Regents, which governs the 10-campus UC system as well as the 2 national laboratories.

The report, entitled 'The Strong 21st Century Public University,' is being published amidst student lobbying and protests on March 1st and 4th, and comes two weeks after a state audit into the UC was requested unanimously by a legislative committee after news articles alleged financial conflicts of interests between two Regents and the University.

The report responds to criticism that academic autonomy and freedom of speech must be protected from the winds of politics and the influence of money. "The group that's on the board [of Regents] now is the most political of all, representing only 2 percent or 3 percent of the wealthy individuals and established corporations of the state," said former state Senator John Vasconcellos, cited in the report. Vasconcellos faced similar criticism when he helped craft legislation in 1970s that made Regent meetings public and put one student representative on the Board of Regents. Those reforms followed widespread controversies and protests on UC campuses in the 1960s.

The proposed changes would utilize public financing and ranked choice voting in order to ensure that elections of Regents further the interests of a broad range of California residents. Amidst the rationales for reform, the report cites a lack of stakeholder representation and a lack of clear job duties for the Regents. In addition to citing to current design flaws, the Report also criticizes practices such as low attendance by Regents to their own meetings, the failure of the governor's advisory committee to meet regarding Regent selection, inadequate oversight, and the failure of appointed Regents to reflect the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the state of California, as required in the state Constitution.

The report offers an analysis of three avenues for reforming the UC Board of Regents – a legislative referendum, a popular ballot initiative, and a constitutional convention. It urges further discussion and deliberation amongst a wide range of stakeholders concerned about UC democracy.

The report was written after extensive review of literature, newspapers, policies, regulations and laws, and years of consultation and discussion with hundreds of citizens, entrepreneurs, associate and tenured faculty, graduate students, historians, immigrants, journalists, lecturers, non-governmental organizations, staff, researchers, state senators and assembly members, student movements, undergraduate students, unions and university administrators.

The Campaign for UC Democracy is a broad alliance of concerned stakeholders. For the report and more information about the Campaign, see: <http://ucdemocracy.org> and ucdemocracy@gmail.com

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