To Linda Sarna, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate

From Mark A. Peterson, Chair, Luskin School of Public Affairs FEC

Concerning the Proposed General Campus Negotiated Salary Trial Program

November 1, 2012

The Faculty Executive Committee of the Luskin School of Public Affairs has reviewed the proposed "General Campus Negotiated Salary Trial Program." In this opinion, we are not commenting on the merits of the negotiated salary idea itself, which we leave to the ample campus assessments conducted in response to the previous incarnation. Rather, given our collective professional expertise in program design and evaluation, we wish to comment on core features of the Trial design, and the "comprehensive three-year review" to "assess whether the Trial Program has helped UC meet University goals effectively."

We appreciate the objectives of launching a pilot initiative. The proposed Trial has the potential to yield useful information about the how a Negotiated Salary Program might operate if it were adopted permanently system-wide. Based on the information we were provided for review, the design of the Pilot seems sensible for meeting some objectives, but perhaps not all. We have concerns about two significant issues that the Pilot as conceived, even if well implemented, is unlikely to be able inform. One has to do with the four-year duration of the initiative. A relatively short-term Pilot cannot answer important questions about what the mid- and long-term effects of adopting the Negotiated Salary Program broadly would be on campus norms and perceptions. The second concern has to do with the scope of the "intervention," which is limited to three UC campuses and does not have a systemic mechanism, beyond voluntary action, for determining which units, schools, and departments will participate. Assuming the Trial goes forward, when the results are evaluated the Academic Senate must take care that questions that were difficult—or impossible—to study in the Pilot receive adequate attention in the decision about whether to move forward with the NSP at the end of the study period.

Of particular concern to us is how adoption of NSP system-wide might change norms and expectations about the role of University versus outside funds in recruitment and retention—and how such changes could affect not only recruitment and retention, but also teaching, faculty and student morale, and perceptions of equity across campuses and units. Recruiting and retaining first-rate faculty is considered a core function of the University, to be financed primarily with University funds. NSP adoption would represent an admission that the University does not always have the resources required to compete for the best faculty. This is a pragmatic consideration (and in some sense not entirely new), but we do run the risk that the Plan could further erode the expectation that it is the responsibility of the University, and not outside
funders, to put together the resources necessary to maintain a first-rate faculty. A shift in the norm/expectation such that units or departments are expected to raise private funds to finance their most productive faculty as a matter of course would represent a fundamental change to the nature of faculty recruitment and retention, and could have far-ranging effects. While the possibility of enhancing one's compensation through NSP might make UC more attractive to some potential faculty, the notion that the only way to make a competitive salary in the UC system is to pull together outside funding might deter others. Such a change would clearly have uneven effects across the campuses in the UC system and across units and departments within each campus, because some are far more able than others to raise outside funds for this purpose. Such a program may assist the recruitment or retention of top flight faculty in, say, the physical sciences and the law school, but prove detrimental in the humanities and some social sciences.

Thus we are left with a rather profound question: If adopted system-wide, would NSP substantially change norms about how the core functions of recruitment and retention are financed, with the risk of adverse affects, or would it operate as a small, add-on program affecting only a few star faculty? What would be the effects of such a change on support for non-participating faculty compensation, recruitment and retention, morale, and equity? We do not currently know the answers to these questions, and, given the duration and scope of this pilot initiative, the "comprehensive three year review" of the Trial necessarily will be unable to answer them.

Another challenge of this Pilot, like all others, is to penetrate a system, institution, or culture at the level necessary to mimic the effects that would occur should the intervention be adopted permanently and system-wide. The number, range, and character of the units participating in the Trial may not be sufficient to create recognizable and measurable impacts on perceptions and actions on the campuses beyond the immediate issue of whether individual faculty members stay at the UC or accept offers of appointment when recruited.

We should emphasize, too, that in addition to being unable to capture all the potential long-term costs of the NSP, the comprehensive review of the Trial may also miss some of the long-term benefits. For example, the data collected on recruitment and retentions will be only for those who participated. If, however, the NSP enhances the expectation that UC is a place where productive faculty can be well-compensated during their careers, the program could make UC more attractive to younger faculty even if they do not expect to participate in NSP for some years to come. The data from the Pilot are unlikely to be able to capture such effects even in the short run, much less the long run.

We want to reiterate that we are not taking a formal position for or against a negotiated salary plan, or in favor or opposition to conducting the Trial and collecting what could be quite useful data before further considering adding NSP to APM system-wide. We do wish to emphasize the limitations of this (and any) short-term and confined-scope pilot program in answering key questions about the long-term effects of the program on the University community. We urge the Academic Senate to give these issues due consideration despite the inevitable lack of concrete answers to these questions based on hard data.