



STUDENT UNION ASSEMBLY

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Commissioner of Academic Affairs

Student Union Assembly Constitutional Duties and Responsibilities, as per art 3, § A:

- Establishes and maintains communication with the UCSC and systemwide Academic Senate and all undergraduate academic related programs.
- Shall inform and represent the SUA on matters of academic policy.
- Shall act as the representative to the Academic Senate on the Committee on Educational Policy.
- Shall provide for periodic polls and information surveys to assess student concerns.
- Required to hold weekly office hours at the SUA office.
- Attends weekly officer meeting(s) to ensure communication and collaboration.
- Prepares a monthly report evaluating the SUA, which provides constructive criticism, for the purposes of improvement.
- Carryout any other duties as set forth in this constitution, the bylaws, and/or assigned by the Assembly and/or Chair.

The primary responsibility of the CAA is to be the representative for undergraduates at the University of California Santa Cruz vis-à-vis academic issues. Thus, the CAA must stay in close contact with the Academic Senate, (the faculty body on campus with plenary authority over admissions, curriculum, graduation requirements and the like), be aware of its role, responsibilities and functioning, and also be informed of students' opinions and views pertaining to the aforementioned.

The month of July has been an interesting one, with new and engaging twists and turns on a daily basis. As per what I deem to be an unspecified and unnecessary "rule", the requisite 40 hours of weekly work during the summer needed to be done in the office/on campus. Thus, I worked, (and was compensated at), half time. This did pose and still poses some problems for the group. From the commencement of work on July

2nd, I began working on issues that I hope to address during my term as CAA, the most important of which is Ethnic Studies. According to my assessment, Ethnic Studies seems to be an area that a majority of undergraduates would like to see take shape at this institution. Thus, it is my job to see what can be done to this end. The bulk of time so far has been spent on preliminary work that needs to be done over the summer so as to ensure as much progress as possible during the coming year. Accordingly, I have focused my time on three main areas of research: evidence supporting a need for ethnic studies; the definition and history of ethnic studies; and the status quo of UCSC vis-à-vis ethnic studies. Although these areas surely overlap, this breakdown works to illicit specific information that is fundamental to progress in this area.

I found evidence supporting students' want of ethnic studies in opinion polls conducted by SUA in the 2003 and 2007 campus wide elections. The numbers clearly indicate strong support for it. Further data may be forthcoming after the Academic Senate finishes analyzing the Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity's 05-06 Diversity Climate Study. The CAAD Executive Summary of the study has provided important evidence as well, citing student, faculty and staff support for ethnic studies. However, further evidence will be needed in order to make a compelling case. So, I drafted a letter/survey pertaining to ethnic studies to be sent out to faculty whom I and others have identified as possible supporters. The letter briefly introduced myself, my job and student support for ethnic studies. Its goal was to illicit the faculty perspective on this issue. Since the Academic Senate has jurisdiction over this issue, any substantive progress will require faculty support. The questions posed attempted to find out the following: the individual's thoughts on ethnic studies vis-à-vis academic importance; personal feelings; and participation. My hope was/is that these answers can establish academic significance, support and a want to be involved in ethnic studies from faculty. I am still waiting for responses from the majority of the people who I contacted. Vacations and teaching summer classes may inhibit speedy responses.

I then began researching the form and makeup of ethnic studies at other institutions as to get a feel for what a major/program/department entailed. It was my contention that not only are there ethnic studies necessities, but that UCSC already has

many classes that could be used. Currently more research is needed on the history and academic importance in order to make a clear and stronger argument for it.

The faculty responses, as previously mentioned, will hopefully establish, (in part), UCSC's status quo for ethnic studies. However, I was primarily focused on identifying courses that could be used, based on the aforementioned information on other institutions. As I suspected, UCSC currently has many of the classes needed for ethnic studies. However, the one necessity that seems to be missing is some sort of lower division prerequisite introductory course(s). This, as with all of the ethnic studies research is a work in progress and further information will be forthcoming.

The second area that I began working on this month was not something that I had set out to do, but rather was subsequently brought to my attention by the Director of the African American Resource and Cultural Center, Paula Powell. She informed me of a substantial disconnect between "academic clubs", (such as the Black Science Network and the Latino Business Student Association), and their respective academic departments. She also informed me of the need to create some sort of pre-law "society" or "club" on campus. These both seem like important items to tackle that will be beneficial to many students. Thus, I have compiled a list of these SOAR registered organizations, and am in the process of both eliciting more information about them and contacting their head's to get their views on the status quo. Again, further information will be forthcoming.

As far as group activities go, there have been multiple officer, transition and preparation meetings. Due to my half time status, I have not been able attend all of them. However, I have made arrangements to ensure that I will get the necessary information. The Tuesday and Thursday officer meetings are designated for updates and voting. The transition meetings are for the former SUA officers to pass on information to the new officers. These meetings have a group and individual, (one on one), component. Since my predecessor does not want to transition me and, (per my evidence backed assessment), lacks a fundamental understanding of the CAA's job and its requirements, I have not been individually transitioned by her. This, however, has and will not hinder my progress and ability to do my job. Finally, the preparation meetings are usually SOAR facilitated and center around group dynamics, conflict resolution and accountability, (legal, financial, etc.). By far the most interesting one was the Conflict Resolution Part 1 recap,

(as, due to a lack of communication by planners, I was not informed of the meeting in a timely fashion and was absent), which can be summed up as: “Problems with Jamal”.

I cannot say that I was particularly surprised by what was said, given my assessment of the individuals who made the respective comments. I was however surprised that the individuals in question made judgments and derived conclusions with little or no substantive evidence. As I feel my record in SUA shows, I never make accusations and claims without substantive proof and evidence to back them up. I think that Denzel Washington’s character in Training Day said it best: “It’s not what you know; it’s what you can prove”. If the officers, and SUA in general, are to work together and function properly, more time, thought and consideration needs to be put into what is done and said. One of the biggest mistakes people can make is to rush to judgment.

As I alluded to previously, there seem to be a number of problems concerning the group and its functioning. Some of them, (hopefully), can be overcome with time. Others may very well continue on throughout the year. Those that may persist concern fundamental differences in beliefs and approaches that we may not be able to get past. However, as long as people do their jobs and act with a certain level of professionalism, we should be able to function. I also believe that SUA in general has certain fundamental problems. These include, but are not limited to, a distrust of administrators and faculty, a lack of forethought, a lack and or ignorance of rules and procedures, and a tendency to forget and or neglect one’s duties vis-à-vis the students. Since the officers, (for better or worse), run most of the show, we must take a certain amount of responsibility and work to correct these problems. Some will take longer than others, but as long as we recognize them and work towards positive progress, we should be fine.

For the officers to work together, we need to be cognizant of what we need to do as individuals and try to establish a civil relationship with each other. As for SUA, we as officers need to properly and thoroughly inform college and organization representatives of how the game is played from the start. The officers also need work out feasible and responsible guidelines and procedures for certain activities, such as resolutions and funding requests. In my view, the aforementioned should not be voted on the day they are received. If SUA is ever to be legitimized in the eyes of administrators, faculty and students alike, we must act in a professional, sound and responsible manner that allows

for repetition. Disrupting the process because someone has not planned ahead of time for a resolution or funding request will not help to this end. Lastly, we need to follow SUA, UCSC and UC rules, restrictions and regulations. SUA actions in the past have either violated or have come dangerously close to violating some or all of the aforementioned. In addition, libel, slander and defamation of character should be areas that we stay away from. It seems that SUA is often freer with it's' actions than it should because of a lack of outside interest, and scrutiny. However, if our goal of legitimacy ever takes shape, people will begin to consider our actions more carefully. Not only should we get in a good habit now, but taking time to fully contemplate our actions can also help establish credibility, and thus our legitimacy.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report and participate in the process. After all, we cannot complain about unfavorable outcomes when we do not bother to involve ourselves in the proceedings. If you have any further questions and or comments, do not hesitate to contact me. My email is jatiba@ucsc.edu.

Peace

Jamal Atiba
Commissioner of Academic Affairs