August 23, 2010

Dear Deans, Directors and Department Chairs,

Several requests to approve the Graduate Division’s disbursing of payments to non-matriculated graduate students who are visitors to UCLA have reached my desk this summer. After learning more about the specifics of each visitor’s stay, I have concerns to convey to you about our hosting graduate student visitors.

Most of our graduate student visitors are students from other countries. While our academic community embraces international collaboration, the intent of visiting programs is to host students for a short period of time. Three requests for payments came to my office from departments asking to extend a visiting student’s time here at UCLA for a second or third consecutive year. It is difficult to justify these extended stays since visiting students utilize campus resources without being assessed the same fees that our official students are assessed. It appears that UCLA is providing substantial training and sponsoring dissertation research for non-matriculated students who are not paying fees as mandated by the UC Regents. We wish to discourage this kind of circumvention of university policy.

Last month, the Graduate Division summarized for our campus leadership issues and concerns regarding our hosting of visiting graduate and undergraduate students. We noted inadequate policies and procedures and that the university community has a fairly limited understanding of the implications of visitor presence in terms of liability, accountability, and resource distribution. The Graduate Division has identified many risk management issues associated with:

- Intellectual property
- Academic integrity
- UCLA’s reputation
- Competition for limited resources by official UCLA students
- Health insurance
- Personal liability
- Compensation accountability

For example, our campus’s liability increases with visitors who are not part of our formal personnel classification system. Because visiting students are not eligible for workplace insurance (Worker’s Compensation), if these individuals are harmed while performing their duties, our general liability insurance pays for damages with unlimited exposure to risk.

There is a clear need to understand better the issues regarding visiting students and to develop appropriate policies and procedures. Meanwhile, the Graduate Division will review requests for visiting students on a case-by-case basis. If departments wish to sponsor a visiting student for two quarters or less, they should work with the International Education Office (IEO) and pay appropriate fees through that office. However, if departments wish to sponsor a visiting student beyond the second quarter, this student must apply for and be granted admission as a non-degree-objective student and be assessed the appropriate education, registration and non-resident tuition (NRT) fees.

Sincerely,

Claudia Mitchell-Kernan
Vice Chancellor Graduate Studies
Dean, Graduate Division