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**DAILY BRUIN**

## **UCLA takes steps to address reports of racial discrimination among faculty**

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By [amanda schallert](#)

Reports of racial bias and discrimination among faculty at UCLA have spurred changes in university policies and procedures for addressing claims of discrimination – a move that some faculty members say is a first step to remedy a larger institutional problem.

“There has got to be a mechanism, unless of course we don’t really care about diversity and we are just saying it,” said Darnell Hunt, a sociology professor and director of the UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American studies. “Something’s got to change.”

A recent report, conducted by an independent committee and headed by former California Supreme Court Justice Carlos Moreno, found that UCLA’s policies and procedures for addressing racial discrimination and bias among faculty were insufficient. Chancellor Gene Block released the report and a statement in an email to administrative heads and faculty members last week.

In June 2012, about 30 faculty members signed a letter to Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Scott Waugh, asking for a review of the “campus racial climate” and an independent committee to address UCLA’s policies and procedures for responding to racial discrimination.

The concerned faculty were prompted to approach administration partially because of a high-profile racial discrimination lawsuit involving UCLA surgeon Dr. Christian Head, who claimed his colleagues at UCLA discriminated against him because he is black. In July, the University of California Board of Regents paid Head \$4.5 million as part of the lawsuit’s settlement.

“Rather than seeing it as an isolated case, we wanted (UCLA administrators) to use that moment as a way to look deeper and understand the issues that face this faculty,” said Chon Noriega, director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and one of the faculty members who initiated the report.

At the time of Head’s case, some faculty members said they thought that the university tried to avoid associating itself with the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, where Head works.

Based on feedback from 30 faculty members and administrators willing to talk about their experiences, the committee concluded that UCLA's current mechanisms bar the university from effectively investigating and evaluating acts of racial discrimination on campus.

The report held that the university's current policies and procedures fail to act as a deterrent for these acts.

The review committee evaluated the work of multiple administrative groups and people on campus formally or informally tasked with the job of addressing racial discrimination complaints. These committees and people included several Academic Senate committees, the Title IX Officer, the Vice Provost for Diversity & Faculty Development and the Office of Ombuds Services, among others.

The majority of complaints brought to the different committees and people involved hiring, advancement and retention disputes.

The committees and people most frequently approached by faculty had no way to formally investigate claims and evaluate their merit. Instead, UCLA personnel addressed faculty complaints with informal processes, such as phone calls to deans.

Aggravating the problem was a lack of accessibility to formal proceedings for faculty members who could not afford legal fees for counsel or did not want to spend the months arguing their claims, according to the report.

In line with the report's recommendations, Block said he plans to appoint a discrimination officer at UCLA and to work with the Academic Senate to ensure that UCLA's policies and procedures regarding racial discrimination and bias are defined and enforced.

Additionally, UCLA administrators have already amended the Academic Senate's bylaws to authorize administrators to conduct initial investigations of discrimination claims at all times, said Carole Goldberg, the vice chancellor of academic personnel.

Goldberg added that this investigative authority for administrators already exists for sexual harassment complaints and some research complaints, and she thinks it has been successful.

Goldberg said the big change is that, at the initial level of investigations, administrators will be involved.

"If you're going to expect people to report discrimination and to cooperate with investigations, there has to be a high level of confidence in the process and in enhancing the professionalism and thoroughness of investigations," Goldberg said.

Hunt, who was one of the faculty members who approached administrators about conducting the review, said he thinks the report illuminated some of the problems with racial bias on campus, but that positive change in the way UCLA handles discrimination cases will hinge on administrators' continued actions.

“I think the proof is in the pudding. The devil is in the details. There is going to be an internal committee established to implement (the recommendations),” Hunt said. “But, if it isn’t done correctly, I don’t think it’s going to make much of a difference.”

While some faculty members said they expected the results of the report, other faculty said the review’s findings were surprising.

Michael Morony, a history professor who has been at UCLA for the past 40 years, said the report’s content shocked him because he had not heard about the described instances of racial discrimination before at UCLA.

Morony said he is not sure whether hiring a discrimination officer will combat problems of racial bias on campus, since he thinks the issue stems from the way people are raised.

M. Belinda Tucker, vice provost of the UCLA Institute of American Cultures, said she served as the liaison between the review committee and the university while the report was being conducted.

During the process, Tucker said faculty members would approach her asking if the review was actually happening.

“Some (faculty members) were jaded,” Tucker said. “There have been a lot of task forces at UCLA, and people do not necessarily have faith that task forces lead to real change, that another committee has the power to address the problem.”

In her 35 years at UCLA, Tucker said she has heard of incidents of discrimination that involved race, but has not personally experienced any incidents where she thought administrators treated her unfairly.

She said she remembers a time when she was walking down a hallway at UCLA and someone asked her to change the toilet paper rolls in the bathroom, assuming that she was part of the maintenance staff on campus. She added that she thinks the person assumed she was not a faculty member because she is black.

Despite her experiences and the incidents she has witnessed, Tucker said she thinks this report may lead to real change at UCLA.

“The subtext of the report is that we really need a more diverse faculty,” she said. “When you have more people of different ethnic groups, these incidents are less likely to take place.”

Several faculty members that the Daily Bruin approached for this story did not wish to share their personal experiences of racial discrimination for fear of alienating their colleagues or publishing their names, among other reasons.

Tyrone Howard, a professor of education who was also one of the faculty members who approached administrators about conducting the report, said he thinks the initial recommendations from the report are helpful and a step in the right direction.

He added that he thinks the issue does not just stem from faculty, but is a larger problem with campus climate.

“This will put some shame on the university,” Howard said. “But I think shamefulness sometimes can spur people into action.”

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