

## **Campus Conversations with Paul Alivisatos: A Staff Member's Perspective**

*By BSA Reporter*

The second session of Campus Conversations was held over the lunch hour on February 12, 2018. Assistant Dan Mogulof welcomed everyone and introduced Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP) Paul Alivisatos. There was a good-sized crowd in attendance with what appeared a mix of staff, faculty and students.

### **Opening Comments**

EVCP Alivisatos informed the audience that he had met with every academic unit during the fall semester which he felt was “really special”. He shared that meeting with these units gave him an increased understanding of our mission even though he’s been a faculty member on campus for nearly 30 years and was amazed by what he didn’t know.

Regarding the current financial situation, EVCP Alivisatos expressed that the opportunities to serve the community have never been greater and that the campus needs to be thinking about how we organize and where we want to be. In addition, while it will be hard to meet the budget targets that have been set for the next couple of years, he believes the campus needs to stick to that timetable.

EVCP Alivisatos also addressed the strategic planning process currently underway which is a partnership with the academic senate and will involve discussions with staff and students. He informed the audience that over the next semester the campus will be talking about many of our core issues (e.g., what it means to be human, free speech, and a civil society). The process will address issues such as “people, places, money, and ideas”. He also advised that we need to think about the enormous changes taking place in higher education such as greater need for experiential and multi-discipline learning, changes for grad students, increases in “non-traditional” students. He stated that the changing make-up of our student body will require that we consider how we can support these students and make them feel like they are part of our community. The process will also involve discussion about how money flows into the campus. He concluded his opening comments stressing that the financial challenges we face and our vision for where we want to be are linked together and the way to solve our financial problems will be to think seriously about where we want to be and how to grow in those directions.

While questions were being collected from the audience, Assistant Vice Chancellor Mogulof asked EVCP Alivisatos prepared questions. The following are snapshots of some of the questions asked and EVCP Alivisatos’ answers. If you would like to watch the full 54 minute presentation, it is available within the campus news article at <http://news.berkeley.edu/2018/02/12/provost-alivisatos-in-times-of-turmoil-how-can-we-keep-campus-great/>.



## Prepared Questions

Q: How do you reconcile your comments expressing cautious optimism and our current uncertainty?

A: The campus is headed in the right direction but we need to be prudent in our decision-making and anticipate potential surprises.

Q: How do we address the challenges posed by the levers we can't control such as tuition and state funding levels?

A: One way we might be able to help more people with the footprint is, for example, to look at ways we can serve more students who don't need to physically be on campus such as study abroad and online education.

Q: Do moderate tuition increases mean that we are abandoning hope for a return to state support levels provided in the past?

A: The concept of state support is complicated and the state should always be a key player. All stakeholders have to contribute.

## Audience Questions

Q: What makes us public and how do we stay public?

A: Our public service ethos/culture is what makes us public. Relentless questioning of everything is one of the things that defines Berkeley and we need to use that in our discussions with the state legislature.

Q: Besides enhanced awareness, what were the key takeaways from your listening tour of the academic units?

A: The faculty size staying the same over a number of years has put an enormous stress on the system and the campus has committed to grow the faculty by 100 at a moderate pace.

Q: What is your vision of great undergraduate education and where do you think we're going?

A: It is essential to develop continuous learning skills (learn how to learn) which is needed in today's workforce. There is a three sets of issues for our undergraduates today which we can call thrive, launch, and discover. Another thing learned from the listening tour is that there are a number of students (undergrad and grad) as well as staff whose basic needs are not being met. Therefore, an undergraduate initiative needs to ensure that students have adequate housing and their needs are being met to ensure they are in a position to learn.

Q: As we restructure aspects of CSS, what lessons have been learned?

A: A partnership between CSS and the academic units is needed but the dialogue between the two failed during the centralization process. He emphasized that one of the most "phenomenal" resources for the campus is our staff, both in the departments and those who serve the central functions of the campus. When you're organized in a way that it's productive and creates tension, it degrades the community required to keep our organization resilient. He

believes the current regionalization efforts will create the needed balance between cost and service.