



Office of the Dean

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**TO: SOCIAL ECOLOGY STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND GRADUATE STUDENT SERVICES STAFF**

Dear Colleagues,

As this year comes to a close, it is time to reflect upon Social Ecology Climate Committee's (SECC) accomplishments, and also look ahead to our goals for the future. Below you will find an outline of the completed and in-progress achievements made by the SECC. We have also included our future goals. As a reminder, the SECC is composed of the Equity Advisor (Chair), Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services, Departmental DECADE mentors, Faculty Chair, and Student Representatives from each department.

**Academic Year 2017-18**

**COMPLETED GOALS**

- 1) In response to concerns expressed about the well-being of graduate students, we implemented the Social Ecology Student Support Day/Wellness Series.
  - a. The SECC offered a graduate student Wellness Series during AY 2017-18: a work-life balance workshop in Fall, a yoga/meditation event in Winter, and a "decompressing the past year" coffee chat in Spring.
  
- 2) Present at a national conference.
  - a. In March of 2018, with two of our graduate student representatives, the Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services presented on the SECC at the NASPA annual conference in Philadelphia, PA. The title was, *Addressing Graduate Student Wellness through Climate Committees*.
  - b. Based on the feedback we received, we modified the structure of the SECC to increase its effectiveness and reach. Changes include, but are not limited to,
    - i. Creating the SECC bylaws.
    - ii. Standardizing the quarterly meeting date.
    - iii. Increasing the meeting length from 1 to 1.5 hours.
    - iv. Restructuring the meeting so that student needs are the foremost focus.
    - v. Expanding the responsibilities of student committee members.

- vi. Instituting a selection and training process for incoming/outgoing committee members.
- 3) In response to the low turn-out during last year's in-person Town Hall meeting, we offered an online graduate student Town Hall with the Dean and Associate Dean of Academic Program. The online format offered the benefit of students remaining anonymous and facilitated participation of students who commute.
    - a. The online town hall was convened on 5/8/18. Students submitted questions prior to the session and during the session. Online participation was not better than in-person attendance. A summary of the notes will be made available to all graduate students.
  - 4) In response to the need expressed by students to know what resources are available to them, we recommended that faculty add information about campus counseling services, inclusivity, and the SECC to their course syllabi.
    - a. A template was created by Graduate Student Services staff and reviewed by the SECC. The template was then submitted by the committee to the Faculty Chair, who distributed it to Social Ecology faculty to add to course syllabi.
  - 5) To help facilitate communication between the SECC and students, faculty, and staff, we established a SECC email, where graduate students can submit questions, comments or concerns about climate within the School.
    - a. An email address was created – [seclimate@uci.edu](mailto:seclimate@uci.edu).
    - b. An anonymous feedback form was created, and is available on the SECC webpage.
  - 6) In response to needs expressed by students in the SE-Core doctoral program for more peer mentoring and common space, we helped coordinate a mentor/mentee program and locate space in SE I.
    - a. Mentor/mentee program was established in Fall 2017, matching new graduate students to senior students in the SE Core doctoral program.
    - b. The SE-Core "bullpen" was built in Social Ecology I, and is actively used by current Se-Core doctoral students.

## **IN-PROGRESS GOALS**

- 1) Increase SECC visibility within the School.
  - a. SECC student representatives will attend the SE New Graduate Student Orientation – running the check-in booth so that new graduate students will get to meet their representatives.
  - b. Update the SECC website.

- c. On the website, create a FAQs section, where students can find information about various topics. Include a contact “flow chart,” to help direct students to the correct individuals/departments/services.
- 2) Increase attendance at the Wellness Series.
  - a. Invitations for our Wellness Series will be sent by the SECC student representatives. It will be the expectation that our student representatives will attend our wellness events and help recruit other students.
- 3) Help with reported “Second Year Slump”
  - a. Student representatives noted that the motivation to succeed academically among doctoral students may decrease in year two, and some doctoral students may need a boost to as they transition to year two. We will work with each department to determine what is needed and how the SECC can assist.
- 4) Establish SECC office hours.
  - a. The Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services will be available to meet with graduate students on a “drop in” basis during times posted on the SECC website and emailed in the Weekly Announcements.
    - i. Each student will be encouraged to meet with the Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services at least once per academic year.
- 5) Create a series of events related to addressing cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias within Social Ecology.
  - a. The SECC is actively working with the Coordinator of Faculty & Staff Mental Health Care to create a series of workshops to address cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias within the School (for students, faculty, and staff).
- 6) Encourage all departments to include summer funding in their offer letters to doctoral students
  - a. Faculty Advisors for each of our doctoral programs were strongly encouraged to provide four years of guaranteed summer funding for all new students (detailed in admissions financial offer letters). However, summer funding is ultimately at the discretion of the department, and a standard or requirement has not been established.
- 7) Launch a “Beyond the PhD” event where successful Social Ecology alumni, from our graduate programs, will talk about their paths to success.
  - a. The Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services will be meeting with the Division of Career Pathways to explore having an event in AY 2018-2019.
- 8) Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services to conduct exit interviews with graduating masters/doctoral students – with the purpose of addressing climate with the School and each program.

- 9) Create a strategic plan for the Assistant Director of Graduate Student Services with regard to inclusive excellence.
  - a. School recruitment plans for Fall 2019 are currently being outlined, and in October of 2018, Social Ecology will be hosting an event geared specifically toward inclusive excellence.

## **FUTURE GOALS**

- 1) Provide students with opportunities to establish peer networks outside of the School/University.
- 2) Explore having a writer's block workshop for graduate students.
- 3) Address how our doctoral programs assign faculty advisors. Is there a better model?

We have made meaningful progress in the past three years and are duly proud of our many accomplishments. We are grateful to our committee members for their time and dedication and look forward to working with them again in AY 2018-19.

If there are any goals that have been missed or anything we listed that needs amending, please send your updates to our SECC Chair, Equity Advisor Ilona Yim ([ilona.yim@uci.edu](mailto:ilona.yim@uci.edu))

Thank you,

The Social Ecology Climate Committee

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CLS, PSB (outgoing & incoming), UP3, & SE-Core Student Representatives