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January 9, 2011

The Honorable Marty Block
Chair, Assembly Committee on Higher Education
State Capitol, Room 3091
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 645 (Davis), as amended on January 4, 2012
Scheduled for Hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee on
January 10, 2012
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member Block,

The University of California (UC) writes to inform you of our opposition to AB 645. While we appreciate – and indeed, share – the author’s interest in promoting awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity among our students, we believe the bill constitutes an unwarranted and unnecessary intrusion into the UC Regents’ authority for decision-making over curriculum and instruction. The Regents have delegated this authority – including the establishment of degree requirements – to University faculty, acting through UC’s Academic Senate. UC believes that our faculty are in the best position to determine the components of rigorous and well- rounded University education. AB 645 would clearly usurp and undermine the faculty’s authority and expertise in this area.

Moreover, it is unclear whether AB 645 is necessary, since several UC campuses already require at least one course that will expose students to issues affecting diverse ethnicities and cultures, even if those courses are taken in disciplines other than “Ethnic Studies” (a term which AB 645 does not define). Finally, it is unclear what problem AB 645 purports to address. The bill does not articulate specific concerns – for example, deficiencies in existing general education requirements, or a perceived shortage of ethnic studies courses available to students – that would be resolved if the bill were adopted.

In light of the above concerns, the University must regrettably oppose AB 645.

Sincerely,

Nadia Leal-Carrillo
Legislative Director

cc: Assembly Member Mike Davis
Members, Assembly Higher Education Committee
President Mark G. Yudof
Provost Lawrence Pitts
Executive Vice President Nathan Brostrom
Senior Vice President Daniel M. Dooley
Associate Vice President and Director Steve Juarez