



Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAC)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200November , 2015**[Draft SLASIAC Statement Re ETDs]****Subject: Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

I write on behalf of UC's Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAC), which is charged with advising UC on systemwide library policies, strategies to enhance and facilitate the transmission of scholarly and scientific communication in a digital environment, and academic copyright-related matters.

As discussed below, SLASIAC recommends that UC adopt a systemwide policy regarding "open access" of electronic copies of theses and dissertations written by UC's graduate students.

I. BACKGROUND

Historically, when UC graduate students filed their theses and dissertations, the campuses made physical copies of the manuscripts available to the public for free via bound volumes on library shelves. The introduction of electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) and evolving technologies for research and distribution, such as UC eScholarship, have largely eliminated the need to maintain any physical copies of new theses and dissertations. But as ETDs have become the preferred media for archiving and accessing theses and dissertations, there has been a rise in inquiries from authors and campuses regarding the public availability and distribution of ETDs. Such inquiries implicate copyright rights held by these graduate students.

Currently, there appears to be *no* UC systemwide policy or guidelines requiring our graduate students – consistent with our mission as a public university and the tradition of a scholarly exchange – to provide UC with a limited license to make their theses or dissertations publicly available. In the absence of systemwide guidance, the campuses have created varying local policies (or no policies at all) regarding ETDs.¹

¹ Some campus regulations *imply* the right of UC to distribute publicly theses or dissertations – without the existence of a controlling local policy. Other UC campuses, such as UCSD, require all graduate student filers to sign a form affirming their agreement to grant a nonexclusive, worldwide, royalty-free copyright license to The Regents to reproduce, distribute, and display their theses or dissertations. Other campuses are planning to implement similar practices.

UCLA, for example, recently developed a "[Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Public Dissemination Policy](#)" along with a "[Thesis and Dissertation Submission Agreement](#)," based on examples of similar agreements from around the country and input from UCLA librarians and campus counsel. One potential systemwide solution is to adopt UCLA's policy and/or template agreement as a systemwide model.

The apparent absence of a UC-wide policy and inconsistent approaches among UC campuses have led some students to question, and even challenge, current practices at campuses. For example, some graduates have claimed that UC does not have the right to distribute their manuscripts in an open access forum such as UC's eScholarship, as they, the copyright holders, have sole control over the distribution of such documents. (In one instance, one former graduate student even threatened litigation.) These issues point to the need for clearer policies at the systemwide level, grounded on a shared understanding of copyright ownership and open access at UC.

II. PROPOSAL: SYSTEMWIDE POLICY FOR ETDs

SLASIAC recommends the implementation of a systemwide policy mandating public access to theses and dissertations. We anticipate that the substance of this policy would track either UCLA's [Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Public Dissemination Policy](#) or the recently-promulgated systemwide [Open Access Policy](#) (issued on October 23, 2015), which provides an "open access" license for scholarly articles by UC authors. We also anticipate that the systemwide policy likely would include at least the following elements:

1. A statement about the UC's commitment to disseminate research and scholarship – including theses and dissertations developed at UC – as widely as possible;
2. A reference to the systemwide Open Access Policy for scholarly articles;
3. Policy text that requires a deposit of electronic copies of all theses and dissertations produced at UC in an institutional repository (eScholarship or its equivalent), and a non-exclusive license to UC for the purposes of preserving and making accessible to the public all theses and dissertations;
4. Allowance for delayed releases (i.e., "embargoes") of ETDs of no more than two years, with the ability to get a more extended embargo in rare circumstances; and
5. Allowance for campuses to implement local policies that are not inconsistent with the systemwide policy.

SLASIAC believes that such policy would convey UC's long-standing commitment to open access to theses and dissertations. We also believe that the Academic Senate Regulations would be a logical home for such policy, with the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) having final approval. We look forward to assisting a policy taskforce and communicating with relevant stakeholders in crafting an appropriate policy.

Sincerely,

Scott L. Waugh
Chair, SLASIAC
UCLA Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost