Dear Vice Chancellor Zeller,

Thank you very much for making the draft of the Student Housing 2005 Strategic Plan (hereafter referred to as the draft) available to us. As always, AGS looks forward to having the opportunity to partner with the university's administration in serving the needs of the graduate student community. This letter serves as a preliminary document of our long lasting partnership on issues of housing, as it does offer input on the draft, in lieu of all previous discussions AGS representatives have had with various administration representatives in recent years.

Before addressing some of the particulars of the draft, we would like to draw your attention to a number of minor deficiencies. We noticed that there are three distinct customers for campus housing: undergraduates, transfer students, and graduate students. In reviewing the draft, we came to the conclusion that it would be more efficiently organized if Sections VI & VII were partitioned by customer, specifying which goals are being laid out to each category, along with the specific strategies to achieve those goals. Secondly, we understand that one pivotal change in the way the housing administration conducts its business are its financial models. In the draft, adjustments would be made to these models. Neither the models nor the proposed changes have been included in it. We deem very important that such information be included in the next revision, so that we can partner in analyzing how changes can be made to benefit your customers and future planning. Lastly, a glaring omission was made by not clearly defining the term 'affordable'. As AGS brought up in our February Administration/Student Government luncheon, graduate student pay has had very little increase, while campus housing rents have increased disproportionately, directly affecting its affordability.

As UCI grows, so will its graduate student community, and so will the need to house this community in affordable housing units, for as long as it takes to obtain a degree. The draft's proposal to guarantee housing for all incoming graduate students is laudable. AGS cannot, however, endorse any plan that places a hard limit on a resident's stay that it is inferior to the time needed to complete that resident's degree. It is mentioned in the draft that Chancellor Cicerone believes housing to be the primary issue that can limit this campus' growth potential. The expansion of bedroom offerings currently underway will not solve that problem, since the campus' population has already surpassed the ability to house them.

Furthermore, the issues with the waiting list and the inability to fill Palo Verde II to capacity stresses the point that building more units alone will not solve the problem. The draft must address rent inequalities within the existing units as well as provide a model as to how the waiting list can be shortened in the least amount of time.

As to off-campus housing partnership initiatives, AGS takes great interest in it, and would like to maintain an open line of communication on the topic. This initiative seems especially promising for dealing with graduate students currently on the waiting list, as
well as expanding the housing possibilities for incoming graduate students. Our concern, however, is that rent rates for off-campus options will not be in line with graduate student incomes, thus, unaffordable.

The draft also details a number of renovation, repair and replacement projects. One of the items, 'Verano Place IV', explores the possibility of increasing bed spaces. AGS would like to be involved in discussing this option to verify its feasibility. Our concern is that such changes, taking aim at increasing the ratio of students per square foot of housing unit, may displace graduate students or otherwise lower the overall quality of life in regards to on-campus housing.

As mentioned earlier, AGS is keenly interested in knowing the details of the current financial models as well as the details of the proposed changes. AGS would like to partner with you in finding ways to adjust the current financial models to better the lot for current housing customers, as well as planning for the influx of new graduate students.

The issue of parking for on-campus residents is another one claiming attention. Unfortunately, the parking shortage is not addressed in the draft. We would like to ask the housing administration to explore options which would allow residents to use their housing parking permits to park in non-housing parking lots during the evening hours, when those lots are scarcely being used. This is a concern of a number of our constituents who use their cars to safely travel between their work and their home in the late evening.

Furthermore, the shortage has made it extremely difficult for some residents to accommodate visiting loved ones. It is not at all unreasonable for a resident to expect some way of accommodating visitors and their motor vehicles at or near their campus residence.

Lastly, we would like to applaud the housing administration for their new student program and continuing student program initiatives. Although graduate students do not participate in such large numbers as our undergraduate counterparts, the programs provide an important service for domestic and international students. AGS would like to be more involved in helping in any student program, especially with aiding international students in adjusting to the campus and Irvine communities.

Once again, AGS is always interested in partnering with the university administration in meeting our mutual goals. We would like to encourage the housing administration to inform us of ways we can participate in the process. Moreover, we would like to have the housing administration reaffirm that the milestones described in Section VII will be announced in advance, in meetings held at regular intervals and open to all interested campus community members.

Cordially,

AGS Executive Committee

CC: Vice Chancellor Manuel Gomez
Chancellor Ralph Cicerone
Executive Vice Chancellor Michael Gottfredson