Resolution Number: RF03-216
September, 2003

or National Origin, Initiative Constitutional Amendment
(“Racial Privacy Initiative”)

#RF03-216

Resolved That the San Francisco State University Academic Senate endorse the attached Statement on Proposition 54, Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin, Initiative Constitutional Amendment; and further be it

Resolved That the Academic Senate declare its strong opposition to Proposition 54, Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin, Initiative Constitutional Amendment; and further be it

Resolved That the SFSU Academic Senate communicate immediately to the ASCSU, Chancellor Charles B. Reed, the Board of Trustees of the CSU, and the press that it opposes this initiative.

Statement of the
SFSU Academic Senate on Proposition 54

Since the 1960's, energized in part by the Master Plan for Higher Education, the California State University has been deeply committed to the principle of making higher education available to historically under-represented students, many of them from ethnic or cultural minorities, and to the goal of expanding the cultural and gender diversity of its faculty. If passed, Proposition 54 would significantly inhibit the CSU's progress toward realizing these goals.

The SFSU
Academic Senate strongly opposes Proposition 54 for a number of reasons.

Proposition 54 would inhibit the ability of agencies such as the California Post-Secondary Education Commission (CPEC) to carry out their work, thereby reducing the ability of the CSU to make informed decisions or reach reasoned judgments about matters of policy. Lacking data collected by the state, CPEC would have no factual basis on which to determine success of publicly-funded colleges and universities in providing access to all ethnic/racial groups, or to ascertain whether some lack equal opportunity in the high schools to complete the a-g admissions requirements.

By prohibiting the State from collecting data on ethnicity, Proposition 54 would restrict the ability of faculty and students to analyze such data to the benefit of the State and its citizens. It would deprive faculty and students of data compiled by the State that is used for scholarly research, for analysis of trends in California society, economy, and politics, and for policy planning. The SFSU Academic Senate shares the concerns of the Academic Senate of the UC about the potentially deleterious effects of Proposition 54 on this primary function of the academy (its statement is online at http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/reports/crencresp.pdf).

Proposition 54 is, therefore, at its very heart, anti-intellectual and anti-empirical. Proposition 54 would significantly inhibit the ability of the CSU to realize its goals of making higher education available to historically under-represented students, many of them from ethnic or cultural minorities, and the goal of expanding the cultural and gender diversity of its faculty.

By prohibiting all agencies of the State of California from collecting or maintaining data on race or ethnicity of employees and other individuals (e.g., students and staff), Proposition 54 would prevent the CSU from measuring the extent to which it is succeeding in providing access to all ethnic and racial groups and in diversifying its faculty and staff positions. If the state of California were unable to collect data on the race and ethnicity of high-school graduates, there would be no basis on which to identify which racial or ethnic groups are underrepresented.
Proposition 54 would similarly obstruct the CSU's efforts to gauge the success of efforts to recruit and retain a diverse faculty. The ways that the University addresses its goals of opportunity and diversity will change as the racial and ethnic composition of California changes—a group that is underrepresented today may not be in ten or twenty years. But it is, and will be, possible to know who is underrepresented only if data are available. Proposition 54, if passed, would deprive CSU of these data. Proposition 54 would therefore weaken efforts to expand educational opportunity for prospective students from under-represented groups and to increase diversity of the faculty and staff.

These effects make Proposition 54 antithetical to the policy document entitled “The Mission of the California State University,” adopted by the Board of Trustees in November 1985. They put it equally at odds with numerous statements and reports of the Academic Senate, CSU, various campus Senates, and the Academic Senate SFSU: among many others are the Academic Mission and Goals for San Francisco State University (AS policy S92-176, passed in April 1992); the Position Statement on Multicultural Perspectives on the Curriculum, also adopted in spring of 1992 (S92-179); the report of the 1998 SFSU Commission on University Strategic Planning (campus documents are on the SFSU web site).

The Academic Senate SFSU shares the concerns of CPEC, which strongly opposes this initiative, and those of the many non-partisan organizations that oppose it, including the League of Women Voters. And it shares the concerns of the citizens who see it as harmful to their children, their communities, and the future of this state, blocking the efforts of the University to realize in full its commitment to the California public, and most especially to the students it is intended to serve.

***APPROVED Unanimously by the Academic Senate at its meeting on September 9th, 2003***