

University of California Academic Senate

THE SENATE SOURCE



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Assembly Endorses “Pits” Resolution

The Academic Assembly began 2008 by expressing concern about UC’s role in nuclear weapons production at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Senate learned that the present contract potentially is binding for much longer than the seven years advertised in the bid process. Further, it allows the government to increase the lab’s production of plutonium “pits,” the triggering mechanisms in both fusion and fission bombs, for weapons purposes beyond any limits UC may have envisioned.

At its January 30 meeting, the Assembly voted overwhelmingly to endorse a resolution not only expressing those concerns, but also recommending that UC re-examine its involvement in LANL if pit production rises above current levels or if the University is unable to determine the number of pits being produced. The resolution was originally drafted and brought to the Academic Council by the Senate’s [Special Committee on Lab Issues](#) (ACSCOLI), which is concerned that the government’s plan to shift LANL’s focus from research and stewardship to increased production of weapons-grade plutonium pits was not fully disclosed during UC’s contract negotiations with the Department of Energy.

“I view the resolution as a first step — signaling the faculty’s concern about plans to increase UC’s involvement in nuclear weapons production,” said Academic Senate Chair Michael Brown. “The issue is one of principle. Plans to consolidate the nation’s nuclear weapons complex at LANL and to increase production of pits were not fully disclosed during UC’s contract negotiations with the DOE, and as a result, were not fully known by the faculty when they were surveyed in 2004. The conditions of the current lab contracts appear inconsistent with UC’s historical involvement in LANL — a public service mission centered on providing scientific research leadership for national security.”

The full resolution may be viewed [here](#).