UCLA Academic Senate
Committee on Undergraduate
Admissions & Relations with Schools

October 29, 2020

To: Shane White, Chair
        Academic Senate

Re: Systemwide Review of the Report of the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force

Per your request, the Academic Senate Committee on Undergraduate Admission and Relations with Schools discussed during its meeting on October 9, 2020, the Systemwide Review of the Report of the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force.

The report was discussed at length, with the majority of CUARS members' in agreement with the policy options outlined in Option 1 (UC-Quality On-Campus Degree). The preferred option is for a substantial proportion of courses to be offered in-person. The consensus of the committee was that fully online programs would dilute the value of a UCLA degree. Concerns were expressed regarding a two-tier system, even if taught by the same faculty, as students not on campus would lose out on networking, informal discussions with peers and faculty, and hands-on research opportunities. There were also concerns that online programs would increase disparities in outcomes between well-resourced and under-resourced students.   Another compelling point, is what students get out of attending a university. An education provides much more than classroom knowledge, like how to learn, how to be a professional, learning how to behave and interact with others, and "grow up". Going fully online would undermine these important aspects of University education.

In addition, members discussed the following points specific to each option, which are outlined below;

Option 1 (UC-Quality On Campus Degree) would prohibit fully remote undergraduate degree programs and require at least one-third of all major units and also one-third of total units to be earned in non-remote courses;

- As mentioned above members prefer Option 1, as it recognizes remote learning as a useful approach to delivering information for many classes and would help solve classroom space issues. However, students should be required to have a substantial amount of in-person learning.
- In-person instruction is the preferred method of learning for many students as they are more engaged in the classroom environment.
- Teaching online is a completely different experience. Extending access to the University by adding hybrid and online courses makes sense, given there are not enough classrooms and space to meet current demands.

- Learning remotely cannot replace traditional "brick and mortar" instruction. There is value learning in a cohort in-person, learning together, building relationships, and the ability to have face-to-face communication.
- UCLA prior to the pandemic was offering some classes fully remote and for students with good home environments, and good access to internet, online instruction may be a viable option. However, this may not be the case for students learning within a different time zone, having to logon for example, at 2 AM or listen to a prerecorded lecture.
- In addition, there was the feeling that even Option 1 goes too far, would deplete the student from the opportunities a non-remote degree would provide, as keeping only a third of the units being in-person still creates a disparity between the students.

Option 2 (UC-Quality Remote Degree) would support the formation of entirely remote degree programs, but require that programs meet all ordinary expectations for a UC degree;

- Members felt Option 2 would likely be a mistake.

- If the University moved forward with Option 2, what would be required? Would requirements be left to the major and departments to decide? There are disparities between students who are highly resourced, who will do well no matter the situation and those students who have just dropped off the radar. The committee was concerned that entirely remote degree programs would magnify these disparities.

Option 3 (UC-Quality Remote Degree) would allow fully remote degree programs that satisfy the same coursework expectations as at UC's face to face programs, but may not guarantee equivalent out of classroom opportunities.

- The majority of members felt Option 3 would be a mistake.
- However, CUARS' student representatives pointed out moving to online increases accessibility. Students cannot afford to live in LA especially now given the financial crises. Having the opportunity to go to class from home increases accessibility providing the opportunity to pursue extracurricular actives and help support families.
- In addition, online instruction provides a number benefits especially for students who may experience a hardship in the middle of an academic year, i.e. personal, health, or financial crisis. Providing a fully remote option gives students the opportunity to continue their education without having to take a leave of absence, which could decrease the time to degree and increase the graduation success rate.
- While it is the case, fully online programs could bring down the cost of a UCLA degree; this may be counteracted by reduced completion rates for under-resourced students. In the case of a student not graduating, they will have wasted time and money.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at knowlton@psych.ucla.edu or Academic Senate Policy Analyst Renee Rouzan-Kay at rrouzankay@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Barbara Knowlton, Chair
Committee on Undergraduate Admission and Relations with Schools

cc: Jody Kreiman, Academic Senate, Vice Chair/ Chair- Elect
           Michael Meranze, Academic Senate, Immediate Past Chair
           April de Stefano, Academic Senate, Executive Director