

October 28, 2020

To: Shane White, Chair
Academic Senate

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

The Academic Senate Committee on Teaching discussed the Systemwide Review of the Report of the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force during its meeting on October 27, 2020. We appreciate the work of the task force and the detailed strengths and weaknesses of each of the options on the table.

Before our committee's discussion, Chair Jessica Collett reminded the committee that we were not evaluating the effectiveness of online teaching, but instead which of these three proposals we were most supportive of. The committee discussion was robust. The general consensus was that *of the three options*, the committee was most in support of Option 1, although with reservations (detailed below).

1. The majority of the committee believed that “face to face” instruction and collaboration is hallmark of a university experience, sustains the culture and character of local campuses, and should not be sacrificed in the interest of economic constraints.
 - a. There was confusion—perhaps exacerbated by the comparison table in Appendix C that suggests 1 and 2 share all the relevant qualities—about the distinction between Options 1 and 2. The only difference appears to be the addition of a seemingly arbitrary threshold of how much of a hybrid system would be required on-campus. The committee wondered where the 1/3 came from.
2. The committee saw the benefits for students of remote instruction, with a mixed-view on its effect on equity in education. We want to ensure that public education is accessible and affordable. To offer students some options to pursue classes without having to live in expensive areas like Westwood or to spend as much time commuting would help with the burdens some lower SES students face. However, the committee wants to ensure these students are getting the same quality education that they would get if they could engage in campus life and the professional development and resources from campus that would help them be most successful post-graduation. Without this, there is fear this policy may unintentionally create a two-tiered system.
3. Ultimately, the decision to be involved in online instruction (classes and/or degrees) must be made at the local level, as it may be attractive to large majors to use the physical classroom space for upper-division courses rather than the introductory courses that would function rather well online. This, of course, would not work for hands-on majors, like those in the arts and sciences.
 - a. Regardless, the committee is in support of staffing these online courses with ladder-faculty and experts in their fields rather than contingent faculty.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the task force's report. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at collett@soc.ucla.edu or Academic Senate Policy Analyst Renee Rouzan-Kay at rrouzankay@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,



Jessica L. Collett, Chair
Committee on Teaching

cc: Shane White, Academic Senate, Chair
Jody Kreiman, Academic Senate, Vice Chair/ Chair- Elect
Michael Meranze, Academic Senate, Immediate Past Chair
April de Stefano, Academic Senate, Executive Director
Members of the Committee on Teaching