

September 29, 2022

To: Jessica Cattelino, Chair, Academic Senate
From: Kathy Bawn, Chair, Undergraduate Council

Re: (Systemwide Senate Review) Proposed Amendment to Senate Regulation 630

At its meeting on September 23, 2022, the Undergraduate Council reviewed an amendment to Senate Regulation 630 that clarifies the residency prerequisite for the Bachelor's degree. The proposed amendment stipulates that at least 6 units/quarter for 3 quarters (or 2 semesters) must be earned in courses intended to be in person, and at least 2 quarters (1 semester) must be during the academic year. In principle, the amendment is meant to close a loophole that could allow campuses to create fully online undergraduate degree programs through individually-approved online courses.

Members' reactions to the proposal were mixed. Some were opposed to introducing restrictions that would prevent the creation of fully online undergraduate programs. Others found the proposed amendment to be reasonable and manageable for units who may wish to offer online or hybrid degrees. With 50 percent of instruction designed to be in person, members noted that the amendment does not preclude remote participation while allowing students to benefit from an on-campus experience.

Some suggested modifying the language of SR 630.E to reflect the total minimum number of units that must be completed in person per academic year (rather than units per quarter/semester). Clarification was also sought on the rationale for the proposed requirement that "two quarters or one semester must be during the regular academic year," as opposed to during summer. Some also suggested changing the wording of SR 630.A (vis-à-vis 630.E) to clarify the definition of "in residence" as matriculation in a college or school, distinct from physical presence on a UC campus.

Members also discussed the broader merits and challenges of online learning with respect to course quality, academic integrity, and grade inflation. Some felt that UC should not stifle online programs in order to support innovation and equity. Others felt that expanding online options would better allow the University to honor the goals of the California Master Plan, whereas limiting them may exclude students—particularly in rural areas of the state—who cannot physically access many UC campuses. Overall, members emphasized the importance of Academic Senate oversight in ensuring that online programs be designed with best practices in mind to achieve educational excellence.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please direct any questions to Council analyst Julia Nelsen at jnelsen@senate.ucla.edu.

CC: April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
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