February 16, 2021

Mary Gauvain, Chair, Academic Council  
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607-5200

RE: Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review

Dear Chair Gauvain,

The Riverside Division discussed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review proposal and I transmit the comments provided by the Senate committees’ review. The discussion at the Executive Council around the proposal found that the organization and presentation of the report was leading to some confusion regarding the implementation. It was also commented that faculty and student satisfaction metrics or assessment should be better integrated into the reporting in the program. There was confusion about incentives for individual campuses and how these might end up with unintended consequences of inter-campus competition.

Thank you for the chance to comment on the ILTI Review.

Sincerely yours,

Jason Stajich  
Professor of Microbiology & Plant Pathology and Chair of the Riverside Division

CC: Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director of the Academic Senate  
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director of the Academic Senate  
Cherysa Cortez, Executive Director of UCR Academic Senate
To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Frederick Wilhelm, Chair  
Committee on Academic Freedom

Re: Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review

The UCR Senate Committee on Academic Freedom reviewed the report on the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative. We found the following items of concern:

· Courses taken for UCR credit must be subject to the standard approval practices of the UCR Academic Senate.

· The report states that UC Online will, "Negotiate systemwide contracts for instructional technology systems" (page 25).

In light of recent censorship of academic content by technology companies, it is imperative that these contracts unambiguously specify that the faculty of the University of California has 100% control of all instructional content (see attached memos from the UCR and Systemwide AF committees).
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

November 29, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Frederick Wilhelm, Chair
Committee on Academic Freedom

Re: Zoom censorship and protecting the rights of academic freedom

In response to your email, the UCR Committee on Academic Freedom recommends that the UCR Academic Senate and the Senate’s Executive Council develop a letter of concern that directly addresses the relationship between the University of California and private technology platforms in order to protect the rights of academic freedom. These private companies include Zoom, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, and may include other companies and platforms still to be developed in the future.

The COVID pandemic has dramatically expanded the use of Big Tech platforms, making these ‘essential’ in the running of the University and used, for example, in teaching, consultation or public university events. However, they also pose a direct and immediate threat to academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Big Tech companies have acted unilaterally and arbitrarily to censor, cut off, and/or refuse to carry particular university sponsored events. In some cases, accounts of particular Zoom clients have been eliminated.1 Often Zoom and other Big Tech platforms censor in response to State defined lists of undesirables. It is especially problematic that these lists are often created under the veil of government confidentiality laws and not open to public scrutiny.

These actions illustrate the real and potential power of Big Tech to run rough shod over academic freedom and have dramatically expanded concern about these technology companies’ power and

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“their ability to control speech”\textsuperscript{2} Private companies supplying these services should not be able to censor what they see fit. Shutting down a university-run event directly silences all participants and is a gross violation of academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Such censorship has been met with widespread criticism and concern. San Francisco State University (SFSU) President Lynn Mahoney condemned Zoom’s decision in censoring an event at SFSU and reiterated that SFSU “remains steadfast in its support of the right of faculty to conduct their teaching and scholarship free from censorship. We cannot embrace the silencing of controversial views, even if they are hurtful of others.” UCSB Faculty Association stated “neither Zoom nor any other private corporation has the right to veto or censor the content of our classrooms or any university-sponsored public events. By cancelling the event, Zoom directly violated CSU, SFSU, and AAUP academic freedom policies and both federal and state laws.” And the American Association of University Professors is “deeply concerned about the implications for academic freedom” at a zoom-censored New York University (NYU) webinar, that was in itself a response to Zoom censorship, and enjoined New York University to “issue a strong statement denouncing this action as a violation of academic freedom”.

The widely respected Middle East Studies Association (MESA) issued a statement on Academic Freedom and Corporate Control of Digital Platforms, concerned that “corporate-controlled video-conferencing platforms poses threats to the free and safe exchange of idea,” and that these companies showed a “willingness to suppress the expression of certain viewpoints,” in particular those which discuss Palestinian/Israeli issues.\textsuperscript{3} In situations where the physical security of some participants may be threatened, the university must be especially vigilant to prevent private companies from infringing on the rights of academic freedom and freedom of speech.

In this time of pandemic, universities are dependent on these technological platforms. Yet the university must not be complicit in the actions of these privately run companies that threaten academic freedom or freedom of speech. While some have noted that these private companies have the right to set their own terms of service, users also have the right to stipulate what is appropriate for their needs. Two appropriate responses might address this critical issue for the University.

One is to clarify the universities’ contractual relation with these tech companies, and insist that these companies have no right to veto, censor or alter the content of classrooms, speakers or university sponsored public events. Such an agreement should be inserted directly into the contract with the company concerned. Evidently, patrons of other companies besides Zoom have a right to


\textsuperscript{3} 9/23/2020; 10/28/2020 AAUP to NYU, 10/28/2020 from AAUP website. All universities dealing with China face challenges in using Zoom and perhaps other tech platforms. San Francisco State University, New York University, the University of Hawaii encountered Zoom censorship. And in responses to Zoom censorship, there were those at the following universities who participated in Zoom protests: University of Massachusetts, Boston, Loyola University New Orleans School of Law, Claremont Colleges, University of Alberta (Canada), and the University of Leeds (Great Britain). The following organizations have expressed concern about the ability of BigTech to censor and to violate standards of academic freedom. American Associations of University Professors; California Scholars for Academic Freedom, and a statement by the Middle East Studies Association, MESA Statement on Academic Freedom and Corporate Control of Digital Platforms.
stipulate their own restrictions or eliminate restrictive clauses with these companies, and Zoom could make similar arrangements.

Two: If companies are unable or unwilling to abide by the standards of free speech and academic freedom, the universities should seriously consider terminating these contracts and choosing alternative platforms.

The University of California is a major institution with substantial bargaining power to negotiate with these technological companies. A partnership of the UC with the California State University system, and perhaps other US universities, would clearly strengthen the negotiating power of all concerned.

The UCR Committee on Academic Freedom requests that the Academic Senate and the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate enjoin the University of California, and the Academic Senate of the University to evaluate their relationship with Big Tech platforms and reevaluate their contractual relationships with Big Tech (such as Zoom, Facebook, You Tube and Instagram) and ensure that academic freedom is not violated by private companies and that they are specifically and contractually forbidden to do so.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

UCR Committee on Academic Freedom
December 17, 2020

MARY GAUVAIN, CHAIR
ACADEMIC SENATE

RE: CENSORSHIP BY ZOOM AND OTHER PRIVATE PLATFORMS

Dear Mary,

The University’s responsibility to protect academic freedom and freedom of expression cannot be outsourced. As we all know, UC currently relies heavily on platforms such as Zoom to facilitate our teaching, research, governance, and the public dissemination of knowledge. UC cannot, however, rely on private companies to protect the academic freedom on which those core university functions depend.

The threats here are not just hypothetical. Zoom has already canceled political events and academic discussions at other institutions, after receiving complaints and finding violations of their terms of service.¹ UCAF’s worries go beyond the facts of particular prior cases, which vary in potentially important ways. UCAF is concerned about dangers evident in UC’s own contract with Zoom, under which Zoom retains largely unfettered discretion to control what content it hosts. We suspect that Zoom is not alone in this regard.

Zoom’s current Terms of Service,² which incorporate by reference the company’s Community Standards,³ prohibit all of the following:

- “posting or sending hateful imagery,” where that is defined to include “symbols historically associated with hate groups (e.g. the Nazi swastika),” images of individuals altered “to include animalistic features,” and “logos, symbols, or images whose purpose is to promote hostility and malice against others based on” protected grounds such as race, gender, or religious affiliation;
- “the celebration of any violent act that may inspire others to replicate it”;
- depicting “any form of gory media related to death, serious injury, violence, or surgical procedures” or “media that depicts death, violence, or serious physical injury in graphic detail,” including

² https://zoom.us/terms/
³ https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/community-standards.html
depictions of “visible wounds” and “bodily fluids”;

- nudity, which is restricted “by default,” though Zoom “may make allowances” when “the intent is clear” that nudity is shared for “educational or medical reasons”;
- “impersonat[ing] anyone,” defined as “pretending to be someone you are not”;
- “use [of] another’s name or image without their permission”;
- engaging in activity that is false or misleading;
- communicating “any material that is . . . indecent.”

Zoom encourages users to report violations of its Terms of Use and Community Standards through its online “Trust Form.”

From swastikas portrayed in history classes to nudity in art studios, from clinical training in the medical schools to impersonation by our theater clubs, mock trial teams, and school mascots, members of the University of California routinely violate Zoom’s terms and standards in the course of regular instruction, research, and extracurricular activities. Of course, Zoom may never enforce its terms and standards to the absurdly broad extent that their vague language would allow. (Insofar as it would never do so, Zoom should have no objection to clarifying and limiting its contractual language.) Under our current contract, however, the power to decide what content to allow lies with Zoom, not the University. This is an astonishingly open-ended threat to the University’s ability to carry out its fundamental mission.

Zoom has the ability to censor University content on the basis of criteria—such as indecency, falsity, goriness, or the promotion of hostility—that would be unconstitutional for the University to employ in some contexts, and a serious violation of academic freedom in many other contexts. This will surely make companies like Zoom an attractive target for those seeking to influence what gets said, taught, and studied at the University. The University needs to take steps to guard against such outside influence now—particularly now, when UC is so thoroughly reliant on the services of companies like Zoom.

To their credit, our colleagues in Academic Affairs and Information Technology at UCOP had begun meeting to discuss these issues even before UCAF raised them. On December 4, 2020, in a letter to the Council of UC Faculty Associations (attached), the University Provost also addressed the problem, reaffirming in his letter “that the University of California is committed to upholding and preserving principles of academic freedom.” Bringing attention to these principles is always welcome, but the present threat to them requires a stronger response.

Provost Brown writes in his December 4 letter that “Zoom is a private company that has the right to set its own terms of service in its contracts with users.” This is true, but incomplete: the right to set contractual terms is not Zoom’s alone; the University of California is party to the contract as well. UC has already negotiated additions to its contract with Zoom on issues of data security and privacy. Protecting academic freedom is no less vital. The University of California has the responsibility—and fortunately also the stature and market power—to negotiate terms of service that do not just facilitate the University’s core activities, but preserve the academic freedom that makes them possible in the first place.

UCAF therefore requests that Academic Council call on the administration to take the following steps:

4 https://zoom.us/trust-form
First, negotiate with Zoom for contractual terms that protect the academic freedom of UC faculty and other teachers and researchers, the freedom of scholarly inquiry of UC students, and the First Amendment rights of the entire UC community. Content on University of California Zoom accounts should be censored only if hosting it would cause Zoom to violate the law. Any other content limitations should be left to the University.

Second, identify other platforms that UC faculty, students, and staff can use as an alternative if censorship by Zoom occurs or is feared. Provost Brown’s recent letter encourages faculty to “contact their local Information Technology Department for recommendations as to other vendors.” But the threat of censorship is one that affects the entire University. It results from university-wide contracting. A university-wide solution is therefore appropriate. UC should make available backup platforms that can be used for courses and other events while UC’s negotiations with Zoom proceed (or, certainly, if its negotiations fail).

Third, since Zoom is not the only private platform or service the University uses to carry out its core activities, UC should identify other contracts that might raise similar threats to academic freedom and free speech. A renegotiated contract with Zoom could provide a model for negotiations with those contractors, as well as for other universities grappling with similar concerns.

The University of California has an opportunity to be a leader on this important issue. UCAF asks that Academic Council endorse this statement of concern and proposed responses. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Soucek, Chair
UCAF
December 2, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
   Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Yinsheng Wang, Chair  
       Committee on Academic Personnel

Re: Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review

CAP discussed the report from System-wide Review about Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) and concurred with the recommendations made in the report. CAP suggests that the future practice of the UC Online program should also take into account, the impact of instruction in the online format on the teaching evaluations of the faculty teaching these courses, and the ensuing consequences on merit and promotions. From a faculty perspective, the CAP members felt that the UC Online program should also take into consideration, the effect of the UC Online program on faculty workload management.
COMMITTEE ON COURSES

December 16, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Ming Lee Tang, Chair
Committee on Courses


The Committee on Courses reviewed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiatives (ILTI) Review Report at their December 9, 2020 meeting. The Committee noted these concerns:

- Staffing is inadequate at UCR. Neither UCR’s Xcite nor the Academy of Distinguished Teachers are able to devote resources to expand access to ILTI. UCR does not have the resources in terms of staff or technology to support the program to its full potential. Staff are overwhelmed by the pandemic-induced virtual classes.

- Registration for ILTI courses is extraordinarily cumbersome.

- While ILTI classes at UCR are well-received, they are limited to a small number of classes and therefore any data on ILTI is anecdotal at best.

- Current funding to convert an existing class to ILTI is diminished. Compared to the original grants, current awards reflect a 90% reduction in funding. With zero funds earmarked for online homework, proctoring, etc., it makes the transition exponentially difficult.

- It is challenging for students across the UC campuses to see if classes matriculate across campuses, i.e. if ILTI classes can be considered for credit. For example, UCLA does not have a biochemistry class parallel to UCR’s BCH 100 ILTI offering, thus UCLA students do not enroll in the course. It is also extremely difficult to find out if the same class is considered upper division or lower division across different UCs.
CoDEI reviewed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI): Recommendations for Future State document at our meeting on January 21st. Unfortunately, issues relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) do not appear to have factored substantively in this report. The Committee considers this to be a missed opportunity in several key respects.

The Committee is concerned that the questions that Systemwide Senate Leadership have asked the Divisions and Systemwide Committees to consider do not speak directly to DEI issues. While the Committee acknowledges that DEI is implicit in the "core teaching mission of the University," such a vision is not borne out by the report itself. The Committee encourages all parties involved to pay greater attention to DEI if the report is resubmitted for subsequent review.

The Committee identified three fundamental flaws inherent to the report that are more general and all-encompassing than DEI.

- The proposal lacks clear assessment criteria for the proposed reorganization and rebranding of ILTI along with appropriately designed mechanisms to assess success; DEI should be included in these criteria.

- The proposal fails to address whether or not the ILTI program has been successful in its current incarnation. For example, the Overview section of the report mentions annual funding by the state starting in FY13 "as a means of increasing access and decreasing the time-to-graduate." The report provides data for the numbers of courses offered and the number of students enrolled (Figures 1, 3-5; Appendix II). There is no attempt to define or measure “access” and no data was reported to measure the impact on time-to-graduate for students who enrolled in ILTI courses. It is unclear to the Committee if the ILTI program is presently meeting the State's objectives.

- The proposal fails to assess student and/or instructor satisfaction with their ILTI experience. If there is measurable dissatisfaction, substantially more changes are necessary than the primarily bureaucratic reorganization that has been proposed here.
There is ample opportunity to improve the report and the proposed reorganization that addresses the three concerns outlined above in a manner that seamlessly integrates with DEI.

The Committee was generally concerned that the report lacked a clear DEI component. This Committee would like to offer several specific criticisms and suggestions.

- The proposed ILTI Vision Statement (page 017) does not speak to DEI; this is a missed opportunity.

- The ILTI Future Goals (see Table II, page 018) does not speak directly to DEI. While DEI may be implicit in phrasing such as "campus efforts and priorities" or "activities that support broader systemwide academic priorities," the future goals lack credibility without affirmative goals that are specific to DEI.

- In several places (first, in the Organization Section starting on page 014), the Report mentions that ILTI was moved to a new Department of Graduate, Undergraduate, and Equity Affairs (GUEA), and that the three leaders report to the Vice Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Affairs / Vice Provost for Equity in Inclusion. No rationale for this reorganization is provided, and whether doing so has positively impacted the evolution of ILTI thus far. This Committee would like to understand more about the Equity component of the GUEA unit, and what the anticipated impact on Equity (as well as Diversity and Inclusion) would be.

- As discussed above, the report provides data for the numbers of courses offered and the number of students enrolled (Figures 1, 3-5; Appendix II), but does not provide any demographic data that can be used to assess the impact of the program on DEI. This directly connects to the “access” objective of the program which was explicitly stated as one of its objectives by the state.
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

December 8, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Stefano Vidussi, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy


The Committee on Educational Policy reviewed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiatives (ILTI): Recommendations for Future State Report at their December 4, 2020 meeting and engaged in a robust discussion.

The Committee was supportive of decentralizing the ILTI program so that each campus had autonomy for the program on their campus. Additionally, members recommended that campuses establish testing centers to ensure that tests are secure and rigorous.

The Committee was not supportive of the recommendation for UCOP to provide best practices for the instruction of online courses and instead recommends that UCOP defer to faculty for how best instruct their courses.

Concern was noted by the Committee regarding the outdated data included in the report and a recommendation was made to include more up to date findings. Additionally, members noted that the report did not include a representative sample of faculty.

Lastly, members recommended that the review of ILTI be halted until evaluations of the current remote mode of instruction are evaluated.
COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE

January 26, 2021

To: Jason Stajich  
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Patricia Morton, Chair  
Committee on Faculty Welfare


The Committee on Faculty Welfare met on December 15, 2021 to review the Report on the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review. The Committee notes its approval of the way in which courses created by faculty are being retained. CFW feels it is important to make a distinction between classes currently being taught remotely due to the COVID-19 campus response and those courses that were developed to be taught online. Overall, CFW felt the recommendations in the proposal were very positive and agreed with them.
GRADUATE COUNCIL

January 25, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
   Riverside Division

From: Amanda Lucia, Chair
      Graduate Council


Graduate Council discussed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) report at their January 21, 2021 meeting.

The Council calls for increased and vigilant attention to how online education is integrated, maintained, and supported. The Council was concerned that robust representation from UCR faculty and students was lacking, especially because UCR has valuable contributions regarding equity and access. The report does not include enough of a commitment for staff, which is and will be crucial. It is important that remote teaching due to COVID and online courses designed for remote instruction are distinguishable. The report does not discuss how continued maintenance and updating of the online courses will be handled. The Council also noted that there does not appear to have been adequate consultation with the faculty and graduate students who are and will be teaching these courses (survey responses that would capture pedagogical strategies, student experiences, etc.). The Council appreciated that cross-campus courses will benefit student and faculty access, but also noted that there is distinctiveness to each campus that should be retained.
January 29, 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
    Riverside Division

From: Alejandra Dubcovsky, Chair
    Committee on Library and Information Technology


Innovative Learning Technology Initiatives: Recommendations for Future State. This report addresses recommendations for ILTI. It raises issues about enrollment and classes.

The one point that seem sound and clear:

(1) Eliminate Non-Matriculated Student Enrollment, also known as UC Online, because efforts to enroll non-matriculated students offered little value to the UC system.

The points that raise concerns are:

(2) Recommendation 2: Create a New UC Online Program. The language surrounding this recommendation is vague. Created mostly pre-COVID, it recommends Online instruction on:

1. Innovative Courses, (2) High Demand Courses, and (3) Specialty Courses. These proposals and recommendations were explored and criticized in earlier reports. In other words, these recommendations seemed overly simplistic, and without pedagogical engagement or thought of online teaching issues both in terms of equity and access... which is surprising since in 2020 ILTI was moved to the new department of Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs (GUEA).

Additional concerns within the recommendation (2):

1. The proposal calls to "direct as much funding as possible to the development of online courses..." what does this mean as budget cuts loom? How are faculty and TA’s going to be supported?
2. The proposal calls: "Expanding the use of the cross-campus enrollment system." Again, what does this mean? It makes sense for specialized courses, but can a student take Calculus 1 at Irvine, even though she can take it at UCR. What are the limits of these cross-campus courses?

Finally, Recommendation 3: Restructure Administration and Governance. They recommend that a faculty member take-up leadership of the program. But besides that, I was a bit confused about the streamline they were suggesting. It was telling to me that recommendation 3, about governance and structure was as long as recommendation 2 about actual online classes and structure, which (in theory) is the bulk of the proposal.
The Committee on Planning & Budget discussed ILTI review report at their January 19, 2021 meeting. The cost and revenue of the existing program was not clear to members. The committee was concerned by the noted “limited technical competencies” of the Cross-Campus Enrollments and Operations support structure as a significant problem that would need to be solved. Members raised concerns about how the funding will work for the intra UC program – will revenue go to the campus offering the courses?
January 29, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Philip Brisk, Chair
BCOE Executive Committee

RE: Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review

Dear Jason,

The BCOE Executive Committee reviewed the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) Review. The Committee is supportive of the portions of the Recommendations for a Future State that seek to streamline the ILTI program; given low enrollment, eliminating the portion presently branded as UCOnline which serves non-matriculated students, makes sense.

While the Committee supports the general sentiment of the ILTI program, the Review fails to provide convincing evidence that the ILTI Program has been successful as currently incarnated, and it is unclear if the proposed reorganization and rebranding will yield a substantive improvement.

A common theme for both the review of the ILTI program’s performance to date and the Recommendations for a Future State aspects of the Review is a lack of clearly defined success criteria, mechanisms to assess success; and feedback processes to refine the program in the event that success is not achieved. The data that is presented focuses on courses offered, students enrolled, and student completion rates; the data is necessary but insufficient, and paints an incomplete picture of the ILTI program and its impact on the core teaching mission of the University:

- The proposal explicitly states that state funding was allocated to both the University of California and California State University Systems “as a means of increasing access and decreasing the time-to-graduate.” Neither access nor impact on time-to-graduate were assessed in this Review, and the Recommendations for a Future State do not indicate any plan to assess them.
- The Review does not assess either the satisfaction of students enrolled in ILTI courses or the instructors who teach the courses; likewise, there is no plan to assess them in the future.
- The Review provides no mechanism or discussion about how quality control is maintained across multiple offerings of the same course by multiple instructors across multiple institutions.

In summary, the Committee feels that ILTI must develop a culture of assessment and accountability to positively impact the core teaching mission of the University, with outcomes shared with Senate leadership.

The Committee suggests that ILTI perform a comparison with comparable statewide systems that provide cross-campus enrollment and online instruction. The Arche program in the State of Georgia was suggested as a well-run system (https://www.atlantahighered.org).

The Review did not address the funding structure, which makes it difficult to understand the impact on costs and revenue streams. Without loss of generality, if a UCR student enrolls in an ILTI course offered at UCD, presumably UCD bears the cost of course delivery; it is unclear if some fees associated with course enrollment are transferred out of UCR (assuming that the student would otherwise enroll in an equivalent course at UCR) to UCD and/or UCOP. If this is the case, ILTI could pit campuses against one another: each campus is incentivized to enroll as many students as possible from other UCs in the ILTI courses that they...
teach, and to minimize the number of its own students that enroll in ILTI courses taught by other campuses. In short, it is not possible to assess the ability for ILTI to develop partnerships with UC campuses without a clear and detailed explanation of revenue streams.

The Committee also noted that there is a general lack of awareness of ILTI among students, faculty, advising staff, and other campus stakeholders. Just as an example, ILTI is not mentioned in the UCR General Catalog, and the section on cross-campus enrollment is brief. UCR is already understaffed, and faculty have a high service load, as they perform functions that are carried out by staff at other UCs that have more equitable funding. This puts the onus on already-stressed faculty and staff to raise awareness of the ILTI possibility, on advisors to guide students through the process of enrolling in ILTI courses, and on the faculty who must approve syllabi. This simply is not sustainable, especially in a time of deep budget cuts.

Lastly, the Committee would like to note that UCR has set up several Committees to review online education in the past. It would be useful to provide the Executive Committees with access to these reports to see how UCR’s internal reviews compare to the ILTI Review. It would also be useful for the Systemwide Senate to review ILTI directly, similar to how UCR internally reviews its own Graduate Programs; a self-review of what is essentially a UCOP program by UCOP is not particularly convincing.
Feb. 1, 2021

TO:       Jason Stajich  
Chair, Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

FROM:     Lucille Chia, Chair
CHASS Executive Committee


As several members of the CHASS Executive Committee emphasized, online teaching will become a definite part of UC’s future teaching and research programs, and “Transitioning from current ILTI to new UC Online seems a right direction.” This memo first addresses questions that the Senate leadership asked:

Given that ILTI courses often have been developed in coordination with individual faculty rather than with campus departments, how can ILTI develop a more appropriate and effective partnership with campuses such that it positively impacts the core teaching mission of the University?

Definitely ILTI needs to develop a systematic approach to collaborating with participating campuses. As the Covid-19 pandemic caused UC campuses to resort to “remote teaching” (after the Spring Quarter 2020 at UCR), some of the problems of online instruction have become more apparent. These include the confusion in the administrative criteria, pedagogical regulations, and legalities for sharing and publishing course contents, all of which should be clarified and standardized system-wide as much as possible. Among the programs that need clear system-wide supervision that are equitable among all campuses is the Cross-Campus Enrollment System (CCES).

What is the potential role and impact of ILTI on the core teaching mission of the University?

The CHASS EC recognizes the inevitability of online teaching becoming a core component of UC’s teaching mission. Thus it is crucial that all stakeholders in the UC teaching mission learn as much as possible from the problems we have encountered in the past ten months of remote teaching. Rather than insistently displaying only progress from
2013 to 2020 of the progress made in the ILTI, it would be far more useful and honest to discuss the problems we have encountered. One wonders how much of the “progress” listed in Appendix A in last column (“Now: 2020”) is due to the remote teaching necessitated by the pandemic. Success has far less to teach us than failures and problems that need solving.

What can the systemwide ILTI program best provide for the campuses: instructional design guidance, best online teaching practices, multicampus instructional innovations, cross-campus enrollment through the CCES platform? Other?

The System-wide ILTI needs to provide all the programs listed. In addition, see the comments for the next question.

What kinds of systemwide courses should be created and how should their utility in achieving the UC teaching mission be assessed?

--In looking at the catalog of courses in the CCES platform, there are occasionally the same or very similar course offered by more than one campus. Will this lead to any competition or conflict among the campuses? Can information for instructors interested in offering CCES-qualified course be made more clearly available? And as the new UC ONLINE is expanded, we need more details about CCES: for example, are there limits of this program?

--A broader issue: As CCES courses increase, we should ask if the role and function of each and any UC campus must be defined to clarify the teaching and research tasks as online teaching becomes such an important part of the teaching mission of UC.

What should the ILTI governing structure be?

The ILTI governing structure MUST consist of representation from each campus from the following: instructors (primary and teaching assistants), academic advisors, staff from the academic computer/information technology and the Registrar, and students—undergraduate and graduate. In other words, all those who have a stake in the teaching mission of the University. Their voices, however different from each other and however contentious, must be carefully listened to by the administration on all levels of UC.

Some further, more specific comments on the report are:

1. One point that seem sound and clear: Eliminate Non-Matriculated Student Enrollment, also known as UC Online, because efforts to enroll non-matriculated students offered little value to the UC system.

2. Recommendation 2
a. Specialty Courses, the largest portion of courses in the catalog, which were offered in ILTI are not included in the new UC Online. Is there a specific reason? As the new UC ONLINE will be expanding, More details about the CCES are needed—e.g., any limits of this program?

b. Create a New UC Online Program: The language surrounding this recommendation is vague. Created mostly pre-COVID, it recommends Online instruction on (1) Innovative Courses, (2) High Demand Courses, and (3) Specialty Courses. These proposals and recommendations were explored and criticized in earlier reports. In other words, these recommendations seemed overly simplistic, and without pedagogical engagement or thought of online teaching issues both in terms of equity and access... which is surprising since in 2020 ILTI was moved to the new department of Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs (GUEA).

Additional concerns within the recommendation (2):

1. The proposal calls to "direct as much funding as possible to the development of online courses..." what does this mean as budget cuts loom? How are faculty and TA’s going to be supported?

2. The proposal calls: "Expanding the use of the cross-campus enrollment system." Again, what does this mean? It makes sense for specialized courses, but can a student take Calculus 1 at Irvine, even though she can take it at UCR. What are the limits of these cross-campus courses?

For example, consider the difficulties of courses requiring prerequisites. What if a student has failed math twice and is not allowed to take math on that campus due to failing the course twice (so, now the student has to select another major), will the student be able to take math on another campus? This could be deleterious for the student. Our systems are different on each campus, the student information systems are not linked in any way that I know of. This could cause problems for students who want to follow a path (e.g., BIOL) that they may not be well suited, thereby delaying progress toward graduation because the student does poorly in the coursework. Students can be single-minded at times and won’t give up on a major. In sum, it appears there is much to assess with a move toward online course/program offerings.

3. Specialty Courses, the largest portion of courses in the catalog, which were offered in ILTI are not included in the new UC Online. Is there a specific reason?

Finally, Recommendation 3: Restructure Administration and Governance. The report recommends that a faculty member take-up leadership of the program. But other than that, the streamlining suggested is not clear. It was telling that recommendation 3, about governance and structure was as long as recommendation 2 about actual online classes and structure, which (in theory) is the bulk of the proposal.
29 January 2021

To: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Theodore Garland, Jr., Chair, Executive Committee
College of Natural and Agricultural Science


The CNAS Executive Committee reviewed this review of the ILTI program and had MANY comments. I am going to sign just below and then list them below my signature. The comments are a mixture of what we discussed in the Executive Committee and feedback that we solicited from individual departments, via their representatives. The order of presentation is somewhat random, and it does not much follow the five questions posed.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Views of the ILTI program varied widely among individual faculty and among departments. Some had essentially never heard of the program whereas others had received grants.

The mission of ILTI seems to have shifted over time. Originally, it seems that ILTI was oriented towards developing online versions of large "gateway" courses that were impacted by large enrollments and that would be useful to have available across campuses. More recently, it seems that grants are given for courses that have no intention of being made available for cross-campus enrollment, and even for some that are not even hybrids, let alone fully online. We saw no explanation for this mission creep, nor any justification for it.
We also noted that changes in the goals of ILTI have not been communicated to faculty who might want to participate. Some were turned off by the initial requirements, and never thought to apply later when requirements may have become more attuned to their needs.

This apparently shifting goals of ILTI had some effects on what people thought of the program, via expectations and experiences.

The Report Review that we were given seemed like something of a whitewash.

We agreed that a lack of coordination at department or program levels was suboptimal.

The report seems to overstate the effectiveness with which the on-line classes they supported have been made available system-wide, both in terms of outreach and mechanics (campus approval, cross-campus enrolling). Our experience is that this has not been done effectively. It appears that only a few hundred students a year enroll through the $13M CCES and complete their course. That is the size of one large gateway class at one campus in one quarter.

Some grant recipients noted continuing trouble with getting cross-campus students enrolled. This seems to occur EVERY quarter, even in courses that have been going for years. Why can't the folks up north get their act together?

A lack of consistency in the software systems and procedures of the registrars on different campuses is a hindrance to ILTI's goals.

ILTI has done little or none of the legwork to advertise courses across other campuses and, perhaps even more importantly, they have not worked to get courses articulated across campuses. This is a huge impediment that must be dealt with directly by ILTI, not individual instructors.

There is also the feeling that this centralized program has been less effective than campus-based learning technology programs at supporting the development of on-line classes.

Some thought that most (more than the recommended 60%) of the funding
should go to the campuses through block grants. The Systemwide Competition seems to have had limited successful thus far, and we would not expect that to change in the future.

We agree that a better role for this UCOP office might be coordinating systemwide instructional technology efforts – by taking some of the burden off the campuses (e.g., negotiating systemwide licensing), not by creating more work for them (imposing best practices that are unfunded mandates).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL FACULTY FOLLOW:

Note that some faculty found it difficult to differentiate opinions between ILTI per se, which provides funds with varying amounts of strings attached, and the local UCR resources (e.g., our learning technologists, now called XCITE) who help them (spend the money).

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Well, in regards to supporting the development of online classes in general, I think it has been effective. The program has certainly given me more than adequate resources to develop high quality online learning materials. However, my understanding is the program was intended to create courses that could be taken by students from across the UC system. My sense is that it has not achieved that goal. Part of the problem lies in the fact many institutions created duplicate courses (e.g., UC Irvine created an online prep chem course, so why would their students bother to take mine?). Beyond that, you then need to get buy-in from departments at other campuses to endorse/promote courses created by someone else, and I think that is rare (if it happens at all). I had a colleague at UCLA who tried to get her department to have their students take my prep chem course, but they never did endorse the idea and I got no more than a dozen or so students from their camps to take my course.

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I think the program does a good job of supporting development of online materials, but the problem is getting students from other campuses to take our classes. In-person lab requirements are a limitation for STEM classes. Not sure if this is related to online classes/ILTI courses, but other UCs also don't seem to accept transfer credit from UCR without a lot of hoops to jump through. Their emphasis with time has moved to strictly online courses;
which limits what we can do. Though with the transition to emergency remote instruction I wonder if students will be more interested in online learning in the future... how does UCOP leverage that?

I heard the campus stopped getting the license for Playposit. My colleague wrote: "they extended the license until the end of the [Fall 2020] quarter. Afterwards, I will be able to use my bulbs, but only if I move videos into YouTube and relink them. Also, I will lose BlackBoard integration and if I want to share it with students, I will need to pay them $144/year for a professional license (the free license limits the number of students that can use bulbs).

The offering should be in coordination with local department needs and development. I also am concerned whether the last question regarding the governing structure is the beginning of a discussion on a virtual campus.

The courses I developed with my ILTI grant (for Math 6A/6B) are courses that I also designed for in person classes and I coordinate all 6A/6B sections. Given that I coordinate the courses already, developing the sequence with me for the ILTI was essentially developing it with the department. Similarly, other coordinated courses/sequences potentially could then be (and certainly some are) developed with more impact than an individual faculty member’s courses.

Pro+Mixed: The funding was very helpful in getting some time to develop a way to transition courses to a hybrid/online environment as well as to purchase necessary technology for this transition. Reflecting upon my application, I wish I had applied for more money for me and those in my department to develop the materials as this was a much more significant time investment than I anticipated. While theoretically money can be transferred between different categories in the grant, I have been told that doing so would likely reduce the overall grant funding and so have not investigated that further.

Pro: I am very glad that I had already spent significant time developing 6A/B
to be hybrid before the pandemic as I was able to smoothly transition the courses for me and all the sequence (6A/B) instructors to the online interface at the start of the pandemic.

Con: Several times the recommended tools (such as those used for video hosting) by ILTI technologists to use to share with students changed, which then caused extra work if those tools were used. Choosing tools more carefully and sticking with them would make them more usable. Especially choosing ones that faculty can expect to have access to indefinitely. I was concerned about this issue and chose not to use those tools -- instead I used ones associated to my UCR Gmail account so that I would not encounter this issue that I correctly was concerned about.

Pro: The technology staff who helped me set up the green screen and select technology for creating my own videos were very helpful. Setting up a usable green screen lab was more cost effective than having a UCR videographer film and edit the videos.

There are good and bad things to be said. As a matter of fact, most of what I have to say is about XCITE (the service on campus that, among other things, is supposed to help people with ILTI grants do their ILTI-funded projects).

ILTI provides funding for developing but once you are done developing, it is the campus that is supposed to sustain whatever you developed. As you can imagine, a big portion of the funding goes to XCITE. I was able to cut that down significantly because I do my own video editing (it is quicker than verifying everything edited by people who do not understand the material), and YouTube now does an excellent job generating closed captions (they are no worse than close captions produced by "professionals"; they need to be edited by so are human-generated ones). So, basically, the only thing I need from XCITE is the filming studio.

But even that can be a disaster sometimes. In Summer 2019 we were filming for MATH131. The workflow we used for MATH011 was that I would get the raw footage within a couple of days after filming and would go over it to make sure that everything was fine and nothing needed to be retaken. This time they gave me the footage more than a month after we were done filming. It turned out that 70% of what we filmed was recorded without
sound. That is, the student employed by XCITE verified that he can hear us in the headphones, but did not verify that the sound was actually being recorded. So, essentially we will have to redo all that again.

AES faculty generally do not have time to generate system-wide courses. There is a difference between appointments in AES and not in AES. Administration wants all faculty to think that all faculty positions in the college are created equally but that is not correct. There is a difference for faculty members truly working in agriculture and dealing with commodities (state national, international), federal programs (like IR-4), state and federal regulators (DPR, EPA), USDA, NSF etc. grant proposals, and reviews etc. as well as already fulfilling teaching responsibilities in split appoints between OR and I&R.

Online courses are not how to teach plant pathology or any biology class. In the last year, many faculty members experienced first-hand teaching upper division biology classes that use microscopes and dissecting scopes through zoom. It is a difficult task that results in poor training of students.

The forms need to be more clear about the incentives. Most faculty would view this like a grant proposal and want to know the extent of funding involved. In the attached documents it was difficult to find this information. The program needs to have a broader perspective on the different types of faculty, ways to motivate faculty in different departments and disciplines, and generally more creative or open.

I interacted very little with the UCOP/ILTI people but used the resources to pay for consulting with the Learning Center at UCR, for some equipment that I used to make the videos, and summer salary support for updating content. As part of the terms of the grant we have to offer cross-campus enrollment in our course for at least five years during the normal term (if memory serves). The grant application process was straightforward enough. My understanding is that in recent years they are allocating less money for
newer proposals, however.

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It's helped me a lot to improve my CBNS 124 course. It provided money for instructional designers (IDs) that helped with all kinds of tasks: filming my live presentations, editing and captioning video lectures I made on power point using Camtasia, using special programs like Play posit to embed questions into video lectures and syncing with gradebook (there were problems). They also helped with creating exams online, using/troubleshooting CANVAS, etc. One of IDs also helped create clinical correlate mini-lectures as well which improved the course. Finally, we are working on making mini-experiments held in discussion fully online. Work in progress.

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The ILTI program is excellent overall, should be continued and expanded, but it certainly is not perfect. Here are some comments below.
1. The financial impact cannot be understated. I had the luxury of paying for GSRs to help develop the course, paying Instructional Designers to help use best practices, paying (someone) for recording time on high-demand equipment. ... This type of funding makes creating high-quality online education much easier.
2. There’s no formal campus support to help manage a substantial operation, at least in my case with two high-enrollment courses.
3. The cross-campus enrollment process has been problematic this quarter.
4. There are not enough Instructional Designers and recording equipment across campus. This became more apparent when everyone needed help moving to online instruction.
5. Having an ILTI helped me better teach all my courses online during the pandemic. I also felt like sharing some of my experiences was valuable to the rest of the department and broader college as part of a 'CNAS Remote Instruction Workgroup'.
6. Mainly because of the pandemic, we are trying to do too much too quickly. As a result technology tools my ILTI was counting on have been turned off in favor of newer (better?) tools. This can cause massive disruptions when everything is delivered online. Some tools have also not been fully vetted (or are overwhelmed).