



CHAIR, ACADEMIC SENATE  
RIVERSIDE DIVISION  
UNIVERSITY OFFICE BUILDING, RM 225

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December 14, 2020

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

**RE: Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force Report**

Dear Mary,

The UCR Senate is pleased to provide the attached package of standing committee feedback on the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force Report. Apologies for the delay.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Stajich".

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



**COMMITTEE ON COURSES**

November 2, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: Ming Lee Tang, Chair   
Committee on Courses

Re: Systemwide Online Degree Taskforce Report

The Committee on Courses reviewed the Systemwide Online Degree Taskforce Report at their October 14, 2020 and October 28, 2020 meetings and had a robust discussion regarding the report.

Firstly, the Committee would like to commend the Taskforce on this excellent report that speaks to the challenges ahead. The Committee is glad to note that (i) the Taskforce realizes that faculty buy in is critical to the success of this proposal, and (ii) no existing major should be transitioned to ‘online only’ without triggering Senate oversight. The Committee noted concern that the report did not address the motivation for developing online degrees in light of the remote learning environment catalyzed by the pandemic, nor does it indicate if online degree programs would be implemented by the System or at the local level. Revenue-based incentives were lacking and the Committee recognizes that economies of scale would accrue if a degree were offered at the System wide level.

Concern was noted that campuses that are underfunded (e.g. UC Riverside) might not have all the resources needed to support online degree programs. Substantial financial support from the state to create quality remote options (e.g. to fund infrastructure, faculty, staff, and graduate student TAs) would be required to change public perception about the low quality of remote programs. In addition, the problem of plagiarism/ cheating in an online environment was not addressed.

Lastly, the Committee noted concern that online degree programs will not give students a full UC experience. Remote learning precludes interactions with peers in student-run activities, research-active faculty, opportunities for independent research and self-exploration, development of interpersonal skills and good study skills via immersion in the rich intellectual and cultural environment inherent to UCs. As pointed out by the Taskforce, students go to college not solely to acquire knowledge, but to learn to learn and to synthesize knowledge. It is not clear if our broad educational mission can be fulfilled via a purely online degree.



## *Academic Senate*

### **COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

October 15, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: Stefano Vidussi, Chair   
Committee on Educational Policy

### **RE: Online Undergraduate Degree Taskforce Report**

The Committee reviewed the Online Undergraduate Degree Taskforce Report at their October 2, 2020 meeting and had a robust discussion. First, while the report mentions a recent UCI based study that seems to show that online degrees do not disadvantage URM and other socioeconomic groups, there's well-established scholarly literature that points in the opposite direction, and while this situation may be evolving, scrutiny is necessary. Concern was noted on whether a student can receive a UC quality degree with a program that is offered all online (Options 2 and 3). The Committee recommended that if the System was to proceed with offering partly online undergraduate degree programs (Option 1) that regulations be set in place for students to be on campus for one half to three quarters of the portion of the degree. Concern was also noted with the potential reliance on adjunct faculty to instruct the courses for the online degree program, which would be potentially untenable for the UC System. The Committee recommended that rigorous guidelines be set for any proposed online undergraduate degrees to ensure that the programs are close to the same quality as on campus degree programs.



## *Academic Senate*

### **GRADUATE COUNCIL**

October 29, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: Amanda Lucia, Chair  
Graduate Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda Lucia".

Re: Report Review: Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force Report

The Graduate Council discussed the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force Report at their October 15, 2020 meeting. Members agreed there was no benefit to the third option. This option would require considerable substantive support and would not uphold the high caliber of a UC education. It would also create disparities between UC campuses (without student incentives to choose newer and more vulnerable campuses). The Council felt the second option was also philosophically very dangerous in that it has the potential to eviscerate entire disciplines whose campus contribution is invaluable but that do not readily translate into an online environment. Most importantly, if any of these options move forward, there must be: (1) investment in faculty development and faculty compensation, (2) campus infrastructure for online pedagogy and ongoing technical support, and (3) a robust plan for implementation - not just a summary of research. There are also persistent inequities surrounding access to internet, technology, etc. that need to be addressed and given thought.

The Council is cognizant of the fact that the UC must be forward thinking and suggests using a task force that can push us forward while maintaining UC quality; a hybrid model was preferable to most members.



## *Academic Senate*

October 23, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

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

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

The Committee on Library and Information Technology reviewed the Report of the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force at their October 15, 2020 meeting and cited several concerns relating to the Committee's charge of Library and Information Technology.

The Committee had many concerns about the access and costs of online education. The report made clear, and our experiences during COVID online teaching has shown that students for whom access is an issue are also those students who would have the most difficulty with successful remote learning. In short, online education would exacerbate existing inequalities among students. Second, the move to online education requires varying levels of infrastructural reorganization, training, and course redesign; all this change would cost significant amounts of money. It was not at all clear if this proposed online instruction model would actually save the University any money.

Moreover, the report was not clear how the recommended percentages (1/3 physical classes and 2/3 online instruction) was established.

As for the Library and its ability to provide resources, the main concerns were about books and materials that instructors would need for online learning. Because of COVID both HathiTrust and the Internet Archive have provided UCR with access to online materials. But after COVID, UCR would not have access to these online materials, meaning that the library would be responsible for purchasing a great deal of books and other resources for online teaching. With impending budget cuts, it was unclear how the Library could shoulder those costs.

As for Technology, the report issued no minimum standard that was deemed appropriate for video production or course design. The potential cost, both from the production and technological training and support for course redesign were not properly addressed. The report also did not address how the disparate technological needs and problems of students would be met or funded.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521-0132

October 30, 2020

TO: Jason Stajich  
Chair, Riverside Division

FROM: Lucille Chia, Chair *Lucille Chia*  
CHASS Executive Committee

RE: Review of the Report of the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force

The UC Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) was tasked with evaluation the feasibility and desirability of an online degree program. The committee was comprised of twelve members from all over the UC's. The task force posed questions and tried to determine if an online degree could meet UC standards. The task force was **not** responsible for determining the effectiveness of online classes.

In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each of the three policies, the UCEP used Quality Criteria (based on *Characteristics of Educational Quality* written by the committee in 2011), which emphasized: student access to core UC faculty and to a research-based environment; as well as intellectual and cultural diversity, all of which are more important than the mere transmission of information.

Moreover, "the task force feels strongly that the rapid shift to online-only learning following recent campus closures due to COVID-19 should not be used as a template for moving forward in this domain in the future" (p. 8 of the report). Certainly the significantly negative sentiments voiced in the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) conducted during Spring term 2020 (link on p. 8 of the report) explains why the task force wanted to dissociate its general examination of the development of online degree programs from the pandemic experience. Nevertheless, as we note below, the remote learning during the last several school terms provided much useful information and a cautionary tale.

The UCEP proposed three options and rejected a fourth:

1. Policy 1: Not fully remote (allowing for up to 1/3 online)
2. Policy 2: Fully Remote OK
  - a. FULLY Online degrees
  - b. Many degrees can include online components
3. Policy 3: Remote but not comparable to UC degree, for example offering "BA of Arts in Economics"
4. NOT recommended: online degrees taught by different faculty

It is a thoughtful report that notes:

1. online education *could* meet UC standards, but would be expensive to achieve, more so at the undergraduate than for the graduate levels
2. the costs are not just financial, but would also demand greater effort and time from all participants, instructors, and students alike
3. moreover, if a UC campus offers programs that vary in the extent of online and in-person (face-to-face/F2F) instruction, then this may result in inequities in how different students have access to the “UC experience” and in the amount of work that different faculty have, raising questions about standards for personnel actions
4. lower-cost alternatives can be implemented, but at the expense of aggravating educational inequities and be less successful in meeting UC quality criteria
5. as yet, unanswerable questions include: how would online programs affect the quality of UC’s educational offerings in comparison with other institutions (which do not have online degree programs)?

The CHASS EC had several questions about specific points in the report.

1. For Policy 1: What is the rationale for the 1/3 non-remote major and GE requirements? The majority percentage of coursework would be allowed in remote format, but the report gives no supporting documents explaining how this percentage was worked out.
2. The report states several times that UC already has fully remote courses (prior to the pandemic). How many? What are the hard numbers around course success, student satisfaction, etc? What is the allowable number of such courses?

Further, the CHASS EC’s discussion of this report and the written reviews by two of its members note:

1. The task force aims to separate its assessment of online undergraduate programs, although the report does address relatively briefly the experience of UC campuses’ forced and largely improvised “remote learning” due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, any further plans for an online undergraduate program should be placed on hold until we have a clearer understanding of what the pedagogical effects upon students have been and how faculty feel the quality of their teaching has been negatively (or positively) affected.
2. Moreover, during a time, even when our campus resources are already stretched--even not counting the devastating effects of the pandemic--when staff are already overburdened due to continuing budget cuts, and when class sizes have increased significantly without financial support for readers, TAs, etc., it is counterintuitive at best and cynically irresponsible at worse to propose changes that would at every level require more financial and people-power resources. In light of the alarming budgetary situation, wherein the next few years will see even more belt-tightening, it makes no sense to pour resources into these proposed courses/degrees.

Our strenuous recommendation for caution is based on specific and solid evidence. In Fall 2018 the Faculty Welfare Committee (FWC) received the “Provost’s Task Force for Hybrid and Online Education final Report,” which sought to incentivize the creation of fully online courses here at UCR. They proposed the creation of 250 courses within 5 years. However, FWC noted that the university lacked the structural and financial infrastructure to develop these courses in a

way that would not place the onus on faculty. We were particularly alarmed that junior faculty might be tempted to develop such courses in order to meet departmental efforts to comply with the growth plan and that the lack of infrastructure would put them at professional risk. The preponderance of the task force's information was culled from non-research institutions and those otherwise below the caliber of UCR. FWC rejected the task force proposal as poorly researched and designed in terms of financial costs, time and energy resources, and implementation plans.

3. That we received this report at the same time that we are considering the "Crossing Boundaries: The New UCR General Education Curriculum" report suggests the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, as these two groups of reports – i.e., a sweeping restructuring of undergraduate education and the proposal to allow for partial or fully remote degrees -- have sharply divergent motivations.

4. This task force was deemed necessary due to UCI's proposal for an entirely online degree in Business Administration. The strong belief of a number of CHASS faculty and the experience of some undergraduate students who have taken courses taught by the UCR School of Business is that Schools of Business seem to have different goals than other colleges. At the least, the such schools do not emphasize pedagogy and quality of the learning experience.

Indeed, degrees that could claim to be effective in a fully online environment would seem to be housed in schools/programs whose pedagogical mission is farthest from what a UC-quality degree is deemed to be. The motivations for proposing such degrees are, to at least some members of the CHASS faculty, suspect and would negatively affect students, the quality of their education, and the reputation of the UCs.

5. Because there was much concern about how UCI had attempted to create an online degree **without** Senate oversight. To "prevent 'stealth' remote majors from being developed without adequate Senate oversight to ensure the quality of the program", the task force recommends creating a divisional oversight committee, as well as a systemwide committee, should a degree allow or require more than 50% remote classes (Appendix I, p. 34). However, the first option of the very proposal we are reading allows for 70% of major courses and 70% of GE courses to be remote. This suggests that service burdens would increase at both the divisional and systemwide levels.

6. UCR prides itself as an institution dedicated to promoting a diverse student body and helping economically disadvantaged students achieve academic success. Thus, UCR should be very careful in considering developing online undergraduate programs and degrees, since it is precisely those low-income students who would be most challenged, financially and academically. Evidence, both anecdotal and from surveys strongly show that the remote learning of the Spring 2020 quarter, the summer sessions, and the current Fall 2020 quarter have posed significant challenges to students lacking the technology to access the online instructional materials in their courses. And all three options examined by the task force report would require significant, if varying, levels of infrastructural organization – and therefore would accrue financial costs. Programs whose foundational rationale are based on these two items have low graduation success rates, as well as low student satisfaction rates.

The oft-cited argument that students can save money through online instruction because they can stay at home, thus saving on room and board ignores the considerable costs of a quality online program and the lack of face-to-face interaction with instructors and advisers (see the full discussions of Appendices F, G, and H of the report). And among the students who would benefit most living on campus and direct personal contact with faculty are those who can least afford to forgo these experiences. In short, online degree programs may prove to be neither equitable nor economical.

7. A related issue is that the effectiveness of remote learning modes is mixed and often dependent on very particular groups of students. None of the information here pertains to completely online degrees; rather, it is based on individual courses. (See Appendix D, p. 14.)

8. Developing online degree programs and even individual online courses also make great demands on the faculty. While one may argue that the growth of online courses is inevitable, UC and any academic institution committed to quality pedagogy by its core faculty must deliberate carefully how more appropriate ways to assess faculty members' success in their teaching, research, and service in the light of more online teaching and most likely more research collaboration online. The task force was not asked to address these issues, but they should be examined in the future.

In sum, the task force report believes that more online classes and options were a clear trajectory for UC but want UC standards upheld. It thus had more reservations about Policies 2 and 3, as did the majority of the CHASS Executive Committee members. And one member stated: "Both at this time and in principle, I reject all 3 proposals, with my greatest resistance to #2 and #3. That said, I don't believe #1 is at all wise to undertake."



October 18, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

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

Re: Systemwide Review - Report Review: Online Undergraduate Degree  
Task Force Report

The Committee observed that each of the models has plusses and minuses, but that it doesn't seem practical to do a broad online policy for all of UC. There are some possibilities for a small number of CNAS courses to be done remotely, that there may be some practicalities for some departments if they were interested, and we can reconsider some of the insights from the Report as we continue to learn more about remote learning.

At this time some of the strategies are still in the abstract because we haven't experienced them yet and we should be careful to consider our UCR population in terms of how they manage remote learning compared to other institutions. The Committee considered that remote learning, which is what UCR is experiencing now, is a different experience than full-fledged online learning. The Committee also noted that there needs to be an equitable distribution of resources to support the activities, proportional to the needs of the respective campus, and so it would be practical for this report to include financial support. Ultimately, the Committee concluded that with respect to the possibility of degrees being done entirely online, we don't see that as feasible for our college.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted Garland".



School of Medicine  
Division of Biomedical Sciences  
Riverside, CA, 92521

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

**To:** Jason Stajich, Ph.D., Chair, Academic Senate, UCR Division

**From:** Declan McCole, Ph.D., Chair, Faculty Executive Committee, UCR School of Medicine

**Subject:** SOM FEC Response to the *Online Degree Task Force Report*

Dear Jason,

The SOM Executive Committee reviewed the *Online Degree Task Force Report*. The FEC applauds the very detailed efforts of the Task Force to identify the potential benefits and concerns of an online degree program. We have a number of questions and concerns that we would welcome clarification on regarding the Online Degree Task Force Report.

1. There is a lot of information in this report regarding evaluation of outcomes – mainly based on community college students – but it was clear that students performed better in face-to-face (F2F) classes than in online classes. Those most disadvantaged were “Males, younger students, Black students, and students with lower prior GPAs”. Having identified these groups as being most vulnerable to the disadvantages of online learning, consideration should be given to upfront monitoring of their performance upon initiation of online learning programs.
2. We fully agree with the task force assessment that “we cannot adopt a model like that of ASU, in which a separate cohort of lower-wage instructors teach the online courses”.
3. There is also the danger – with some evidence at UCI – that some programs seek to migrate online without local or system-wide review by the Academic Senate. The task force recommendation that measures be put in place to prevent "stealth" remote majors from being developed without adequate Senate oversight to ensure the quality of the program is a very important consideration.
4. Some additional clarity on who will be the target audience for remote learning degrees would be welcome. For example, will online degrees be focused on California residents; non-state residents; a hybrid?
5. If students are required to spend some amount of time on campus (Plans 1 & 2), does this mean that students are expected to move here for 1 quarter of the year for 3-4 years?
6. What are the practicalities of this with respect to obtaining housing (renters may want a minimum 6 month commitment), students are presumably working while studying so do they have to quit their jobs for a quarter and hope they can retain or find new employment afterwards? *Cal-state has offered programs to accommodate the working student whereas the UC does not. Will it be emphasized that even a UC online degree program may not be a good option for the working student from that perspective?*
7. How will online UC degrees be judged if online graduates apply for on-campus UC graduate programs including professional schools (Medicine, Business, Engineering, Law)? Will they only be eligible to join fee-paying Masters programs? – *The FEC feels very strongly that the UC system - and UCR - have to set the example that we will accept online degree graduates to our graduate programs because if we don't, why should any other institution? This will place a burden on the*

*new online degree programs to really emphasize UC-standard quality across the board for these degrees as they will essentially act as a gateway for graduates to either further their education or obtain better jobs than would have been available without a UC degree.*

8. There was strong concern regarding barriers to access regardless of which plan is selected. With respect to plans 1 & 2, there was concern as to whether incorporation of an on-campus obligation will act as a barrier to access for certain students? This would argue in favor of option 3 from an equity & access perspective. Specifically, students who live in geographically isolated rural areas i.e. the Coachella valley) are disadvantaged because they can't commute to a UC (other rural areas of Northern California have even greater distance to UCs) and may not be able to afford housing near a UC (especially if they are expected to be on campus for part of a year then landlords may not be inclined to rent to them vs. students renting for a full year). To address this, will the UCs subsidize campus housing for students who cannot afford to rent?
9. Has any consideration been given to making accommodations for students who can't physically commute due to the aforementioned economic or geographic restrictions, perhaps they are caring for a family member at home etc.?
10. Concerns with access to the online degree programs also exist for those who do not have to spend time on campus (Plan #3) also exist. As exemplified by the current issues across the educational spectrum during the COVID-19 pandemic, not everyone has access to broadband etc. especially in geographically isolated areas or areas with poorer infrastructure issues i.e. Coachella valley. Will accommodations be made at either the UC or the state level to support or subsidize wifi access for those students?
11. With respect to the language in Policy 2 – the FEC suggests removing reference to a “small number” of programs and instead emphasizing the need to meet the high bar associated with a UC degree. Emphasize how improving infrastructure for this hybrid model could increase access (housing, broadband connectivity, devices, etc.).

Yours sincerely,



Declan F. McCole, Ph.D.  
Chair, Faculty Executive Committee  
School of Medicine