


COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

October 19, 2018

To: Dylan Rodriguez
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Rajiv Gupta, Chair 
Committee on Academic Personnel

Re: Report Review: Provost's Taskforce for Hybrid and Online Education
Final Report

The Committee on Academic Personnel reviewed and discussed the final report from Provost's taskforce for hybrid and online education. CAP found the report to be comprehensive in its identification of unique challenges of online education. However, there was significant concern expressed regarding the impact of the proposed rate of adoption of online courses on faculty and students.

The report recommends that UCR aim to put 50 courses online each year for the next five years and, in the longer term, UCR should aim to deliver around 25% of its courses online. While these goals may be in line with similar efforts at other institutions, CAP found that the justification and readiness for meeting these goals at UCR is lacking in the following respects.

- CAP strongly believes that the freedom of faculty members to choose how they teach should not be impinged upon. Therefore, online courses should be offered only in numbers that can be sustained by volunteering faculty. It is unclear if the individual departments on campus have identified suitable courses and faculty volunteers to justify introducing online courses at the proposed rate.
- Teaching portfolio plays an important role in the merit and promotion process. The urgency of developing and introducing a teaching evaluation process appropriate for online courses cannot be overstated. This issue must be addressed before online courses are offered in large numbers.
- Student surveys seem to confirm the benefits of online courses (e.g., flexibility in schedule and pace of learning) for certain segments of student population. However, it is also clear that students prefer face-to-face instruction for the courses in their major by a wide margin. This suggests that there are likely some drawbacks associated with online courses. As a result, there should be a plan to measure and demonstrate that the academic performance of students in online courses is comparable with those in conventional courses.

In summary, offerings of online courses should only be scaled up after it has been demonstrated that courses currently being offered are satisfactorily meeting student needs, teaching evaluation procedures for online course have been developed and implemented, and enough additional faculty volunteers are available to teach the courses.