

TO: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
UCR Academic Senate

900 University Ave

Riverside, Ca 92521

Tel 951.827.2710

Fax 951.827.3942

FROM: Margaret A. Nash, Chair
GSOE Executive Committee

margaret.nash@ucr.edu

Website gsoe.ucr.edu

DATE: November 12, 2018

SUBJ: Provost's Taskforce for Hybrid and Online Education

The Executive Committee of the GSOE generally is supportive of the hybrid and online education initiative. Several GSOE faculty members have been or are teaching hybrid and/or online courses and have had success with these courses. We recognize that there are many advantages for some students, and for the university.

At the same time, we also want to voice some concerns about the effectiveness of online instruction, the need for training of instructors, and the evaluation system.

The efficacy of online courses is not as well established in the research literature as this report suggests. For example, the study by Wu cited in footnote 4 on page 1 actually presents a more complicated picture than the report indicates (that "online instruction is equally as effective as face-to-face"). In particular, Table 1 in this report (especially the Xu & Jaggar and Tanyel and Griffin studies) seem worrisome. First, most of the research is on courses in economics, statistics, information systems, psychology, leaving open the question of how well the online model works in courses where students are engaged in critically examining controversial topics. Second, the Xu & Jaggar study (which looked at a wider range of courses) indicates negative effects on persistence and grades especially for African American students, younger students, and at-risk students. The Tanyel and Griffin study also looked at a wider range of courses and found higher rates of failure and withdrawing from classes for online courses. Therefore, we recommend close study of UCR's online and hybrid courses, examination into which types of courses work well and which do not, and attention being paid to what type of students succeed in these courses (i.e., majors or non-majors in the course field, students with high or low GPAs, residential or non-residential, students of color, at-risk students, etc.).

Second, we urge the Taskforce to take seriously the need to prepare faculty for teaching in this format. The report discusses this issue, but does not seem to come

to any conclusion about what type of training will be available, and whether it will be required. There is a need for high quality, evidence-based training in how to design effective online instruction. Such training should at the least be made available as a part of this expansion, if not required.

Finally, we believe that more consideration needs to be paid to evaluations. Currently, the same evaluations are used for the online and hybrid versions of courses as are used for face-to-face versions. The current evaluations are inadequate and ill-suited for these other instructional formats. A separate type of evaluation, reflecting the conditions of those courses, needs to be devised and used.

