

June 12, 2020

To: Dylan Rodriguez
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Abhijit Ghosh, Chair
Committee on Faculty Welfare

Re: Proposed Revised Policy on UC Seismic Safety

The Committee of Faculty Welfare (CFW) discussed the University of California Seismic Safety policy on May 12, 2020. The CFW welcomes the updates of the technical seismic engineering standards.

The updated policy, however, completely ignores the human component of seismic safety. During shaking due to an earthquake, even if a building remains standing, how people in that building react to the shaking can determine the human casualties. For example, if hundreds of students in a large lecture hall start running to exit the room during shaking, it may cause a stampede even though the structure remains undamaged. This document should be augmented by incorporating regular seismic awareness programs for all campuses and/or facilities. For example, just like a fire drill, and an annual earthquake drill can be made mandatory. This is particularly important given that we live truly in an earthquake country.

The policy indicates that facilities with Seismic Performance Rating (SPR) of V, VI, or VII can be occupied 10 more years (till December 31, 2030), with provisions for extension of that time period. Allowing students and employees to use known seismically weak and outrightly dangerous facilities seems too risky given that a magnitude ~8 earthquake in California is overdue. In other words, we are expecting a large damaging earthquake at any time now. The CFW understands that some time would be required to seismically retrofit the facilities or make alternative arrangements, but it recommends significantly expediting the process and reducing the time period (10 years) people are allowed to use facilities with SPR of V, VI, or VII.

Moving SPR to facility manual is fine, but the CFW recommends keeping it here as well in the form of an appendix for quick reference. In addition, adding a weblink to the facility manual in this document for easy access would be helpful.