



**COMMITTEE ON DISTINGUISHED TEACHING**

October 21, 2020

To: Jason Stajich, Chair  
Riverside Division

From: Susan Straight *Susan Straight*  
Chair, Committee on Distinguished Teaching

**Re: Systemwide Review of Proposed Curtailment Program**

As the committee composed of Distinguished Teaching professors and charged with recognizing teaching excellence, we have concerns regarding how the proposed “curtailment” plan will impact teaching at the University:

First, although the proposal explicitly states that the curtailment would be scheduled to minimize impacts on teaching, the reality is that any curtailment will negatively impact teaching. Faculty are spending extraordinary amounts of time adapting their courses to remote learning, making it much harder to accomplish other research and service duties. The anticipated forthcoming teaching assistant (TA) reductions will reduce the quality of instruction further and exacerbate the workload on faculty and the remaining TAs. Curtailment will further reduce the time faculty have for teaching and their other departmental duties.

Second, the economic stress of curtailment will distract faculty from their teaching mission. For junior faculty, many polled expressed strong desire for amortization of the curtailment over the long term rather than experiencing a sharper economic hardship of curtailment in a single month. Also, many faculty expressed very strongly that lecturers not be part of an extended curtailment at all, even if it means that some full-time faculty take a larger pay cut. Faculty pointed out that the job security of lecturers is already a deep concern, and “curtailment” would affect lecturers adversely.

Some more senior faculty may have service credits which exceed the maximum for retirement salary, as expressed as a percentage of the highest three consecutive years' salary. If 2020-21 would be the third of the highest paid years for those faculty, they might reasonably consider retiring at the end of the year, saving the campus significant salary expense starting in 2021-22. If the curtailments reduce their 2020-21 base salary, however, the option becomes less attractive and is complicated by guessing how and when that base salary might recover to pre-COVID levels. Factors like this should be included in the specifics of stated goal of avoiding negative impacts to retirement benefits, since it both protects employees near retirement and because the salary savings resulting from retirements may help protect more recent faculty hires and the innovative teaching

they bring to the university. UCOP should consider polling long-serving faculty to gauge likely outcomes, using long-term retirement rate statistics.

Finally, it must be pointed out that proposed curtailment plans for staff are unknown at this time, but staff are already asked to work longer hours, especially during COVID, and have been charged with running multiple departments due to staff shortages and reduced positions. Any proposal that requires staff to either forfeit pay for five days, or to use vacation days to avoid that “curtailment” in pay, would constitute a severe hardship.