



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.