

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of May 20, 2020

**UPDATE OF COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA:
ACADEMIC AND STUDENT ISSUES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Instructors and staff did an historic and commendable job adapting almost all courses to ensure instructional continuity in the service of the physical distancing required to interrupt the transmission of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Campuses ramped up efforts to provide students the necessary technology, along with academic and counseling support to help students succeed in this environment. This item highlights some of the opportunities and challenges instructors and students faced and provides initial insight into enrollment projections and scenario planning for the fall.

BACKGROUND

On April 14, 2020, the Chair of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASAC) directed a set of questions to the Provost of the University to obtain information about the UC’s transition to remote learning to interrupt the transmission of COVID-19. Campus executive vice chancellors worked with local administrators to assemble responses to the thorough questions posed by the ASAC Chair. This report represents an initial qualitative assessment of the experiences of faculty and students had during the emergency transition based on campus responses; more formal assessments and studies are being planned and implemented at campus and systemwide levels.

In response to COVID-19 pandemic, UC campuses rapidly transitioned from in-person to remote instruction in early March. The biggest challenge for all campus constituents was the lack of preparation time, with campuses attempting to ensure faculty and students had adequate technical resources to support their transition and/or participation in courses delivered remotely.

	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Quarter campuses	Winter exams	Spring recess	Spring quarter begins	Spring Exams		<----- Summer ----->	Fall quarter begins
Semester campuses		Spring recess		Spring exams		<----- Summer ----->	Fall semester starts

For those on the quarter system, campuses were near the end of the winter quarter, with final assessments and exams to administer. Soon after, these campuses needed to launch the spring quarter, with the curriculum redesigned to support remote instruction and an uncertainty of how many students might return for the winter break. UC campuses on the semester system had almost two months of in-class experience when they converted ongoing courses to remote instruction. These campuses had to make decisions about commencement and summer instruction earlier than campuses on the quarter system.

In support of this work, leadership at the UC Office of the President (UCOP) hosted frequent meetings with campus chancellors and provosts, along with other critical campus leaders (e.g., undergraduate and graduate deans, student affairs vice chancellors) to address immediate questions, share best practices, and identify issues needing a systemwide response (e.g., ensuring campus accreditation for remote instruction). Campus administrative and Academic Senate leaders partnered to determine how to best address local issues, including necessary revision of policies (e.g., grading practices). Using collaboration in lieu of command, these efforts produced remarkably coordinated and consistent approaches.

FACULTY TRANSITION TO REMOTE INSTRUCTION

UC instructors were able to transition almost all courses to remote instruction, rapidly adapting syllabi, course content, and instructional plans. This feat was particularly significant considering the limited online experience of many instructors and the number of necessary tools needed to capture and deliver course content. Faculty, lecturers, and graduate student instructors needed to develop a baseline proficiency with delivering course content outside of a physical classroom, and the campus community rallied to support this transition. Many faculty employing advanced digital and instructional technologies found that they could not easily or effectively transition their approaches and activities to remote status.

Transition Support for Remote Instruction

Campus teaching and learning centers, instructional technology support services, and instructors familiar in providing online instruction increased their efforts to help instructors quickly convert classes to remote delivery. While not staffed or prepared to assist in the campuswide implementation of remote instruction, these instructional support teams consolidated relevant content into websites encouraging colleagues to keep teaching and provided numerous training sessions and individual consultations. As one example, UC Santa Barbara reported that 420 instructors and TAs participated in videoconferencing workshops between finals week and spring break, and there were more than 170 individual consultations by the third week of the spring quarter.

Instructors needed to decide not only what content to cover, but also whether it should be provided synchronously (i.e., live or in real time) or asynchronously (i.e., recorded or accessible at any time). While synchronous remote instruction provided ways to maintain key components of

UC campus resources for remote instruction

UCB: Instructional Resilience (<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/instructional-resilience-resources>)

UCD: Keep Teaching (<https://keepteaching.ucdavis.edu/>)

UCI: Teach Anywhere (<https://sites.uci.edu/teachanywhere/>)

UCLA: Academic Continuity (<https://www.adminvc.ucla.edu/covid-19/academic-continuity>)

UCM: Educational Continuity (<https://it.ucmerced.edu/EdContinuity>)

UCR: Keep Teaching (<https://keepteaching.ucr.edu/>)

UCSD: Educational Continuity Tools and Resources (<https://edtech.ucsd.edu/education-continuity-tools-and-resources/>)

UCSF: Teaching and Learning Continuity (<https://www.library.ucsf.edu/ask-an-expert/learning-tech-group/teaching-and-learning-continuity/>)

UCSB: Instructional Continuity (<https://keepteaching.id.ucsb.edu/>)

UCSC: Keep Teaching (<https://keepteaching.ucsc.edu/>)

in-person classes (e.g., structured schedule, immediate and dynamic interaction between faculty and students), it was difficult for some students who now sheltered at home lacked a quiet study space, had poor internet connections, or lived in different time zones.

With shelter-in-place orders, many instructors also found themselves with young children to home school, financial uncertainty, and the responsibility to deliver instruction and assessment in an environment that is far from ideal. Access to technology varied, with some faculty self-purchasing additional equipment, like microphones, cameras, and lighting to improve course delivery. Ironically, some campuses reported that many of the most sophisticated instructional delivery technologies—ones that required special facilities and classrooms equipped to analyze data and multi-media presentations that instructors could integrate into lectures—could not be accessed with shelter-in-place orders and were therefore not leveraged for remote instruction.

After herculean efforts, UC campuses reported that most courses could be offered remotely.

Challenges with laboratory, field study, and performance arts courses

Laboratory, field study (especially in remote sites), and performance art courses were the most difficult to adapt and a greater proportion of these classes were cancelled. Instructors did their best to provide analogous experiences, such as creating virtual labs. UC Berkeley explained that the virtual labs worked adequately because, as a semester campus, its students had already done a great deal of lab or studio work before the shutdown. However, some UC Merced faculty were concerned that remote instruction would not give students the hands-on lab skills needed in future courses, and UC Santa Barbara cancelled introductory biology and chemistry labs for that

reason. UC Merced is considering developing a one-week boot camp lab class to give its students more hands-on experience working with glassware and instrumentation, which is needed in upper division lab classes. UC Davis (UCD) labs have creatively presented video of laboratory experiment results to students so that they can on their own run calculations, and the UCD College of Biological Sciences has consolidated all upper division capstone lab courses into one mega-course focused on COVID-19. Field study in all Natural Reserve System sites at all campuses have been cancelled.

Schools of Medicine were hit particularly hard, now needing to either rethink the timing of curriculum so that lab-based classes, along with hands-on research instruction and clinical rotations will be available when they are back in-person.

Music and arts programs were challenged in reproducing studio and performance courses. Art, dance, acting, design and costume, and music classes are laboratories in which students conduct original research in the arts. In many ways, music and arts programs have faced greater challenges than science labs. Because studio courses are free-standing where science labs usually have accompanying lectures that convey additional content. UCLA scheduled trips for art students to pick up materials. Music programs have found ways to continue instruction and ensemble practice. The campus purchased a number of document cameras to help with lab demonstration. Faculty have generated creative ideas for courses, but no one is satisfied with the substitutes.

Challenges with assessment and flexibility in grading

Campuses raised concerns about appropriate assessment strategies, online proctoring tools, and student integrity and privacy. Quarter campuses had to immediately determine how to assess winter quarter performance and administer exams in a remote environment, with some campuses noting greater incidents of academic dishonesty and cheating on exams.

UC Riverside's learning management system tool proved inadequate to administer tests and quizzes, and the campus is now developing its own proctoring solution. Other campuses had varied experiences with other proctoring tools. Many of these tools have monitor and lockdown features that require the use of a webcam and prevent students from navigating other websites or programs during exams. Some campuses expressed concerns about violating student privacy, particularly the requirement of operating video cameras in a student's home. Some students lacked the right technology and did not have sufficiently stable internet connections for these programs to work consistently, requiring instructors to provide equivalent exams in a different format. These tools also created new challenges on how to adapt for accessibility and accommodations.

As a result, a number of campuses have set up working groups to provide guidance on online proctoring, with some recommending emphasis of the honor code to students and instructors and others revisiting the approach to assessment. With more time, campuses are trying to help instructors design assessments that gauge a student's understanding of material that could be open-book or collaborative work. This shift could also lead to the development of well-designed

assessments that can't be passed by "googling" answers.

With all of these challenges, campus divisions of the Academic Senate revisited their grading policies to provide more flexibility during this COVID-19 period, either making pass/not pass grading a default, extending the deadline to change to pass/not pass, or suspending the limit on the number of pass/not pass courses.

STUDENT TRANSITIONS TO REMOTE LEARNING

As UC campuses transitioned to remote instruction, UC students had to decide where to live, how to adapt to learning in a new environment, and how to stay connected with instructors, classmates, and friends. Below is a description of some of the steps taken and the initial student assessments from campus faculty, advisors, and other staff. UCOP is currently administering the spring 2020 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) that will provide direct feedback from undergraduates about their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and impressions of remote instruction.

Should I stay or should I go?

Relatively quickly, UC students had to choose whether they would remain on campus or return home. Some students stayed in residence halls or near campus, because it would be easier to focus on studies or it was either difficult to go home or better not to go home. While these decisions supported educational continuity and access to technology, some of these students felt isolated as campuses quickly emptied and they were not at home.

Students who went home may have had more company, but also might have had greater distractions at home, inadequate study spaces, and competition for internet access with many people in the same household needing to be online at the same time.

Technology support for remote instruction

UC campuses attempted to assess and meet the technology needs of students by providing laptops and internet hotspots. Campuses used a range of outreach efforts—communications with deans and department chairs, student service and advising units, and prompts on campus learning management systems—to identify students who needed technology support.

Campuses quickly expanded loaner laptop programs and provided financial support to ensure students could get the necessary equipment to support their remote instruction. For example, UC Merced's Loaner Laptop Program, which started with Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funding in 2018, was able to expand quickly thanks to campus partners who loaned devices not currently used by their units for undergraduate students to use.

While valiant efforts were made to address these technological challenges, some students were not able to access adequate equipment. There is concern that remote instruction may amplify inequality in higher education, where students with access to fewer resources may have coped

with poor bandwidth and obsolete or inappropriate devices (e.g., only a mobile phone) and had a worse educational experience than peers with better access to these resources. It also appears that the learning environments of working class and poor students was less free of distraction or the presence of others.

Transitioning to remote instruction and academic advising issues

At this point in the term, most quarter campuses expect their spring enrollments will be relatively flat. During this shelter-in-place period, students who enrolled in the winter quarter chose to re-enroll in the spring quarter knowing instruction would be delivered remotely. In addition, some of these campuses are seeing higher student full-time enrollment (FTE) at present, with students enrolling in more courses and/or taking more units. Anecdotally, some believe students with limited extracurricular activities, social life, and work may be taking additional courses, while others think greater flexibility with the pass/not pass deadline might be a factor.

Campuses recognize the challenge to capture in-person engagement via remote instruction and have seen a range of adaptability by students to remote instruction. These differences could be due to any combination of living arrangements, access to quiet space, availability of adequate computer equipment and internet, financial security and basic needs, family concerns, mental health status, or disability status.

Academic advising has carried on virtually. In addition to academic advising topics one would expect in the spring term (e.g., degree checks, switching majors, graduation eligibility), time management is becoming a major topic and students are struggling with motivation and procrastination. Some students have expressed challenges managing the variation in class delivery methods, with too much variety from teacher to teacher (e.g., scheduled virtual meetings, video lectures, online materials), along with an overabundance of emails and virtual meeting fatigue. Some students indicated that the remote environment has made finding study partners or group lab projects more difficult. Some students living overseas have experienced difficulty trying to navigate synchronous courses at 2 a.m.

Along with campus “keep teaching” websites, UC campuses created “keep learning” websites and messages directed to students to help with their transition to a remote learning environment.

UC campus resources for remote learning

UCB: Remote Instruction Support

(<https://sa.berkeley.edu/covid19/messages/2020/03/30/supporting-you-during-remote-instruction>)

UCD: Keep Learning (<https://keepteaching.ucdavis.edu/student-resources>)

UCI: Learn Anywhere (<https://sites.uci.edu/learnanywhere/>)

UCLA: Student Resources for Remote Learning

(<https://www.teaching.ucla.edu/resources/student-remote-learning>)

UCM: Educational Continuity for Learning (https://it.ucmerced.edu/EdContinuity_Students)

UCR: Keep Learning (<https://keeplearning.ucr.edu/>)

UCSD: Learning Remotely (<https://digitallearning.ucsd.edu/learners/learning-remotely/index.html>)

UCSF: Teaching and Learning Continuity (<https://www.library.ucsf.edu/ask-an-expert/learning-tech-group/teaching-and-learning-continuity/>)

UCSB: Keep Learning (<https://keeplearning.id.ucsb.edu/>)

UCSC: Keep Learning (<https://keeplearning.ucsc.edu/>)

Student engagement and mental health

Student affairs services are providing remote support to help students manage this new environment. UC Santa Barbara is providing weekly updates on student service and engagement activities that will be available online, with yoga, meditation, programming for identity groups, and fitness classes being more popular. UC San Diego has created virtual programming, as well as a new weekly podcast (“Tritons, Tools, and Tidbits”), to focus on learning, engagement, and student success strategies.

Despite these kind of efforts, student organizations are struggling to maintain “normalcy,” and campuses are concerned about how to maintain student engagement and community. Many fraternities and sororities have shut down or have fewer members in residence, so they are shifting to virtual meetings and activities to stay connected. Other student organizations are trying to hold regular meetings and check-ins, but grappling with the reality that many of their campus events have been cancelled. At UCLA, student groups are working hard to keep connections going by creating virtual celebrations of spring milestones and the online social media hashtag “#BruinFridays” when all are encouraged to wear UCLA-themed clothing during virtual meetings and posts on social media.

COVID-19 has affected student wellness and connectedness. Some students are lonely, grieving the lost relationships and social support from peers. Many students are concerned about the financial impact of COVID-19, with some family members losing or potentially losing jobs. Students are concerned about the pandemic’s impact on their ability to continue school or address basic needs. Some express concerns that they or a loved one could be infected. For seniors, the loss or postponement of commencement ceremonies and fear of not being able to get a job after graduation are major areas of concern.

Campus counseling, mental health and support services have transitioned on-line, with some additional challenges when students living back at home may have less privacy to discuss sensitive or confidential matters. Quite a few departments, student groups, campus organizations and peer advisors are also hosting social support talking circles, webinars and panels to provide students with resources and further opportunities to socialize remotely and connect with others.

PLANNING FOR SUMMER AND FALL INSTRUCTION

UC campuses recently decided to provide summer instruction remotely with the expectation that COVID-19 restrictions will likely continue. Initial information shows strong summer enrollment among UC students at most campuses. However, there has been a decline in enrollment of non-UC students, many from other countries, whose revenues support summer session for UC students.

UC campuses are actively involved in scenario planning for the fall, with options ranging from returning to on-campus instruction, continuing remote instruction, or a hybrid of in-person and remote instruction. It is unclear how this uncertainty may affect student decisions about enrolling in the fall.

UC campuses have provided admissions offers to potential new freshman, transfer, and graduate students, but, it is difficult to predict yield (i.e., how many students will accept the admissions offer as well as enroll in the fall) so soon after the May 1st deadline for freshman statement of intent to register (SIR). Because campuses are unable to host in-person events or campus visits, they are relying on virtual yield events. In addition, domestic nonresidents may choose to stay closer to home, and international students may be hesitant to attend UC given recent federal government rulings on immigration and visas. Even if SIR figures are close to normal, students rescinding their SIR, also known as “summer melt,” could be higher than in prior years.

For continuing students, their success and satisfaction during this remote instruction period may influence decisions to enroll in the fall. UC campuses are closely monitoring factors like course withdrawals, which affect retention, and may know more when students can register for fall courses in mid-May. The spring 2020 UCUES includes a question asking whether undergraduates plan to enroll at their UC campus in fall 2020. The survey was launched in mid-April to early May with initial results available by mid-June.

CONCLUSION

UC campuses have efficaciously shifted to remote instruction. Certain gaps in instruction and technology have been identified, along with challenges maintaining a sense of community and campus experience. Further assessment, including analysis of Spring 2020 UCUES responses, may help inform how to improve remote instruction until campuses can return to on-campus instruction.

Key to Acronyms

ASAC	Academic and Student Affairs Committee
LCFF	Local Control Funding Formula
SIR	Statement of Intent to Register
UCOP	UC Office of the President
UCUES	UC Undergraduate Experience Survey