Dear EVC/Provost Waugh:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on Special Programs Task Force Report. We circulated the report among the Senate committees most directly involved with the programs under consideration and received responses back from the College, GSEIS and SSEAS Faculty Executive Committees, the Undergraduate Council, the Graduate Council, the Committee on Planning and Budget, the Committee on Instructional Technology, and the Committee on International Education. As you will be able to see from the individual responses (available at http://www.senate.ucla.edu/documents/2-ResponsestoSpecialProgramsTaskForce.pdf), the responses were wide-ranging and sometimes contradictory, reflecting the greater familiarity of some committees with particular programs. These individual reports, along with very brief suggestions from the FECs of TFT and Medicine, provided the Executive Board with important insights into a number of issues that the report had not necessarily considered.

The Executive Board was particularly grateful to the Task Force for its enormous effort in addressing the challenges of its charge. One of the benefits of the report was that it encouraged the Senate to reconsider its role and the role of its committees in relationship to the many issues raised therein.

UCDC/CAPPP

Like the Task Force, the Executive Board found it easiest to deal with the recommendations for the more self-contained programs first. While appreciating the concerns articulated by the College FEC and conscious of the fact that the Executive Board has the Director of the CAPPP program and the UCLA representative to the UCDC Academic Advisory Committee among its members, we agreed that continuing its current reporting structure makes sense given the sources of its financial support and its close connections with departments in the Social Sciences. The suggestion that the reviews of UCDC be forwarded to the Undergraduate Council as well as the Dean of Social Sciences was also endorsed. Such sharing would help address the concerns of the College FEC about the absence of Senate reviews of the program.

ROTC

The Executive Board shared the concern of the Undergraduate Council that the recent Program Review and its recommendations seem not to have been fully considered in formulating the recommendations for ROTC. We hope that the conversations that led to the recent decision to keep ROTC in the Social Sciences paid careful attention to the issues raised by both the task force and the Eight Year Review in determining what would be its appropriate divisional home.

International Education

The Committee on International Education’s (CIE) careful attention to the many complex issues associated with International Education as well as the changes already made convinced the Executive
Board that the recommendations in this section will need to be rethought substantially. The argument made by CIE that some better method for approving and evaluating summer travel content and experience should be implemented convinced the Executive Board that the Senate needs to grapple with ways to approve and evaluate these courses. The Undergraduate Council will be circulating to other Senate committees its recommended policy regarding approval and evaluation of online courses early next year. It is our hope that the discussion of that policy will help in the formation of policy for other alternatively scheduled or located courses such as summer travel courses.

Summer Sessions

Although the Executive Board does not oppose the recommendation that Summer Sessions continues to report directly to the EVC, it does share the concern about an apparent lack of Senate involvement in the evolution of summer offerings and the incentive structures that drive summer course offerings. All agreed that summer courses have provided critical revenue that support basic departmental needs. However, there were serious concerns raised about ensuring the quality of summer courses, especially as departments consider teaching required courses in the summer (sometimes only in the summer) and despite the separate Senate review of Summer Sessions. Because the quality of summer courses is the responsibility of the departments offering them, there was a consensus that the Senate should include a review of summer courses in departmental program reviews, paying particular attention to how these courses compare to the academic year versions of the same courses.

There were also concerns raised about possible changes to the current cost-sharing model and how future investments in new ventures like Sophomore Online Summer will be made. The Undergraduate Council, the Graduate Council, and/or the Council on Planning and Budget should have input into these decisions as they affect the curriculum. One alternative for ensuring Senate involvement would be the creation of a Senate Committee on Summer Sessions, similar in charge and composition to the Committee on Continuing and Community Education.

Online Education

We recognize that online education at UCLA will require building a framework on top of an existing infrastructure that has served particular parts of the campus well and has established informal policies and procedures, even while letting a sense of confusion reign. The Senate responses emphasized the following points in an effort to remove confusion, build on existing strengths, and move forward in this increasing important area of pedagogy and instruction:

1) The technology of online and hybrid education must improve our students’ learning experiences while furthering the pedagogical goals of the faculty beyond our current practice.
2) Utilizing existing course design and technology support centers that meet different pedagogical goals is desirable even while we look for synergies and efficiencies and maintain a central entity that can help faculty across campus in creating online and hybrid courses.
3) Evaluation of these courses and of student learning both in individual classes and in subsequent classes is critical for creating new classes, redesigning existing classes and programs, and understanding both the human and financial investments required to make them successful.
4) Adequate and appropriate resources must be available to create the courses we consider to be of UCLA quality. Funding, of course, is critical, but it is equally important to consider the human resources required for development and assessment of these courses, the infrastructure required to support them, and the reward systems (financial and otherwise) necessary for faculty to invest their time and intellectual energy in these courses.
5) Policies regarding issues as wide ranging as intellectual property and teaching credit for multiple offerings of the same online course by its creator or subsequent instructors must be
clearly formulated.

The first point emphasizes the central role of individual faculty, departments and programs in establishing online offerings for UCLA. The second suggests that the distributed nature of online development should be continued even if, as will be apparent in what follows, we believe that there needs to be a centralized point of contact that can work with faculty in assessing what those production needs might be. The third places new responsibilities on the Office of Instructional Development and curricular design and assessment professionals (both faculty and staff) across campus as well as on the Academic Senate’s program review process and those who evaluate financial viability. These points fall into what the Task Force has identified as the organization of course production and delivery capacity. We would modify that charge instead emphasizing as its primary task encouraging the development and assessment of online courses that improve the student experience and further the pedagogical goals of faculty.

Points 1-3 lead us to concur with the task force’s recommendation that the Office of Instructional Development serve as the central node in a distributed node of online/hybrid course development that should include the units across campus that have created or aspire to creating online courses. As the report indicates, OID has been successful in working with individual faculty in developing innovative courses since its origins as a unit. Among its staff are skilled course designers and individuals trained in both assessment and evaluation, as well as individuals who have been closely involved in developing online and hybrid courses at UCLA. Its reach extends, as reported, to both undergraduate and graduate education. It works closely with multiple faculty committees that advise it on the various aspects of its diverse charges and with school and divisional computing support groups in the development of Moodle through CCLE.

Each of those realities suggest that OID is the most likely initial go-to place for online and hybrid instruction. There is ample evidence that it is responsive to the faculty innovation and leadership that the Committee on Online Instruction feels is critical for successful online instruction, a commitment that the Executive Board shares. OID’s existing relationships convince us that the clearing house function and the task of directing faculty toward the best production option for their course needs, a task it currently shares with OIT, should also be housed within OID. We agree that its ultimate reporting structure of the newly-charged OID need not be determined immediately, as long as there are some clear goals in place and there is financial and human support adequate to achieve them. As the point of first contact for many faculty and programs interested in online instruction, OID and its leadership will necessarily have to work closely with not only the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Instruction but also with other administrators and instructional support organizations across campus. It will be important, however, that OID have a faculty advisory committee, perhaps an expanded version of Senate Committee on Instructional Technology, that will not only advise but also serve as a liaison with other Senate committees like the Undergraduate Council and with an Online Policies and Procedures committee that we suggest should be jointly appointed by EVC Waugh and the Senate.

This group should be tasked with resolving the policy issues implicit and explicit in points four and five above as well as setting priorities for campus-wide online initiatives. Because of the complexity of many of those issues, some may have to be considered by smaller task forces consisting of representatives of relevant Senate committees, faculty, administrators and staff with particular knowledge sets, and administrators who have administrative responsibility for the topics under consideration. These proposed policies will also need to be reviewed by both the Senate and the administrative units responsible for implementing them. The committee should make recommendations for allocating funds for ongoing support of online instruction as well as for encouraging individual and departmental initiatives and for institutional initiatives and evaluate whether those allocations were appropriate when matched with expectations and accomplishments.
As these policies evolve, it may be that this committee may no longer be necessary and that the issues that are particular to online now may be as regularly managed as those affecting other more familiar academic programs. That possibility argues against creating permanent administrative structures now if we can establish policies and strategies that improve our students’ learning experiences while furthering the pedagogical goals of the faculty within the budget realities facing UCLA.

That, ultimately, is the goal of the many recommendations of the Task Force and the suggestions offered by the Senate committees and in this document. Thank you again for the opportunity to respond and we look forward to working with you in resolving these complex issues.

Sincerely,

Jan Reiff
Chair, Academic Senate, 2013-2014

cc: Maryann J. Gray, Assistant Provost
    Joel Aberbach, Vice Chair and Chair-Elect
    Linda Sarna, Immediate Past Chair
    Linda Mohr, Interim Senate CAO
    Serge Chenkerian, Senate MSO