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March 6, 2024

CHAIRS OF SENATE DIVISIONS AND SYSTEMWIDE COMMITTEES

Re: Systemwide Senate Review of Proposed Academic Senate Statement on UC Quality

Dear Colleagues,

I am forwarding for systemwide Senate review a proposed Academic Senate statement on UC quality – “Characteristics of Educational Quality at the University of California” – presented by the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP).

The Academic Council endorsed circulating the statement for review to gather input from the Senate divisions. Both UCEP and Council consider that a Senate statement on quality that articulates the collective components of academic excellence can serve as guidance for shaping the University’s academic programs, priorities, and actions, ultimately contributing to its continuing success and enduring impact. The statement in its current form has already informed the work of the newly convened Presidential Task Force on Instructional Modalities and UC Quality Undergraduate Degree Programs as it considers criteria for baccalaureate degree programs that may be delivered remotely.

We invite your feedback. Please submit comments to the systemwide Academic Senate office at SenateReview@ucop.edu by May 14, 2024, to allow us to compile and summarize them for the Academic Council’s May 22 meeting. As always, any committee that considers these matters outside its jurisdiction or charge may decline to comment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "J. Steintrager".

James Steintrager, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: Senate Division Executive Directors
Executive Director Lin

Encl.



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
Melanie Cocco, Chair
mcocco@uci.edu

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January 30, 2024

**JAMES STEINTRAGER, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: UC QUALITY STATEMENT

Dear Jim,

The University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) is pleased to submit the attached updated UC Quality statement. Collectively, the UC is known for both its rigorous majors and exceptional degree completion rates (up to 94%). The quality of our undergraduate training manifests in an exceptionally high placement in graduate schools. 40% of all UC undergraduates complete a graduate degree within ten years. UCEP appreciates the opportunity to describe the educational aspects within the UC system that lead to these successes.

As you know, a UC Quality statement was originally developed in 2009-2010 by the UC Commission on the Future's Education and Curriculum working group to be used as a basis for evaluating change due to the ongoing budget difficulties at that time and the possible inclusion of more online instruction. UCEP closely monitored the Commission's work, and, at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year, Academic Council asked the committee to study how educational quality would be impacted by the University's need to downsize in response to the budget situation.

The committee considered the Commission's attempted definition of "UC quality education" toward their effort to provide guidelines and best practices for preserving quality. These deliberations were intrinsically connected to UCEP's discussions about what was then known as the UC Online Education pilot project and the need to thoughtfully assess the quality of online courses. In addition, the committee considered both the implications for quality related to the increased student to faculty ratio and concerns about a greater use of non-ladder rank faculty resulting from the budget crisis. UCEP opined that quality based on the totality of the experience at UC should be the focus, not just any single course. After making minor revisions, the statement was submitted to Academic Council in March 2011 and endorsed. It was also submitted to the Academic Council's task force charged with implementing the Academic Council Special Committee on a Plan for the University of California (the "Powell Committee" Report).

Following UCEP's work in 2022-2023 on the [White Paper on Online Undergraduate Degree Programs](#), the [Principles for Online Undergraduate Programs and Majors](#), and the [Standard Terminology Guide for Distance Education](#), in October 2023 you asked the committee to revisit the statement on UC quality. While the phrase is often used by Regents, administrators at the Office of the President and the campuses, and others, there is no shared

agreement or official policy statement about how “quality” is defined. UCEP members found the 2010 document to be comprehensive, touching on student-to-student and student-to-faculty interaction as well as undergraduate research, but the committee agreed to revise the statement in the context of a rapidly evolving world, including technology and new social paradigms. We also contemplated the importance of maintaining quality amidst demands to increase access, a lack of student housing and classroom space, an unfamiliar labor environment, and yet another period of financial uncertainty. The committee acknowledges that the statement on quality is aspirational in nature but believes that it is grounded in the mission of the University of California and the world-renowned excellence and rigor of UC’s undergraduate academic programs.

UCEP appreciates the opportunity to comment on this matter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Cocco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melanie Cocco, Chair
UCEP

Characteristics of Educational Quality At the University of California

Fundamental Basis for a UC Quality Education. Collectively, the University of California, California State Universities, and California Community Colleges provide higher educational opportunities for all citizens of the state. The distinctive mission of the UC 'is to serve society as a center of higher learning, providing long-term societal benefits through transmitting advanced knowledge, discovering new knowledge, and functioning as an active working repository of organized knowledge.' To support achievement of that teaching, research and public service mission, the delivery of the highest caliber educational programs is paramount. The quality of a UC education fundamentally derives from three key components: the training and expertise of UC faculty, the ability and engagement of UC students, and the rich research-based environment central to the UC system.

- The vision of what constitutes desired and acceptable quality will appropriately come from the faculty responsible for the curriculum and teaching in each degree or program.
- The measures of success ultimately will be derived from the experiences and achievements of students.

UC Quality: Environment. UC quality derives not just from individual courses or activities but from the comprehensive educational experience at the system's 10 top-tier public research universities which:

- Leverages synergies across campuses while simultaneously giving students access to the unique characteristics of each institution.
- Provides a civil and inclusive multicultural environment that conveys and helps to develop the most current knowledge, theories, ideas, and perspectives.
- Takes advantage of the important social, cultural, and intellectual contributions enabled by having a diverse population of students, particularly those from underrepresented populations.
- Offers insights and experiences based in both research and practice, including engaging students with hands-on projects closely mentored by UC faculty.
- Promotes a rich learning environment beyond the classroom, providing context for social interactions with others, potentially grounding and inspiring creative research activities, and other contributions to society, and creating relationships that can continue after graduation.
- Fosters a safe and healthy living environment for each student, with the academic resources, libraries, campus facilities, health and wellness support, cultural events, social opportunities for informal interactions with peers and mentors, and other enrichment activities that will allow them to maximize their success.

UC Quality: Educational Offerings. The following features enable UC to deliver high-quality educational content and maximize student outcomes, leveraging UC's status as California's primary public academic research institution. Courses, programs, and extracurricular activities that define UC quality:

Are Structured to Maximize Student Success.

- Are developed and taught by UC Senate faculty, often delivered in collaboration with lecturers, graduate students and external specialists with relevant expertise, and address content reflecting the most current research.
- Employ effective pedagogical practices for each area and serve the needs of different types of student learners, regardless of instructional modality.
- Include appropriate and substantive student-instructor and student-student interaction.

Build Core Competencies and Critical Thinking Skills.

- Provide a framework by which students achieve objective standards of knowledge and competence appropriate to the field of study.
- Train students to interpret and organize information critically, analytically, and effectively, empowering them with skills in the acquisition, assimilation and synthesis of knowledge that will allow nimble adaptation to the ever-changing intellectual, cultural, and technological environment.
- Promote intellectual curiosity and an appreciation for knowledge, including knowledge for which practical applications are not immediately apparent.
- Nurture intellectual independence, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

Ensure Rigor and Depth

- Operate at a high level of intellectual rigor suited to the extraordinary level of academic potential of the student body.
- Maintain high ethical standards and intellectual integrity.
- Scaffold courses on a core set of knowledge, concepts, and skills, enabling students to reflect and build in a temporally extended way on what they are learning.

Foster Breadth of Perspective and Interactive Learning Communities

- Develop interpersonal and communication skills that will contribute to success through collaboration.
- Provide ample opportunities for closely-mentored relationships with faculty and other University-affiliated personnel that allow students to pursue independent research, creative activity or service to society.
- Facilitate informal and less-structured interactions that enable learning and development of perspectives beyond those that can be captured by typical tests and other structured assessments.
- Develop sensitivity to the diversity of domestic and international cultures that will enhance students' capacity to operate within the university, and advance U.S. and global society.
- Contribute to a sense of the course, program, and campus as a learning community that facilitates productive peer-to-peer interaction, support, and feedback.

UC Quality: Oversight. To ensure their effectiveness, UC courses and educational programs are subjected to rigorous and ongoing review. Key elements of this process include:

- Initial course and program development led by faculty with expertise in the latest pedagogy, research, and practice in the field, followed by reviews for content, rigor, innovation, modality-specific issues, and quality assurance at multiple levels (department, school, UC Academic Senate)
- Systematic monitoring of existing educational offerings, exercising the UC Academic Senate course and program review process.
- Regular review of content and delivery of instruction by individual faculty at multiple levels, including self-assessments, student evaluations, and internal and external peer faculty and administrative appraisals, which are considered in the faculty member's record as they are considered for advancement within the University.
- A course and program assessment process in which faculty develop learning goals, mapping them to the curriculum, and evaluating students' mastery of those goals. Learning targets include skills related to critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written and oral communication, and other discipline-based skills.
- Investment in ongoing training, course development support, and resources for faculty, with reference to pedagogical developments and the emergence of new teaching modalities.

UC Quality: Expected Outcomes. Graduates of UC will have the ability to:

- Think critically and independently.
- Demonstrate integrity and principled leadership.
- Communicate effectively.
- Make intellectual and creative contributions to issues important to California, the nation, and the world.
- Perform excellently in subsequent graduate study and other research.
- Make professional contributions in their chosen field, informed by their experience in a research-oriented academic environment.
- Apply the scope and depth of their liberal-arts education, readily adapting to and taking advantage of rapid changes and evolutions in knowledge, technology, and social paradigms.
- Facilitate meaningful engagement with others in diverse vocational, living, and social environments.