

2022-23 Academic Planning Group (APG)

The Academic Planning Group (APG) is a joint Academic Senate-Administration body that advises the provost on academic planning and other campus priorities. APG's deliberations demonstrate UCI's ongoing commitment to shared governance. The group's recommendations inform the provost's considerations regarding issues of strategic importance to the campus.

The APG works primarily through formation of ad hoc work groups to address specific topics chosen for the year. The APG may also be asked to opine as a group on topics for which short-term input is needed.

This year's work groups and their charges follow below.

Online Education

Interest in online teaching at UCI has increased tremendously over the last few years. There are multiple reasons for this, some of which are:

Access: Online/remote teaching can allow students who have other responsibilities such as work, childcare or dependent care, to obtain a UC degree.

Flexibility: The experience of the recent pandemic has shown that remote teaching options offer flexibility to both instructors and students.

Space: The lack of space for new classrooms and housing mean that online education may be the only pathway to increasing enrollment.

Financial: Increasing enrollment can be beneficial to the university's financial situation, and as mentioned above, this may require more online teaching.

These reasons have to be balanced against the difficulties in providing a quality online education at scale.

Currently, many professors, and in some cases departments, are already moving (or discussing the possibility of moving) to a more online mode of teaching, where certain lectures or discussions are offered virtually. It is therefore timely to examine whether suitable resources need to be allocated to directing and aiding these efforts, to improve the quality of education and mitigate problems which were observed during the pandemic with remote teaching.

Some of the broad classes of questions are:

- What resource and pedagogical challenges will we face in transitioning a significant portion of our teaching to an online/virtual mode?
- What have we learned from the past few years from our transition to online teaching? What positive outcomes should we take away, and what negative effects should we avoid in the future?

- What technology and resources will be required to implement an effective transition to online teaching?
- What is required to achieve a quality online course for different kinds of courses?
- How might we better serve our faculty in terms of addressing their online teaching reservations and expectations?
- How will we ensure development of quality online courses and measure student success in online courses relative to in-person classes?

Addressing student socialization and mental health in the pandemic's aftermath

Many commentators have recognized that both academic achievement and mental health have suffered among young people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated stressors. Restrictions in school and extracurricular activities during the throes of the pandemic also likely resulted in social deficits among students. In addition to the challenges and losses associated with the pandemic, numerous additional stressors (inflation, climate-related crises, political polarization, mass shootings, racial reckoning) have also taxed many of our students' mental health. Moreover, many of our students – particularly those who entered UCI in 2021 or 2022 – had very different academic and social experiences during their high school and college years than prior cohorts.

Some questions to be addressed by this workgroup:

- How can we assess and address the lingering effects of the pandemic and the consequences of social isolation among our students?
- How can we ensure that our students thrive academically despite the toll of the pandemic and additional collective stressors?
- Should the post-COVID extracurricular experience be different?
- How can our campus services address ongoing mental health challenges for students of different backgrounds and differing experiences over the past few years?
- How can faculty be sensitive to these issues while optimizing education for students with varying levels of preparedness?