April 25, 2019

Marlene Tromp, Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
Office of the Chancellor

Re: Insufficient Classroom Capacity

Dear Marlene,

In 2017-18, in the context of the Kresge Project, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) recommended that greater attention be paid to small and intermediate sized classrooms rather than trying to build the biggest possible large classroom. In a subsequent meeting, the Chancellor was informed that, if forced to choose between protecting small and intermediate classrooms, CEP would prioritize small classrooms (with 30-35 seats). For various reasons, the administration decided not to go with the recommendation from the Academic Senate. In Fall 2018, remembering this discussion, you inquired whether all small classes had been accommodated in existing rooms, and were informed that they had been.

As I discussed with you recently, it seems that the situation next year will be very different. We are informed by the Registrar's Office that the Writing Program has requested that 36 additional classes of WRIT 2 be scheduled in Fall 2019 compared to Fall 2018. Without an official analysis from the Humanities Division, our understanding of the cause is tentative, but we believe that 2018-19 was a one-time situation caused by the transition from the old College Core-Writing requirement to the new Academic Literacy Curriculum, and 2019-20 will be typical.

There were 15 free standard time slots in Fall 2018 in rooms with 25-40 seats. (WRIT 2 has a designated capacity of 25 students per section.) If one includes rooms with 24 seats, the number of available time slots increases to 44. Scheduling 36 additional classes would leave 8 empty slots, i.e. a utilization rate of 97.5%, which is probably beyond even the near-miraculous abilities of the Registrar's Office. The situation is improved by the fact that it may be possible to schedule discussion sections more efficiently, and the Registrar's Office believes that this efficiency may allow them to provide all the classrooms needed in Fall 2019 (with considerable effort on their part). However, standing so close to the edge of the precipice, it is impossible to estimate the exact moment we will fall over.

It would not be solution to try to squeeze discussion sections into whatever rooms and time slots are available after the increased set of classes have been scheduled. Discussion sections are integral parts of many courses, not optional enhancements. If and as lecture courses become larger, we can expect to require more smaller classrooms for the accompanying discussion sections.

Even the situation this 2018-19 academic year, which appears to be tenable if barely so, has very high costs. These costs are hidden if one only considers whether or not it is possible to fit all of the pieces of the puzzle together in some way. When classroom utilization is as high as it currently is, students have less flexibility in choosing their classes (and/or their class

schedule), which can mean longer time to degree, higher rates of failure, greater emotional stress, or perhaps even more simply, that they are less able to pursue what they had hoped to pursue. Also, when classroom utilization is as high as it currently is, teaching faculty and graduate students find themselves with teaching schedules in which it is more difficult to effectively carve out research time, exacerbating inequalities in degree or professional advancement among similarly-ranked colleagues. For our lecturers with the highest teaching load, the likelihood that they may have to teach early in the morning and also into the evening within a single day, and the certainty that it would be more difficult to schedule one's teaching around other commitments whether work or family, means more stress and an increasingly unreasonable burden to deliver quality instruction no matter under what conditions. Finally, the stress and workload of staff who have to try to reconcile these conflicting imperatives is not only utterly irreconcilable with their compensation, but beyond what can be sustained even by those most generous, committed, talented, and willing to sacrifice.

Accordingly, we request that you immediately approve that the Registrar's Office may schedule WRIT 2 classes in rooms with 24 seats for Fall 2019, and that the resultant increased cost of delivering writing instruction will be covered by an increased allocation from the central administration to the Humanities Division compared to what would have been provided with 25 students per class. This additional cost is modest, probably not more than one additional class in the fall and one in the winter. UCSC has the largest class sizes in writing courses in the entire UC system, so allowing 24-seat WRIT 2 classes will not just provide more options for class scheduling, but will also be beneficial pedagogically.

If this is approved by you, we request the Registrar's Office to be mindful that it may be necessary to move WRIT 2 classes to 24-seat rooms to ensure that discussion sections can be scheduled reasonably. Because the full picture will only be clear after everything has been scheduled, there is some guesswork and iteration involved here,

For the intermediate term, we request that you

- direct that the ongoing space audit be conducted with urgency, so that any rooms that can be converted to general assignment classrooms are released to the registrar in the next six months. A more comprehensive and principle-based space reallocation plan may take longer, but classrooms cannot wait that long. We are advised by the Registrar's Office that the situation with rooms with 35-50 seats is as bad as with the 25-35 seat rooms, although less visible to CEP.
- explore the possibility of combining very small classrooms (less than 20 seats) into slightly larger and more usable classrooms (30 seats and more), and to reconfigure existing classrooms to make them more usable. There is a limit to how far this can go, because the very small rooms are used for examinations by the Disability Resource Center — which brings us to the need for the campus to construct a Testing Center — but even two classrooms (of the appropriate size) would result in 32 additional class time slots being available.
- authorize the Registrar's Office to have divisions work with their departments so that they submit a balanced set of requests for classroom spaces (and verify that those departments that do not do so have good academic reasons), rather than asking for a disproportionate number of prime time slots on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In our congested state, we have to use all 16 standard time slots in classrooms for scheduling to be feasible.

- evaluate the number of undergraduate students that our existing classroom space can reasonably support with our current curriculum. The rationale and assumptions that underlie whatever number is reached should be made explicit and public. This number should become a point of reference in any discussion about possible or expected campus growth.

We also request the Chair of the Writing Program and the Chair of the Council of Provosts (copied here) to consider how the available instructors for College Core and Writing classes — there is some overlap between the two sets of instructors — can be supported and deployed most effectively, to allow students to complete the Academic Literacy Curriculum requirements as soon as they wish to. We have heard from students that they were unable to get into required Writing classes this year even though they tried to, because of insufficient capacity. We hope that this was a one time event because of the unique challenges of the transition to the Academic Literacy Curriculum, but if there is actually a dearth of instructors, this must be remedied. Apart from the deadlines for their completion, composition courses are implicit prerequisites for a wide range of courses in various majors, which presuppose the ability to write effectively.

In the longer term, over the next few years, it will be essential for the campus to *construct* new classrooms with 30 - 50 seats . Trying to achieve 90% or more classroom utilization requires a huge effort, and leads to hidden inefficiencies, including a cascading underutilization of seats in larger classrooms because smaller classes have to be scheduled there. Comparisons with other UC campuses show that we are uniquely under-resourced in this regard:

Data from University of California Classroom and Teaching Lab Utilization Report, November 2017. Fall 2016 undergraduate enrollment totals listed under each campus. Highlighted columns are sister campuses closest to fall 2018 UCSC enrollment totals (17,792).

	UCB 29,310	UCD 29,379	UCI 27,331	UCLA 30,873	UCM 6,815	UCR 19,799	UCSD 28,127	UCSB 21,574	UCSC 16,962
16-25 seats	63	13	12	55	15	5	18	31	28
26-50 seats	143	62	83	111	12	49	44	62	31

Although similar data for classrooms with 200-300 seats shows that we are comparable to other campuses, CEP's analysis last year shows that our need for classrooms of this size is also acute. The lack of classroom space is already limiting what is possible: CEP was informed by the Computer Science and Engineering Chair that several courses she has scheduled for 2019-20 *could* be taught to larger groups if she had classrooms available. If her report is correct, the lack of classrooms is aggravating impaction in the Computer Science undergraduate program, depriving students of career opportunities. Classrooms with 200-300 seats should be included in the construction plans for this campus.

Other universities seem to be able to raise donor funds to construct buildings; we hope that this should be possible for us too.

Sincerely,

Onuttom Narayan, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Kimberly Lau, Chair, Academic Senate
       Bruce Schumm, Chair, Committee on Planning and Budget
       Tonya Ritola, Chair, Writing Program
       Alan Christy, Chair, Council of Provosts
       Richard Hughey, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
       Karen Bassi, Acting Dean, Humanities Division
       Tchad Sanger, University Registrar
       Margie Claxton, Deputy Registrar, Curriculum Management
       Kalin McGraw, Associate Registrar, Curriculum Management