

June 12, 2019

Richard Hughey, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
Office of the Chancellor

Re: Insufficient Classroom Capacity

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your response to the letter from the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) to the Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor (CPEVC) on this topic, where you support our assessment that the availability of classrooms on our campus is dire. The committee has discussed your response by email. Unfortunately, the main step to be taken seems to be a new task force to deal with all space issues, where we can be “hopeful that issues specifically related to classes and classrooms may be a top priority.” This is too diffuse and too slow.

It is possible that, at some point, the space audits, task forces, determination of principles etc. will actually lead to additional classrooms; the campus has been doing this for two years now. But in order to avoid being bogged down in this process, CEP divided its recommendations into short term, intermediate term, and long term steps. In the short term, we requested providing the registrar’s office with more flexibility in scheduling Writing Program classes for Fall 2019 by allocating compensatory funding to the Humanities. We understand that, as we expected, **five sections of WRIT 2 have had to be scheduled in rooms with 24 seats**, and other sections may have to be moved to 24 seat rooms too. We request that the central administration provide the funding to the Humanities Division needed to ensure that they do not bear the burden of this change.¹

For the intermediate term, we recommended several steps to the CPEVC. Of these, it seems that our first and fourth recommendations have been transformed into the planned task-force, which we fear will yield results much more slowly than needed,² while our second and third recommendations have been ignored. In detail, our first recommendation was to “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”. As is clear from the previous paragraph, the crisis is already upon us. For a more comprehensive picture, we include a table created from data provided by the Registrar’s Office:

Number of free class time slots in Fall 2019

Seats	201-500	100-199	75-99	50-74	25-49	24
Tu-Th day	0	1	0	0	0	18
Tu-Th 5:20	0	2	0	0	0	4
Tu-Th 7:10	0	4	2	0	6	6
MWF day	3	10	9	1	0	32

¹ Although the Humanities Division has presented the case that Writing Program courses are underfunded on a much larger scale, there is no reason to add to any underfunding.

² It should also not be forgotten that departments use space for discussion sections that are not recorded with the registrar, and for essential flexibility in course offerings (such as additional or make-up sessions with students) which the registrar’s office, in its overextended state, has lost the ability to provide. Thus, the outcome of this exercise may be less than one might hope.

MW 5:20	0	1	0	0	1	5
MW 7:10	1	5	4	1	2	6
Assignable slots	6 x 16	7 x 16	9 x 16	7 x 16	32 x 16	7 x 16
% utilization	96%	79%	90%	98%	98%	36%

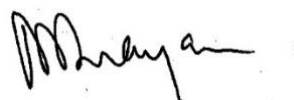
The hidden costs of approaching close to 100% utilization were discussed in detail in our previous letter. Note that the table shows the situation before additional discussion sections — and time changes to accommodate Teaching Assistant schedules — are requested at the beginning of the fall term, and that some vacant time slots are needed for Disability Resource Center examinations (especially in small rooms) and other events, so the actual situation is worse than it seems.

For the longer term, your letter proposes various creative solutions. These may provide some relief,³ but ultimately there is no alternative to constructing more classrooms; our previous letter discussed how poorly we fare compared to other UC campuses, and how it is already affecting the curriculum. Considering the amount of time it takes to construct buildings, and the imminent loss of small classroom space due to “the Kresge decisions,” we are dismayed that all we seem to be able to do are committees and task forces.

You mentioned a possible goal of adding 40 class time slots in small classrooms; the Writing Program alone has added 36 class sections this fall compared to last year. You also mentioned the Senate’s collaboration in increasing the number of approved time slots; this has resulted in a UCSC student with a normal load of 3 x 5 credits being provided with 585 minutes per week of instruction, less than the UCSC norm of 4 x 4 credits x 150 minutes/4 credits = 600 minutes/week. Obviously, we cannot go down this path further.

In the fall, I will present CEP with the administration’s response, to decide if we need to take any steps to ensure that the administration’s inability to provide additional classroom space does not result in invisible degradation of our courses, especially with regard to discussion sections. It is our sincere hope that there will be sufficient progress during the summer to make this unnecessary.

Sincerely,



Onuttom Narayan, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Lori Kletzer, Interim Campus Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor
Kimberly Lau, Chair, Academic Senate
Bruce Schumm, Chair, Committee on Planning and Budget
Karen Bassi, Interim Dean, Division of Humanities
Tchad Sanger, University Registrar

³ impediments such as the low salaries for Graduate Student Instructors and Unit 18 lecturers in Summer Session and our failure to develop a transportation plan befitting a multi-campus institution will limit the effectiveness of these measures.