

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING Reinvesting in Teaching at UCSC

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

UCSC has always been proud of the quality of its undergraduate instruction. The first line of the summary statement on our webpage says that we've "earned national distinction as a university with high-impact research and an uncommon commitment to teaching." These two roles are intertwined with faculty creating cutting-edge research opportunities for undergraduates, with graduate students serving as teaching assistants, and with instructors bringing their research findings into their classrooms. With increased numbers of undergraduates, particularly those from traditionally underserved populations, high quality teaching is imperative. Yet, administrative support for the teaching mission at UCSC has dwindled precipitously.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), formerly the Center for Teaching Excellence, under the office of the VPDUE, has been disestablished for several years. The mission of the CTL was to support UCSC instructors in their efforts to improve their teaching and enhance student learning. The center, with its full-time director, provided in-class and in-person instructional support to the campus community, including resources to faculty and graduate students for developing courses and syllabi, discussions of appropriate pedagogy and classroom climate, assistance in evaluating teaching and learning, training workshops for graduate teaching assistants and graduate student instructors, and the planning and organization of annual Convocations on Teaching. In the past, the CTL played a particularly important role in providing guidance to new professors and first-time instructors. The Committee on Teaching (COT)'s traditional role of providing direction to the CTL disappeared when it lost its permanent director in 2008-2009. After unsuccessful attempts to hire a high-level administrator to direct the CTL, its support and presence on campus evaporated. There is no longer any location on campus for instructors or TA's to receive the kind of targeted pedagogical support offered by a center for teaching and learning.

Until 2011, the COT also adjudicated *Instructional Improvement Grants*, which fostered innovation and experimentation by instructors in their classrooms. These grants were meant to motivate and encourage faculty to think seriously about how they teach and how the learning experience of undergraduate students could be improved. These grants had a direct and positive impact on the campus. They provided support for instructors to develop interdisciplinary courses and new GE courses that addressed campus priorities, they offered mentoring to graduate students in appropriate teaching pedagogy, they allowed instructors to implement new technology in courses, and much more. The budget for this program, administered by the office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), began contracting in 2003-2004, when \$129,552 in grants were given to 26 programs. The last year these grants were offered was 2011-2012.

Most recently, COT was informed this fall that the funds and administration for the Excellence in Teaching Awards, which were reduced to a total of \$2,000, would no longer be

funded or administered by either the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE) or the Vice Provost Academic Affairs (VPAA). These awards are tangible signs of recognition and appreciation for outstanding instructors, and outstanding undergraduate teaching. The administration has offered the Senate one-time funding of \$2,000 to develop a program of its own choosing, but these funds will be eliminated after this year.

Of course, we understand that cuts to instructional support were originally prompted by extraordinary budget cuts, and we appreciate that the administration must make the most of its limited resources. We would like to note that the VPDUE has recently placed great emphasis and financial support on fostering student success, though none of this support seems to be tied to improving the *teaching* of students. There is also the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC), which provides support for the integration of technology into teaching. Unfortunately, the personnel in FITC have no pedagogical knowledge to offer instructors and graduate students, and the use of educational technology is only one facet of what teachers do in the classroom. Subject specific grants, such as the instructional improvement grants focused on Disciplinary Communication, help support particular aspects of teaching, as do the campuswide TA training sessions which focus on compliance with campus policies. But, neither of these initiatives provide the type of generalized pedagogical support that translates to overall teaching success for the benefit of the entire campus community.

There has been a cumulative disinvestment in campus-wide systems which support new instructors in appropriate pedagogical practices in all areas, honor and celebrate high quality teaching, and assist graduate students who serve as teaching assistants. We are particularly concerned with the disconnect between undergraduate and graduate student growth, and the lack of support for training graduate students as teaching assistants and instructors.

We believe that supporting the teaching mission of the university is critical. Eliminating the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Instructional Improvement Grants, and Excellence in Teaching Awards strikes at the heart of this mission. The COT would also like to note that *all* of other UC campuses retained their centers dedicated to the improvement and support of high quality teaching during this period of budget constraints. The cumulative impact of the budget cuts on our campus sends both a symbolic and a tangible message that teaching quality and systematic support for appropriate pedagogy are low priorities for this administration.

Despite this lack of administrative support for high quality teaching at UCSC, the COT will do what it can to support our instructors and graduate student in their instruction. While the Senate cannot bring back the CTL on its own, we have plans to create virtual spaces to encourage innovative teaching and share the results of effective pedagogical practices on campus. We'd also like to host teaching forums and other events to bring the instructional community together to share ideas and insights about teaching. At this point, COT is soliciting ideas from the rest of the Senate and campus community about how to foster teaching innovation given the current lack of funds and support. Our students depend on us for high quality instruction. We hope to work with the Senate, the administration and the development office to find creative solutions to renew our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. We sincerely hope that together we can make good on our promise of being a research institution with an "uncommon commitment to teaching."

Respectfully submitted;
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