Academic Instruction's Return to Campus

(Repopulation) Team

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Co-Chairs: Marshall T. Fulbright III, Manuel Mancillas-Gomez,
Alicia Munoz, and Denise Schulmeyer (listed alphabetically)

Cuyamaca Members:	Grossmont Members:
Alicia Munoz-CA*	Aundrea Kaiser, ASGC*
Dante Jones-Class Sen*	Denise Schulmeyer
Guillermo Colls-Acad Sen*	Heriberto Vasquez
Julie Burcham	Julio Soto-AFT*
Kim Dudzik-AA*	Julie Burcham-CSEA*
Manuel Mancillas-Gomez	Kelly Jackson-Class Sen*
Martin Campos-ASCC*	Javier Ayala-AA*
Robert Anness-AFT*	Marshall Fulbright-CA*
	Victoria Curran-Acad Sen
District Members	Recorder:
Myra Lomahan-Conf Empl*	Jacqueline Valdivia
Daryl Johnson-Class Sen*	* Designated constituent group representatives

Committee Membership

The return to campus workgroup consisted of 18 members from both college campuses

and included representatives from all constituency groups. Each constituency group was

provided with the opportunity to appoint representative(s) to serve on the workgroup and

meetings were scheduled to accommodate as many individuals as possible. The workgroup

discussed our overall role in the return to campus planning process, and the role each member

had in representing their constituency group.

Purpose/Charge

First and foremost, our academic instruction return to campus team would like to say to our all our colleagues that we hear and see you, and that we respectfully acknowledge your humanity and suffering during these challenging times. Your humanity was taken into consideration while we drafted our recommendations for a safe return to campus instruction. As we assess the needs of faculty, staff, and administrators related to our work responsibilities, we appreciate that much more than working condition where abruptly interrupted as we attempted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. We mourn the loss of colleagues and their loved ones to this pandemic. We acknowledge that in the process of sheltering in place, we lost the everyday social connection and camaraderie that adds meaning to the work we do. We lost important working dynamics, including the challenging and uncomfortable ones, that allow us to challenge ourselves and our campus to grow and innovate. We lost this and much more, and we are in solidarity with you as we gradually develop ideas on a return to campus that considers our complete humanity.

The instruction return-to-campus team focused on providing recommendations to the Chancellor for a safe return to on-campus instruction. We made a concerted effort to exclude recommendations or discussions regarding specific Human Resources or Facilities challenges as we believe those teams will discuss those. This team primarily focused on the needs of faculty, classified staff, and administrators as they related to the return and re-opening of both college campuses to hybrid and face-to-face on-campus instruction.

Identified Areas of Focus

After several meetings, the instructional return to campus team identified the following areas of focus:

- Instructional Spaces, Equipment (Hardware), Technology Support, and Software – What needs to be done to prepare our instructional spaces for a return to campus? What additional equipment (hardware) and software needs to be identified that will support the instructional needs of faculty, students, and staff to ensure an equitable return to campus?

- Ongoing Professional Development – The team recognized that the immediate closure and virtual re-opening of campus in Spring 2020 necessitated emergency online instructor training, but more training is required to ensure the academic integrity of our remote/online instruction continues even as we return to campus.

- A "Phased-in Approach" to Returning to Campus – The team identified that any return to campus plan requires a thoughtful and deliberative approach and, therefore, the District and colleges must adopt a phased-in approach to returning instruction to campuses.

- Increased Access to Teaching Assistant Hours – The team identified the need for additional assistance to create and support engaging learning environment in remote and hybrid learning modalities.

- Learning Resources – Tutorial Services

- Decision Timelines – The team identified the necessity for decision-making timelines that will establish guidelines for when decisions will be determined.

- On-Campus Remote Learning Support

- Other Services Required to Return to Campus

Instructional Spaces, Equipment, and Software

 Instructional Spaces. Every instructional space on both campuses must be in proper working condition before the return to campus date. Properly working instructional equipment is necessary to facilitate active, engaging, and educational learning experiences. This workgroup recommends that the District and both colleges develop an inventory list for all instructional spaces. The inventory list should include a list of all instructional equipment in each instructional area to ascertain that the equipment is in proper working condition, needs repair, or must be replaced. The expectation is that the lists will be used by the District and colleges to either provide funding to repair or replace the equipment or provide information to the colleges for redistribution of equipment to provide fully functional instructional spaces on campus to facilitate a seamless return to on-campus instruction. The team's recommendation is that each campus review and potentially transform traditional non-instructional spaces on campus to teach to provide instructional access to larger rooms for social distancing. The team also recommends that the District and Colleges ensure there is adequate IT staffing to support the instructional technology needs for returning to on-campus teaching.

 New Equipment (Hardware). The workgroup received numerous requests from both campuses that demonstrate the need for the District and colleges to further invest in additional equipment to facilitate the broadcasting of instruction materials (lectures) via teleconferencing platforms. The required equipment includes additional cameras and microphones in some, but not all the instructional spaces on both campuses. The type of camera and microphones can be mutually determined between the District and colleges, but the review, purchasing, and installation of these new equipment needs to be completed prior to the return to campus. It is also recommended that faculty and staff be provided with training so they can adequately utilize

the equipment; this training should be presented as both a live (face-to-face) version and in a video/taped version.

Technology Support. It is also recommended that both colleges identify a technician or technicians who can be available whenever there is instruction on campus to assist with technical difficulties, and that there be a dedicated telephone number and email address that would ensure the ability for a faculty member to contact a person immediately if there is/are technical difficulties. It cannot be understated that if/when technical difficulties arise immediately preceding or during an instructional period that those difficulties will negatively impact students' ability to obtain the necessary instructional time is required by Law and is critical for their academic success. It is incumbent on the District and colleges that there be adequate technical assistance if our commitment to hybrid, remote, or face to face education is to be adequately realized.

Software. Throughout the transition to online/remote education, the primary focus has been on equipment/hardware needs. It is the recommendation of this workgroup that there also be a deliberate and focus on software needs. The technical needs of the campuses have largely been met, but the software must be brought up to the same levels of the hardware needs. The equipment that has been distributed and/or installed is only as good as the software that it runs, and we improved software to effectively support the robust and engaging online learning environments that will be required to retain students and ensure their academic success. Therefore, the group recommends that the District and/or both colleges collaboratively work to develop a list of software needs that can be reviewed, purchased, and installed prior to the return to campus date. In addition, the group recommends that both colleges work collaboratively work to identify software that would support both campuses to reduce the number of resources

required by IT to install the programs and that the Deans of Leaning Technologies on both campuses lead this effort.

Ongoing Professional Development

The immediate college closure and transition to online/remote instruction in Spring 2020 forced faculty, classified staff, and administrators to establish online learning environments for students to continue their academic educations. Faculty and classified staff needed to receive "emergency" training on remote teaching that primarily focused on instruction's technical aspects. It must be recognized that the immediate transition to remote education and the rapid training of faculty was sufficient to ensure a quick transition but not enough to support ongoing remote learning environments. Therefore, the team recommends the District and Colleges commit resources (personnel, facilities, and monetary) to provide additional training/professional development to faculty, classified staff, hourly student workers, NANCE, all other instructional support staff. The additional training will primarily focus on improving current remote teaching techniques to continually enhance online instruction while also providing training on new equipment and software to prepare for future innovative instruction. The improvement of synchronous remote teaching, including the technology and pedagogy, must be addressed if the instruction is to improve continuously.

The team recommends that the campus's professional development committees, in conjunction with their academic senates and union representatives, immediately begin discussions to provide additional and more robust professional development as soon as possible. We recommend that the college's Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Instruction coordinate with the academic deans and department chairs to develop lists of hardware and software required to ensure high-quality remote and hybrid instruction. The team recommends that the

VPs coordinate with the District to provide the necessary IT support to install and support both the hardware and software needed to support high-quality remote and hybrid instruction. Therefore, we recommend that the hardware and software lists be developed and ordered as soon as possible (ordered by Summer 2021 for Fall 2021).

A Phased-In Approach to Returning to Campus

The team also recognizes the importance of returning to campus as soon as possible while understanding that an immediate and complete return to campus is not feasible, practical, nor safe. The safe return to campus is our priority with the recognition that the campus closures and remote instruction have negatively impacted teaching and student learning. Although all of instruction was negatively impacted by the campus closures and a shift to remote/online education, the primarily skills-based courses, those that require "hands-on" components, suffered the most negative impact on instruction.

Therefore, the group recommends that the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs/Instruction develop a college-based return to campus course prioritized lists through their local participatory governance structures. The prioritized list will be developed in collaboration with each college's academic deans and department chairs/coordinators and be provided, as recommendations, to each college president. The team also recommends that the prioritized list process include considerations of equity by removing barriers for vulnerable populations.

A phased-in approach to returning to campus will follow CDC guidelines for Higher Education. The prioritized list of hard to convert classes will include labs and skills-based courses scheduled in multiple forms to ensure social distancing, hybrid courses, and specialty courses that students need for degree completion in the short-term and potentially in the long-term. The percentage of campus returns will follow tiers identified by County Public Health and

CDC guidelines. Hybrid Classes, percentage of campus returns will be based on CDC, State, or County guidelines.

- Phase 1: Hard to convert classes (primarily laboratory and skills-based courses)

- Phase 2: Phase 1 + a small number of lecture-based courses, with an emphasis on hybrid instruction

- Phase 3: Phase 1, 2 + More lecture-based courses, with an emphasis on increasing face-to-face/on-campus instruction and gradually reducing the amount of online/remote instruction and hybrid class.

Increased Access to Teaching Assistant (TA) Hours

As the colleges begin implementing the phased-in approach to in-person instruction, there may be a need for additional TAs to support innovative modalities of on-campus teaching and remote teaching. The team therefore recommends that the District , in conjunction with the appropriate bargaining units, review and actively engage in redeveloping the hiring/onboarding process for TAs. Reviewing the onboarding process for TAs will ensure they are hired in a timely manner, which will provide them with greater opportunity to engage with instruction sooner.

The team recognizes that there will be some apprehension about an immediate return to campus. Therefore, we recommend that the colleges ensure a balance between fully remote, hybrid, and on-campus section offerings. It is also recommended that there be a focus on high-demand general education courses (e.g., Math, English, World Languages) and hard-to-convert classes that require in-person instruction and are needed to support student retention, success, and completion. The colleges must consider multiple scheduling options (the combination of

various modalities) as they begin their phased-in approach to returning to campus to ensure equitable and safe access to instruction.

Learning Resources – Tutorial Services

The team recognizes the need for a phased-in approach to increasing on-campus tutorial services and an increased commitment to supplemental instruction and embedded tutoring. As learning resources were transitioned to a virtual environment, the team recommends that the District support the college's plans for providing both remote and on-campus learning resources to our students during a re-transition. These resources include, but are not limited to, additional personnel (staff and students), extra physical space, and other technology as needed. In conjunction with their Deans of Learning and Technology Resources, both campuses will develop plans for such a return.

Decision Timeline

Effective teaching and learning pedagogies for face-to-face, hybrid, or remote/online instructions require different preparations. Therefore, the act of changing modalities during an ongoing academic session is hugely challenging and disrupts the overall learning environment, as demonstrated in Spring 2020 when the pandemic forced the transition to 100% remote instruction. Therefore, the team's recommendation is that the District establish a decision-making timeline in conjunction with the Colleges. The timeline should set deadlines/dates for when the District will make decisions; for example, the decision to return to campus in Fall 2021 or Spring 2022 will be made and announced by "X" date.   Due to the amount of preparation required for instruction, once a decision is made regarding a schedule and teaching modalities, the District and colleges should not change instruction modalities unless it is to transition from on-campus to remote instruction for safety reasons.

On-Campus Remote Learning Support

The return to campus will require an increase in remote and hybrid instruction in conjunction with limited face-to-face instruction. The team recognizes that a faculty and students schedules will be a combination of face-to-face, hybrid, and online/remote instruction and some will be required to transition between the different instructional modalities as they once did when simply walking across campus. Therefore, it is recommended that the District support, and the colleges establish, on-campus spaces for remote learning. The spaces will provide students the opportunity to be on-campus for a both in-person instruction and, if required, to quickly transition to online instruction without having to go to another location to access Wi-Fi. It is recommended that each campus establish their own on-campus remote instructional spaces, but they could be, but are not limited to, libraries, labs, common areas, and outdoor spaces. The team recognizes the students' needs for quiet assessment locations. Therefore, we recommend the colleges provide on-campus resources for assessments/exams.

Other Services Required to Return to Campus

The team has also identified the need for additional on-campus services for effective instruction. We recommend the District support the partial re-opening of both campuses' food services, printing services, and access to the bookstore; each service and area is crucial to instruction as they support all constituency groups on both campuses. The team also recognizes that addressing parking fees, the warehouse's ability to receive shipments, and access to instructional supplies (markers, scantron machines, etc.) is vital for a successful campus return. Therefore, the team recommends that the colleges develop plans to ensure access to food services, printing services, bookstores, the warehouse is staffed, and adequate access to instructional materials before returning to campus.

Conclusion

- In summary, after several meetings the Return to Campus Instruction Team discussed areas of concern and gathered feedback from constituency groups to develop the following recommendations. Our guiding concern was to develop a plan that focused on what was best for students and staff, so that our colleges can safely re-open their doors.

- **Technology.** The colleges should conduct a thorough assessment of the technology that exists in the classroom to ascertain that it is in working order after a year of sitting dormant. Plans need to be developed to repair or replace damaged equipment.

- **Software/Hardware.** The colleges should explore acquiring new software and investing into new technology that will support online, hybrid, or in person instruction.

- **Professional Development.** The sudden shift to online instruction was very challenging because of the emergency that caused it. While faculty and staff engaged in emergency remote teaching and distance education training that helped them make the sudden transition, it is critical that faculty receive robust and continuous training on the pedagogy and best practices for successful instruction in remote, hybrid, and face to face instruction.

- **Phased-in-approach to return to campus.** It is important that the district adopt a phased-in-approach for returning to campus. Hard to convert and skills-based courses that can only be taught successfully face-to-face should be identified, prioritized, and scheduled to meet face to face in the fall semester. Other classes can resume a face-to-face schedule following CDC guidelines.

- **Instructional and Student Support.** The team recommends increasing instructional support for faculty and students by mainstreaming the process of hiring teaching assistants to assist faculty navigate the challenges of online education. approach. In addition, students need access to spaces on campus to study, duplicate materials, and receive tutorial services.