

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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## OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE ABOUT SB 520

Dear Colleagues:

Senate Bill 520 raises grave concerns. We were not consulted in the writing of this legislation, which purports to address course access problems experienced by students in public higher education. Next week, we plan to meet with Senator Steinberg's staff in order to discuss this bill.

First, limits on student access to the courses this bill targets are in large part the result of significant reductions in public state higher education funding, especially over the last six years. Second, the clear self-interest of for profit corporations in promoting the privatization of public higher education through this legislation is dismaying. In fact, UC's graduation rates and time to degree performance show that access to courses for our students is not an acute issue as it may be in the other segments. Lastly, the faculty of the University of California, through the Academic Senate, approves courses for credit at the University and reviews courses offered for transfer credit to determine whether they cover the same material with equal rigor. There is no possibility that UC faculty will shirk its responsibility to our students by ceding authority over courses to any outside agency.

The Academic Senate is committed to exploring how important measures of student success, such as graduation rates and time-to-degree, can be improved. Indeed, over the last two decades we have made remarkable progress on such measures. For example, we have developed innovative ways of using summer sessions and our own online course offerings to ensure that students can enroll in the courses they need when they need them. Individual academic programs and campus academic leadership must ensure that courses and outstanding student advising are available. There is no alternative to the deep involvement of faculty in courses and curricula and the validation provided by rigorous and continuing review of these.

The University of California offers access to the highest quality degrees in a public research university. Our faculty are committed to this vision for our current students and those yet to set foot on our campuses.

Handwritten signature of Robert L. Powell.

Robert L. Powell  
Chair, Academic Council

Handwritten signature of Bill Jacob.

Bill Jacob  
Vice Chair, Academic Council