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Academic Senate

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January 30, 2026

James B. Milliken
President, University of California

Katherine S. Newman
Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Academic Senate Division Chairs

Re: UCAD Final Report and Recommendations

Dear President Milliken, Provost Newman, and Division Chairs:

On behalf of the Academic Council, I am forwarding the enclosed final report of the Academic Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions ([UCAD](#)) for your consideration. The Academic Council endorsed the report at its January 28, 2026 meeting.

The UCAD report reflects extensive faculty deliberation and systemwide input and offers principles, observations, and recommendations intended to strengthen UC's academic standing in the face of fiscal, political, and other external disruptions, while preserving the University's core academic mission and faculty governance responsibilities.

The task force substantially refined and expanded the interim report in response to systemwide review and further discussion. Most notably, the final report adds a brief new section on *Planning for the Future of Doctoral Education* that refers to the recent APC Workgroup report on that topic, and a section on *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission and Visibility*. Other sections, particularly those addressing research funding assistance, were significantly strengthened to address a broader range of disruption scenarios, including protections for academic freedom and support for research in politically sensitive fields. Throughout the report, revisions emphasize campus autonomy, and the central role of faculty working through shared governance processes, in decisions related to academic restructuring, instructional adaptation, and programmatic change. Taken together, these changes move the report from an interim assessment of emerging challenges to a more comprehensive, forward-looking framework for strengthening UC's academic resilience based on robust shared

governance.

We ask Senate division chairs to share the report with their divisional Senate councils, and also request that President Milliken and Provost Newman share it with the Board of Regents, campus chancellors, and executive vice chancellors/provosts.

As you know, [UCAD Plus](#) has been established to build on the discussions initiated by UCAD, further develop recommendations for campus-level consideration, and identify issues and ideas for systemwide discussion and planning to enhance the resilience of the UC system in the face of future disruptions. Accordingly, I am copying the co-chairs of all five UCAD Plus workgroups and ask that they share the report with their respective group members.

Sincerely,



Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Academic Council
Chair, UCAD and Co-Chair, UCAD Plus

cc: Academic Council
UCAD Plus Steering Committee and Workgroup Co-Chairs
Vice President and Chief of Staff Kao
Chief Policy Advisory McAuliffe
Chief of Staff Beechem
Senate Division Executive Directors
Senate Executive Director Lin
Senior Strategic Advisor Sheean-Remotto
Strategic Advisor Camacho



Systemwide Academic Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions (UCAD)
Final Report & Recommendations
January 16, 2026

Introduction

The [Academic Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions](#) (UCAD) was established by the [Academic Council](#) in response to concerns about the University's ability to sustain its teaching, research, and public service mission areas amid political volatility and external disruptions.

Recognizing the need for a faculty-led response to these disruptive conditions, the Council charged UCAD with evaluating risks and developing strategies across four areas: 1) restructuring academic programs, 2) resizing programs and the workforce, 3) recalibrating growth objectives, and 4) realigning funding sources with mission activities. The UCAD charge and membership is attached as Appendix A.

In its initial phase (spring-summer 2025), UCAD met weekly, drawing on the expertise of Senate faculty leadership in consultation with administrative partners at UC Office of the President (UCOP) to discuss initial recommendations in four key areas:

- 1. Research Funding Assistance**
- 2. Academic Personnel Evaluations During Disruptions**
- 3. Program Resizing and Restructuring**
- 4. Need for Flexibility in Course Offerings and Modalities**

The preliminary recommendations focused largely on the first two areas in the original charge and were intended to be a starting point for continuing discussion. An [interim report](#) was issued in early fall 2025 and distributed for expedited systemwide Senate review.

In response to [extensive systemwide feedback](#) and evolving external conditions, a revised UCAD Task Force with some new membership reconvened from August 2025 through January 2026. This second phase of UCAD focused on reviewing and incorporating feedback from the systemwide review, as well as addressing additional issues, including the pursuit of new funding sources and state engagement, the relationship between UC Health and the academic enterprise, the University's ability to sustain its diversity and inclusion goals amid ongoing disruptions, as well as challenges to maintaining UC's excellence in graduate education.

Feedback on the interim report, particularly with respect to academic program resizing and restructuring, underscored the importance of clearly articulating the principles that guide this work. As emphasized throughout this report, decisions regarding academic restructuring appropriately

reside at the campus level and must be undertaken in close partnership with faculty through established processes of shared governance. While fiscal realities cannot be ignored, budgetary pressures alone must not dictate academic offerings or institutional priorities. UC's commitment to maintaining access to small and specialized disciplines, especially in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, remains essential to its mission as the world's leading public university system.

In the meantime, UCOP stood up a successor task force, [UCAD Plus](#), comprised of both original UCAD members and new UCAD members in partnership with administrators at the systemwide level and across the 10 campuses. UCAD Plus aims to further the discussions started by UCAD, providing additional recommendations for campus-level consideration and ideas for systemwide discussion to enhance the resilience of the UC system in the face of disruptions yet to come.

1. Research Funding Assistance

Background

Incremental erosion of public support for scientific investigation, coupled with a sudden shift in White House priorities, have threatened major disruption of research at UC and other universities across the country. Federal executive orders have attempted to defund research in a multitude of interconnected ways that amplify their effects. Budget cuts and staff reductions at funding agencies have weakened grantor service infrastructure; delayed grant submission, review, and approval processes; and reduced the overall number of grant awards.

The possibility of a significant reduction in facilities and administrative (F&A) rates endangers the sustainability of the infrastructure necessary to support research broadly moving forward. The alternative Financial Accountability in Research ([FAIR](#)) model currently under consideration would shift how F&A funds are distributed among grants, and may limit their use to support a broad research portfolio. Award suspension and termination profoundly impact the ability of principal investigators (PIs) to conduct scholarly activity, impede graduate student and postdoctoral training, and degrade other core components of the University's central mission. Finally, ideologically-based funding curtailment of certain topics—notably, projects that advance our understanding of anthropogenic climate change and those alleged to involve “illegal” diversity, equity, and inclusion activities—threaten academic freedom and harm individual faculty PIs.

The termination or indefinite suspension of an awarded research project has both near-term and long-term impacts on faculty and trainees. In the near term, research work and trainee support are disrupted. In the long term, faculty academic progress and candidacy for advancement and promotion are jeopardized. While all stakeholders must recognize that the University cannot fully replace lost federal funding, there is still an urgent need to provide institutional support for UC researchers—broadly construed to include Senate faculty, non-Senate faculty, research staff, postdocs, graduate students, and trainees—experiencing disruptions. To this end, UCAD recommends three complementary interventions:

1. **Bridge funding** for research grants that are temporarily caught up in “stop work” orders and are likely to be reinstated following brief delays or court actions.
2. **Transition funding** to *ramp down* impacted research projects that have no likely prospects for extramural funding reinstatement and to mitigate potential harm to careers of both faculty and trainees.
3. **Research recovery funding** to *ramp up* opportunities for impacted faculty to explore and pivot to new research areas that may attract new extramural funding.

These proposals must be understood in the context of both the long-term prospects for sponsored research in different fields and the University of California's commitment to academic freedom. Ultimately, individual researchers must decide how to best align their research activities with their values and interests, given prevailing funding constraints. Neither the University nor individual researchers should be required to re-align their values with changing federal priorities, especially since those can change with subsequent administrations. Instead, we suggest the three proposals above as ways in which the University can provide institutional and financial support for researchers in

the short run as they make their own choices about how to best advance their research in the face of ongoing disruptions.

To ensure equity across campuses, these interventions should be supported in part by UCOP funds, some of which might be diverted from existing UCOP-sponsored research programs. Given the budgetary challenges the campuses are facing, matching funds should not be a requirement for securing UCOP funds. In addition, UCAD suggests that departments and schools/colleges consider how the recommendations above can be supported in other ways, such as temporary teaching and service workload adjustments, as impacted researchers adapt.

Beyond assistance to impacted researchers, the University should first establish a systemwide inventory of disrupted research programs. That information would inform the development of a coordinated policy and strategy approach to navigate current challenges that are expected to persist for at least a few more years. Without it, the University risks losing a generation of faculty who are unable to thrive as researchers.

Recommendations

For the Divisional Academic Senates & Campus Administrations:

- **Transition Funding:** UC campuses are encouraged to provide transition funding for PIs with grant awards that have been suspended or terminated, and without reasonable likelihood for reinstatement. Monies should be used to *ramp down* the activities of terminated awards and provide support to trainees and research staff who derive salary support from the defunded projects. Funding should last at least for the remaining award period or up to one year, whichever is shorter.
- **Research Recovery Funding:** UC campuses are encouraged to provide research recovery funding for impacted faculty to explore new research ideas and pursue ways to reframe existing research to improve fundability. Monies should be used for PIs to *ramp up* new research directions to capture preliminary data for the development of competitive extramural grant applications in the near future. Funding should last no longer than two years.
- **Protect Academic Freedom:** While supporting researchers who wish to pursue new directions and approaches is important, UC campuses should recognize that some of the present funding disruptions are ideologically motivated, and new federal funding priorities may not align with UC or researcher values. The recommendations above must be balanced against the need to seek alternative funding models and implement Achievement Relative to Opportunities (ARO) principles, as described elsewhere in this report, to preserve important research infrastructure even if it is currently disfavored by federal agencies.

For the Systemwide Academic Senate & UCOP Administration:

- **Bridge Funding:** While bridge funding is expected to be largely campus-based, UCOP and the Senate should partner to develop and implement a unified process to provide support for faculty who received grant awards that have been subject to “stop work” orders—considered to be temporary—and likely to be reinstated following brief delays or court actions. Funding should last up to one year.

- **Central Research Support:** To improve equity across campuses, Research & Innovation should consider whether existing central research funding, perhaps supplemented by other UCOP funds, might be effectively used to support campus efforts to implement the recommendations above.

For the Campus & UCOP Administrations:

- **Support for Early Career and other Vulnerable Faculty and Trainees:** Prioritize institutional support for early and mid-career faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and graduate students including research funding, mentoring, closeout activities, and advancement guidance, to support retention and allow individuals to build an academic career. Without timely and proactive efforts, there is a risk of long-term erosion of the academic pipeline.
- **Campus and UCOP Resources:** Campus- and UCOP-based bridge, transition, and research recovery funds may be financed by reserves, endowments, philanthropic gifts, existing research programs, and other sources. Another option is to access UCOP liquidity in the form of low-interest loans.
- **Campus Team Support and Systemwide Database:** Create campus teams to support faculty whose grants are at risk of termination, with legal and research development resources. Develop a systemwide database of disrupted research programs, including key information, such as project topic, discipline, funding agency, amount, duration, and other descriptors.
- **Other Research Funding Models:** Examine international models of research sustainability in low extramural funding environments, including how other countries organize research disciplines, share infrastructure, and support early career scholars. Explore participation in international funding programs such as Horizon Europe, based on the model of non-European Union members like the United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea.
- **Public/Private Partnerships:** Consider public/private partnerships for supporting research programs, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Processes for creating these partnerships should be enhanced to speed approval and make such partnerships more attractive to industry partners, while also maintaining researcher autonomy and protecting against conflicts of interest and industry capture.
- **Equity Monitoring:** Track whether funding agency-based, budget-driven decisions are disproportionately affecting historically underrepresented faculty.

For the UCOP Administration:

- **UCOP Philanthropic Fund:** Consider establishing a fund supported by individual donors and institutional partners for transition and research recovery support. This fund would be fully expended over a five-year period in support of *ramp-down* and *ramp-up* needs of impacted faculty across all 10 campuses.
- **California Dormant Endowments:** For endowments whose original purpose or beneficiary may no longer be feasible or identifiable, the California attorney general makes case-by-case determinations on appropriate distribution or use. UC should advocate for state legislation to release funds from dormant endowments (e.g., 15+ years) to support UC research.
- **Partnership with the State of California:** Engage the State to develop long-term models for sustaining the research enterprise. The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) serves as a model to raise financing, develop a proper governance structure, collaborate with private and public entities, and mobilize advocates.
- **Cross-Campus Collaboration:** Identify innovative research infrastructure funding models that reduce barriers to cross-training and cross-campus collaboration, modifying faculty's course loads or course releases to lower barriers to launch new research projects. The UC Observatories (UCO) provides one model of a highly successful cross-campus collaboration that amplifies research excellence at participating campuses.

2. Academic Personnel Evaluations During Disruptions

Background

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty experienced significant disruption to their research programs, which prompted the adoption of Achievement Relative to Opportunities (ARO) principles. This [Monash University](#)-inspired framework allows for more equitable assessment of faculty career progression and achievements in the context of opportunities available to them. At the University of California, these principles outlined how campuses can implement ARO “in a way that simultaneously maintains academic rigor while recognizing the unique contexts faculty members are operating in.”¹

The pandemic was largely viewed as a *force majeure*, a time-limited event that was nonetheless far reaching in impact. With respect to UC research disruption, federal and state governments responded to the financial challenges borne by investigators and sponsors with timely delivery of funding that created a glide path toward an eventual recovery. In contrast, UC research disruption in the current environment is the outcome of targeted federal actions that have resulted in the termination of awarded grants, proposed budget cuts to funding agencies, proposed reductions to the maximum facilities and administrative (F&A) rate, and the wholesale desertion of certain lines of scientific inquiry, among other negative impacts. While making predictions about the future is a hazardous endeavor at best, the intentional retrenchment of federal support for research has already degraded the support infrastructure at multiple levels and will likely lead to the accumulation of deleterious effects for at least several more years. The result may be permanent impacts on the ability of faculty to produce scholarly work. Although some faculty may be able to redirect interests to new research areas, others may lack the means or the opportunity to do so, and even for those who can, the transition may take longer than a single academic review cycle.

The pandemic affected almost every facet of faculty life, ranging from child and elder care responsibilities that consumed residual flexible time, to university facility lockdowns that precluded access to laboratories, to research subject declinations that impaired progress. In response to pandemic-related disruptions, two earlier reports^{2,3} offered guidance on implementing ARO principles that focused on academic advancement, research recovery, and supportive environments conducive to faculty success. With the assistance of federal and state emergency funds, these reports informed systemwide responses, such as the creation of bridge funding opportunities, academic review period extensions, and greater recognition of invisible labor, which helped mitigate harmful impacts and support faculty success.

In parallel, willingness to adopt ARO principles in faculty review during the peri-pandemic period provided much needed short-term flexibility in the advancement and promotion review process. Yet prolonged adoption of peri-pandemic ARO principles raises important questions about the long-term

¹ Joint Senate-Administration Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working Group (MCIF-WG) Final Report: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/rh-senate-divs-mcifwg-report.pdf>

² See MCIF-WG Final Report: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/rh-senate-divs-mcifwg-report.pdf>

³ Report of the Academic Planning Council Workgroup on Faculty Work & Recovery Post-Pandemic: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/js-kn-report-of-apc-workgroup-faculty-work-recovery-post-pandemic.pdf>

expectations for faculty advancement in an era of permanently contracted research funding opportunities. Adapting academic personnel evaluations to a more constrained and uncertain future for higher education research deserves careful consideration. The processes should also take into account potential disruptions outside of research including teaching and professional activities. Changes to the review processes should be monitored carefully at both the Senate division level and systemwide to ensure effectiveness in meeting these goals.

Recommendations

For the Divisional Academic Senates:

- **Review Period Flexibility:** Communicate clear timelines and criteria for extending advancement review periods for impacted faculty. Processes should be transparent, fair, and consistent across the University. Implementation of this recommendation should take care not to disadvantage faculty by delaying their career progress, providing alternatives to enable timely progress when possible, through ARO principles.
- **Career Pathways Flexibility:** Create voluntary pathways for faculty in highly impacted disciplines to shift effort toward teaching and service, with or without formal reclassification of job title series. Providing such flexibility should be balanced against unintended consequences such as creating a two-tier faculty model where disrupted faculty research is offset by increased teaching.

For the Systemwide Academic Senate:

- **Systemwide Review of ARO Implementation:** Assess the current state of ARO implementation at the University. The University Committees on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity ([UCAADE](#)), Academic Personnel ([UCAP](#)), Faculty Welfare ([UCFW](#)), and Privilege and Tenure ([UCPT](#)) are conducting a joint survey to review ARO implementation practices across UC campuses. Responses from Academic Affairs Offices, Senate Committees on Academic Personnel (CAPs), and other campus entities will create a dataset for analysis to help identify gaps and inconsistencies and inform best practices. It is important that these efforts lead to concrete processes and guidance on how to apply ARO across campuses with training and oversight to ensure fairness and transparency. Application of ARO principles should be applied consistently in all academic disciplines.
- **Joint Senate-Administration Workgroup on Faculty Evaluations:** In collaboration with UCOP leadership, form a joint Senate-administration committee to consider how faculty evaluations should adapt to this new era of diminished funding opportunities for academic research. The workgroup charge may include:
 - *Developing systemwide ARO principles and processes that can be applied consistently across campuses when faculty experience one-time or ongoing disruptions to activities impacting their career advancement.*
 - *Proposing sustainable models of research infrastructure and reimagined structural support, moving beyond indefinite extensions of pandemic-era ARO accommodations.*

For all recommendations, processes should be revised and/or developed to take into account asymmetric effects of disruptions on vulnerable faculty such as early career and female faculty members, as well as non-ladder-rank faculty. The revised and/or new processes should also ensure that faculty maintain the standards of excellence that drive the research and teaching missions of the University of California. Implementations should be monitored and evaluated to ensure they meet their intended goals. It is important that new processes be combined with training for academic personnel review bodies to ensure fairness.

3. Program Resizing and Restructuring

Background

Despite UC's compact with Governor Newsom, and a relatively favorable budget outcome for the 2025–26 fiscal year, UC's long-term state funding trajectory reflects gradual per-capita disinvestment and fluctuating budgets that make long-term planning challenging. Rising costs, structural deficits, and ongoing revenue uncertainty across UC campuses make it clear that the University cannot continue to operate as it has in the past. UC must acknowledge this reality by considering academic program adjustments that preserve as much as possible its mission of research, teaching, public service, and health care for all Californians.

UC also faces growing and evolving risks to its core academic mission in the current political climate. With respect to undergraduate enrollment, planning for change is prudent. While demand for a UC education continues to increase overall, public skepticism about the value of a college degree is growing, particularly for certain majors with low enrollment or unclear career outcomes. Compounding these challenges are mounting risks associated with policy volatility, including changes affecting student visas and the administration of federal student loan programs, which may discourage qualified applicants from considering UC.

Graduate education is also under pressure, with some graduate programs already shrinking prior to the current crisis due to rising academic labor costs. The diminishing research funding landscape is likely to exacerbate this trend, leading to smaller graduate student cohorts and increased strain on graduate programs.

Faculty leadership is critical—and must be central—to navigating these realities and shaping the associated narratives. Regardless of the outcome of the current political period, faculty will need to reimagine the future of the UC academic enterprise to ensure continued student success and well-being, and to lead efforts to responsibly resize and restructure academic programs. Such efforts must be proactive and thoughtful, striking a balance between financial sustainability and the pursuit of universal academic knowledge. Budgetary constraints alone should not drive the academic mission. Faculty must lead this transformation and be willing to take bold but principled actions to sustain the University's core activities.

When engaging in any academic restructuring, several key principles must remain at the forefront. First, restructuring decisions appropriately reside at the campus level, with changes dictated by local needs and undertaken in close partnership with faculty. While fiscal considerations will inevitably play an important role, the University must remain attentive to protecting access to small and specialized disciplines, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, that are essential to UC's mission. In short, UC must remain the world's foremost public liberal arts university system, with program offerings not dictated solely by fiscal considerations.

Academic restructuring need not be viewed as simply reducing academic offerings. Rather, when done properly, academic restructuring allows for more efficient administrative structures that free up resources for new initiatives, or in the case of tightening budgets, reducing budgets while preserving academic programs. The objective of restructuring must be to preserve and protect academic

disciplines, degree program offerings, and faculty research areas. Elimination of programs should be considered only when programs cease to be viable based on objective criteria.

Recommendations

For the Divisional Academic Senates:

- **Review the Size of Graduate Student Cohorts:** Coordinate decisions to resize graduate student cohorts campuswide. Campuses would benefit from a more coordinated and deliberate approach to enrollment management. For some programs, maintaining a viable cohort through yearly admissions cycles may not be possible. This may require shifts in both the teaching and research support provided to new graduate students, as well as the faculty's overall instructional commitments at the graduate level. Furthermore, it is likely that the number of international students who have historically favored UC graduate programs may also decrease, leading to further pressures.
- **Rethink Approaches to Faculty Recruitment:** Campus departments and colleges/schools should consider appointment types that can afford greater flexibility to academic units going forward. While decisions to use certain faculty appointment types may differ depending on local contexts, placing greater emphasis on teaching professorships and joint appointments are two examples that may make sense for some campuses. These types of positions can help sustain instruction during times of uncertainty, while allowing research-oriented faculty to maintain scholarly progress. At the same time, campuses should evaluate how expanded use of such appointments aligns with the University's research mission, expectations for Senate faculty teaching, and UC's commitment to ladder-rank faculty positions supported in whole or in part with state funds.
- **Review Instructional Offerings:** Academic units should examine their instructional offerings, and if appropriate, consider options for consolidating their offerings using a variety of strategies. These may include increased use of cross-listed courses, redesigning curricular requirements, and formal collaborations with units on other campuses to maintain the diversity of courses available to students. Overall, units, colleges/schools, and campuses should consider whether there are ways to streamline instruction to achieve financial sustainability while maintaining academic quality.
- **Prioritize Academic Quality and UC's Comprehensive Identity:** When evaluating programs for resizing, indicators of educational quality (such as graduation rates, learning outcomes, or research output) must be emphasized in addition to financial constraints. UC must remain a comprehensive university offering a full spectrum of academic disciplines, including the arts, humanities, social sciences, STEM, and professional fields. Even as difficult choices are made, breadth of knowledge at UC should be preserved. This means ensuring that core disciplines are represented on every campus.
- **Augment the Role of Academic Program Reviews:** Program reviews are typically inwardly focused exercises designed to enhance and improve a program. This is a critical function that must be maintained. However, such reviews do not usually consider the broader environment of the college or school within which the program sits. Consequently, opportunities for

structural changes (e.g., program mergers) that might achieve beneficial academic realignments or administrative efficiencies are often overlooked. Divisional Senates should lead discussions about augmenting program review processes for undergraduate majors and graduate programs to include consideration of a broader range of outcomes, such as program mergers, reductions, splits, terminations, or expansions. Such an augmentation should not, however, compromise the value of the current review process, and might be better conceived as a distinct and separate review process. Regardless, reviews should occur on a regular cycle and incorporate the new evaluation criteria (see the recommendation to the systemwide Academic Senate below).

For the Systemwide Academic Senate:

- **Establish Clear Criteria for Academic Program Evaluation and Viability:** Develop systemwide principles to guide campuses in assessing local academic programs. These principles should include enrollment trends (e.g., chronically low enrollment or declining demand), student outcomes, cost per student, and alignment with UC's mission, while also accounting for the intrinsic academic value of scholarly fields. Transparent guidelines for program evaluation and potential restructuring will support proactive planning and help avoid ad hoc or reactive cuts.

For the Divisional & Systemwide Academic Senates:

- **Adapt Systemwide Guidelines to Fit Campus-Specific Contexts:** While shared overarching principles for academic program review are important for systemwide coherence, campuses vary in strengths and constraints. A one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective. Systemwide guidance should be flexible enough to accommodate each campus's unique context and be implemented through campus-level strategic plans that consider local enrollment demand, faculty expertise, and community impact. In short, systemwide policies must empower campuses to make tailored decisions aligned with a common UC-wide vision.
- **Support Faculty-Led Innovation in Curriculum and Program Design:** The UC system should incentivize and fund academic innovation that, ideally, both reduces costs and enhances student opportunities. This may include developing hybrid and cross-campus academic programs and launching new or redesigned majors that reflect emerging fields and student interests. Care must be taken, however, to avoid overly optimistic assumptions about demand that have plagued past systemwide efforts. Faculty and administrators must work together to realistically assess student demand, while faculty are best positioned to realistically assess the resources needed to deliver a high-quality UC education. This is especially important in the context of UC-quality online degree programs, whose infrastructure and support needs are not necessarily inexpensive to develop and maintain. Curriculum innovation must be faculty-led to ensure academic quality and alignment with UC's educational mission in all instructional modalities.
- **Keep Faculty Governance at the Core of Resizing Decisions:** UC must reaffirm its commitment to the principle that faculty, through the Academic Senate and local academic

governance structures, must play a central role in decisions about restructuring or discontinuing academic programs. While administrative leaders should work with faculty to provide data and context, academic judgment rests with faculty. Engaging faculty early in any resizing initiative ensures that UC will benefit from their insights and gain buy-in for necessary changes. It also helps balance financial pressures with academic values, reducing the risk that budget-driven decisions will unintentionally harm educational quality. In practice, this means any systemwide program evaluation framework should require evidence of campus-level faculty consultation and support before major changes are approved.

For the Campus & UCOP Administrations:

- **Align Budgeting and Resource Allocation with Academic Priorities:** UC should continue developing budgeting models that incentivize structural efficiency while protecting core academic values. This may mean modifying revenue-centered budget formulas to include quality metrics (not just enrollment numbers) or establishing campus contingency funds to buffer critical programs from short-term fiscal shocks. The system should articulate principles of “financial sustainability with solidarity” to guide these efforts, signaling that while academic programs should strive to cover costs, there remains a commitment to mutual support across disciplines. Budget reductions should be informed by academic program evaluations, rather than imposed as across-the-board cuts. Additionally, UC should enhance transparency in how funds are allocated to academic units. A strategic budgeting approach will help avoid situations where vital programs are cut simply because they lack immediate revenue, or where pet projects continue unchecked despite poor performance or weak alignment with current campus priorities.
- **Evaluate and Right-Size Administrative Support Functions Alongside Academic Programs:** As part of restructuring efforts, campuses should review administrative programs and initiatives using evidence of their impact on student success and research productivity. For example, services that directly support academic outcomes, such as academic advising, mental health services, and research grant support, should be maintained or strengthened. In contrast, functions that cannot demonstrate clear alignment with the academic mission, including duplicative management structures or excessive marketing expenditures, should be streamlined or eliminated. Spending on outside consultants warrants particular scrutiny. Systemwide guidelines should assist campuses in redirecting administrative savings toward academic priorities.
- **Reaffirm the Value of Higher Education:** A university degree continues to equip graduates with improved employment opportunities and remains a powerful driver of social mobility. Beyond measurable employment metrics, higher education offers substantial intangible benefits, such as fostering critical thinking, civic engagement, informed citizenship, and supporting satisfying intellectual pursuits of deep personal value throughout a student’s life. Investing in new initiatives that strengthen UC’s connections with Californians and communicating the value of a UC education clearly and broadly will be essential moving forward.

4. Need for Flexibility in Course Offerings and Modalities

Background

Given its delegated authority over courses, programs, and degrees, the Academic Senate responded to recent international student visa disruptions by providing policy guidance to the Senate divisions from the University Committee on Educational Policy ([UCEP](#)) and the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs ([CCGA](#)). This guidance reiterated existing flexibilities in Senate regulations that are available to support students,⁴ including remote access to courses to complete degree requirements. International students requiring maximum flexibility under time-limited circumstances may be allowed to satisfy certain degree requirements by completing alternate courses offered by any UC campus.

The initial visa threat underscored both the value of remote education options and the importance of ensuring that such options meet UC academic quality standards. It also highlighted the potential benefits of a systemwide policy framework to facilitate approval of courses and articulation of courses across UC campuses.⁵ The Academic Senate may be able to facilitate the development and offering of shared courses or academic programs (e.g., language programs) across UC campuses by leveraging UC Online and other tools. Such efforts are most likely to succeed when they are grounded in accurate assessments of campus-level needs and instructional capacity and respect divisional course approval and review processes.

As noted in earlier sections regarding the importance of documenting the impact of disruptions on research programs, the University and campuses should also consider developing systems to inventory and assess the impact of disruptions on instruction. Depending on the nature of the disruption, these impacts may include loss of teaching positions, decline of student enrollment, or the use of emergency authorization of remote learning in classes not already approved for online delivery.

Recommendations

For the Divisional Academic Senates:

- **Evaluate Opportunities for Cross-Campus Course Coordination:** Engage collaboratively with divisional undergraduate deans, Senate undergraduate and graduate councils, and UCEP to explore sustainable models for course approval and articulation that support hybrid and online instructional options. Lateral agreements between departments across campuses may also facilitate course articulation and support students' degree progress, especially in impacted majors. Any such efforts should be bottom-up, grounded in clear data regarding student demand and campus teaching capacity, and consistent with divisional procedures and authority over degree requirements.

⁴ Academic Support for Students Unable to Complete their UC Degree on a UC Campus: <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/council-chair-provost-re-academic-support-for-students-unable-to-complete-uc-degree-on-a-uc-campus-04-15-2025.pdf>

⁵ Such a framework for policy and related procedures could also enable undergraduate students to take full advantage of articulated courses offered through the UC Center in Washington DC (UCDC), the UC Center in Sacramento (UCCS), and the UC Education Abroad Program (UCEAP).

- **Plan for Disruption-Responsive Instruction:** Consider establishing mechanisms for systemwide coordination to help relieve pressure on individual campuses that may have limited capacity to offer key gateway or general education courses during periods of unanticipated disruptions (e.g., visa challenges preventing large groups of students from remaining on UC campuses). Senate divisions may work with centralized administrative units, such as UC Online or UCOP Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP), to support delivery logistics and enrollment management for courses approved through established divisional processes.

For the Systemwide Academic Senate:

- **Establish a Systemwide Framework for Course Sharing:** Develop a systemwide policy framework for systemwide course approval and articulation to enable systemwide recognition of Senate division-approved courses and associated credits across UC campuses. The framework should respect campus authority over curricula and degree requirements while enabling greater consistency in how credits are recognized when students must complete approved coursework at another UC campus.
- **Charge UCEP with Implementation Guidance:** Request that UCEP establish an ad hoc subcommittee to develop guidance on systemwide course articulation and approval processes. The subcommittee's work could include clarifying divisional roles, identifying best practices for cross-campus coordination, and outlining how central units (e.g., UC Online) may support implementation without encroaching on Senate authority.

For the Campus & UCOP Administrations:

- **Evaluate Cross-Campus Enrollment Processes:** Evaluate cross-campus enrollment processes to determine the extent to which they effectively serve the needs of students. Develop pragmatic, data-driven scenarios to assess the potential to expand opportunities for students to make academic progress when local courses are inaccessible or unavailable. Campuses should also assess the cost-effectiveness of expanding cross-campus enrollment relative to deploying equivalent resources locally.
- **Plan for Disruption:** Support the development of online learning opportunities that meet UC standards through existing divisional course and academic program review and approval processes. Self-supporting programs and other programs that rely heavily on international students should proactively develop curricula that meet UC standards for approval to offer courses online. Concerns about student access should be managed by developing courses and degree programs that meet UC quality standards.
- **Document Impact of Disruption on Teaching:** Develop procedures to catalog and track the effects of disruptions on teaching, including instances in which remote instruction is mandated and/or required for courses not previously approved for online delivery.

5. Planning for the Future of Doctoral Education

As intermittent academic disruptions, including sudden changes in the funding landscape, labor actions, and threats to international student enrollments, have roiled this important part of the UC mission in recent years, they compound the ongoing stress of pre-existing academic and financial challenges. The impacts of academic disruptions on UC's doctoral programs are potentially very large. For this reason, it is not surprising that mentions of graduate education are found in or are implied in each of the previous sections:

1. **Research Funding Assistance:** When research grant suspensions and terminations impede graduate student and postdoctoral training, mechanisms will be needed to identify bridge funding, in collaboration with the faculty, to ensure students can complete their programs.
2. **Academic Personnel Evaluations During Disruptions:** A reduced ability to support graduate students due to rising labor costs coupled with limited availability of extramural funding will constrain the ability of faculty to conduct research in many STEM disciplines, with implications for faculty tenure and advancement.
3. **Program Resizing and Restructuring:** Graduate program sizes and configurations may need to be reconsidered, in dialogue between programs and their campuses, to ensure that program offerings are affordable, student cohorts remain viable, and students are adequately supported, financially and otherwise.
4. **Need for Flexibility in Course Offerings and Modalities:** Systemwide and/or online graduate course offerings may be needed to ensure access for international students whose ability to travel to California is temporarily interrupted, and potentially to expand opportunities for instruction as campus graduate student cohort sizes decrease.

The recent [Report on the Future of Doctoral Programs at UC](#), completed in early 2025, was commissioned by the Academic Planning Council and written by faculty and administrators across the UC system to address longstanding challenges in providing quality, accessible graduate education, despite the failure of financial resources to keep pace with rising costs, and in view of the ongoing national weakness of the academic labor market for newly minted PhDs. The report also called for support for innovative pilot programs across the UC system to explore new models that could be adopted more broadly as parameters for successful implementation become clearer. Faculty and campus leaders are encouraged to use the report as a starting point for broad discussion, planning, and action to maintain thriving graduate programs.

6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission and Visibility

Background

The national political environment has heightened scrutiny of UC's diversity, equity, and inclusion activities. Executive orders, Department of Justice memoranda, federal investigations, and public campaigns targeting structures intended to support diversity and equity in higher education have created uncertainty about the visibility and durability of certain UC programs. These developments constitute significant disruptions that pose risks to funding stability, public perception, and the operational continuity of programs linked to student success, faculty diversity, and workforce preparation. UC must adapt to an atmosphere in which its practices are under greater scrutiny, while remaining committed to inclusive excellence. At the same time, as a public institution, UC must remain attentive to the populations it serves, and to advancing the education and general welfare of the people of California, who are the primary supporters of the UC system.

UC's legal and policy foundation is nevertheless stable. The University already operates under some of the most restrictive race-neutral rules in the nation. Proposition 209 has prohibited the use of race, ethnicity, and sex in admissions, hiring, and contracting since 1996, and many practices now being targeted nationally have never been used at UC. [Regents Policy 4400](#) affirms diversity and equal opportunity as core institutional values, and California law, including [Assembly Bill 2925](#), mandates anti-discrimination training and climate improvements.

Although UC's legal obligations have not changed, federal conditions require clearer communication and visibility around UC's work. The task is to preserve essential, legally grounded equity efforts while aligning terminology, communication, and program structures with current mandates. UC should make targeted adjustments, where necessary, without overcorrecting, abandoning core values, or signaling retreat. The following strategy strengthens UC's ability to adapt while maintaining its commitments and values.

Recommendations

For the UCOP Administration:

- **Reaffirm UC Values and Support for Existing Programs:** UC should publicly reaffirm the values articulated in Regents Policy 4400 and its longstanding commitment to equal opportunity. UC should clearly communicate the ways in which its admissions and hiring practices are fully compliant with Proposition 209, including the prohibition on racial preferences or quotas.

UC should also reaffirm strong support for longstanding, legally compliant programs, especially those initiatives that advance student success, broaden pathways into higher education, support early career scholars, and strengthen California's workforce. Defending them as lawful and mission-critical reinforces UC's stability and integrity during heightened federal scrutiny.

- **Reframe Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts Within UC’s Mission, Law, and Public Accountability:** UC should consistently articulate equity-related activities through four anchors:
 - Legal compliance (state and federal civil rights statutes; Proposition 209);
 - Academic excellence (retention, graduation, research productivity);
 - Student success and campus climate; and
 - UC’s public mission and service to California.

This framing underscores that UC’s practices aim to be race-neutral, evidence-based, and focused on educational and institutional outcomes. UC should be especially mindful of supporting faculty, students, and staff who work in disfavored or targeted fields, including faculty who have lost funding, or risk doing so, because their work centers on politically disfavored fields, such as those related to communities of color, low-income communities, or the LGBTQ+ community. The work of these faculty is particularly pertinent to the health and welfare of these communities which is necessary for the advancement of all Californians.

- **Modernize Terminology and Public Messaging:** Where necessary, UC should update terminology, program descriptions, and public messaging to accurately reflect race-neutral purposes, minimize misinterpretation, and emphasize academic and mission alignment. Adjustments should be made where they would improve clarity or compliance. But UC should not alter the legitimate, legally permissible functions these programs serve.

At the same time, UC should avoid unnecessary or arbitrary changes driven solely by fear of scrutiny. Overcorrection risks undermining trust and obscuring UC’s values. When terminology is updated, campuses should clearly explain why, always being careful to assure relevant constituencies that these adjustments reflect precision and legal compliance, not retreat. Communications should pair evidence of outcomes with clear articulation of race-neutral inputs to demonstrate that practices apply to all students.

- **Communicate the “Why” of the Work:** UC should clearly articulate the educational and professional rationale for equity-oriented practices—in other words, why the work matters. A substantial body of research demonstrates that inclusive pedagogies, diverse teams, and campus climate investments improve learning, foster innovation, and strengthen institutional performance. In health sciences, inclusive clinical competencies are essential for high-quality care; in STEM and professional fields, inclusive pedagogies and mentoring improve performance and workforce preparation; in graduate education, mentoring and investments in the learning environment that support research productivity, recruitment, and retention. These practices are not political preferences but academic requirements central to UC’s mission as a public research university serving California’s diverse populations. Communications should emphasize race-neutral foundations, academic mission, and broad participation across academic disciplines.

- **Embed Equity Work into Core Academic and Student Success Structures:** UC should strengthen race-neutral, academically grounded student success and faculty support practices that are already central to its academic mission, including:
 - Advising and retention
 - First-generation student support
 - Basic needs programs
 - Faculty development and mentoring
 - Curricular reform and pedagogical innovation
 - Campus climate and well-being efforts linked to student progression

These functions are mission-aligned, race-neutral, and legally stable. Embedding them strengthens continuity under federal disruption scenarios. UC should also invest in data analytics demonstrating how these practices contribute to retention, completion, research productivity, and workforce readiness. UC should prioritize support for groups most vulnerable to disruption, including first-generation and low-income undergraduates, graduate students and postdocs reliant on federal funding, and faculty engaged in mentoring and campus climate work.

- **Distinguish Between Mandated, Strategic, and Interpretive Changes:** UC should clearly distinguish among: 1) mandated changes required by law or funding conditions; 2) strategic changes that strengthen clarity and legal defensibility; and 3) interpretive changes (e.g., renaming units or adjusting descriptions) that reduce risk or improve accuracy. Making these distinctions explicit will prevent unnecessary alarm and support coherent systemwide messaging. UCOP should reaffirm UC's longstanding compliance with Proposition 209 and prepare campus and Senate leaders to respond consistently to legal challenges, misinformation, and federal inquiries. While responses should respect campus governance and local needs, UC should strive for consistent systemwide framing. UCOP could provide guidance and templates for program naming and messaging that reinforce legal and mission alignment while discouraging unnecessary alterations.

For the Systemwide Academic Senate & UCOP Administration:

- **Strengthen Senate–Administration Coordination:** UC should acknowledge faculty concerns, including fear of being targeted, reluctance to serve on campus climate and diversity committees, and confusion about shifting terminology, and coordinate closely between the Senate and administration to protect the integrity of this work. UC should consider mechanisms to:
 - Support faculty and staff engaged in equity work
 - Support faculty who conduct research in currently disfavored fields
 - Ensure that campus and UC adaptations to disruption do not disproportionately impact any given demographic group
 - Stabilize communication channels during periods of external pressure
 - Ensure consistent campus responses to inquiries

- Reinforce faculty governance in areas that affect curriculum, campus climate, and academic freedom

Joint Senate—administrative guidance and access to legal support will help safeguard faculty and staff and sustain participation in campus climate and mentoring work.

In summary, UC must preserve the substance of its equity commitments even where it might be necessary to evolve forms, labels, and communication strategies to ensure resilience under federal pressure. This moment calls for precision restructuring, not retreat or rollback. UC’s legal obligations, mission, and values remain intact. A coherent institutional framework is essential to sustaining this work in ways that withstand scrutiny, maintain public trust, and strengthen UC’s capacity to adapt to disruption. Ultimately, UC exists to serve and advance the people of California and the United States by promoting student success, opportunity, and a world-class research environment.

APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Academic Senate

Academic Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions (UCAD)

Overarching Goal

The Task Force on UCAD will develop response strategies that aim to uphold the teaching and education, research and discovery, and public service mission areas of the University of California in the context of disruptive federal executive orders, uncertain federal and state partnerships, and evolving shifts in the higher education landscape.

Task Force Charge Goal

The Task Force will conduct relevant analyses and align its planning efforts with UC's longstanding commitment to access, inclusivity, and excellence. The focus will be on assessing current serious threats and developing viable response options across multiple scenarios in each of the following four priority areas:

1. Restructuring of academic programs,
2. Resizing of programs and the workforce,
3. Recalibration of growth objectives, and
4. Realignment of funding sources with mission activities

As core functions of the University and deeply held institutional values are at risk, the Task Force will address these areas both independently and in relation to one another, recognizing their interconnected impacts. The scope of analysis may well extend beyond those listed above, but immediate attention should be given to these priority areas based on the potential harm that could come to students, faculty, staff, and healthcare patients in the near term.

The Task Force is expected to approach issues analytically, with data whenever possible, and to contribute ideas to near-term academic and operations restructuring, as well as recommendations for long-term planning. The Task Force should draw on the expertise of Academic Senate and administrative leaders and consider a broad array of perspectives through timely consultative outreach and engagement beyond its membership, as needed.

Task Force Membership (*April 2025 - August 2025*)

1. Ahmet Palazoglu, Systemwide Academic Senate Vice Chair & Task Force Chair
2. Steven W. Cheung, Systemwide Academic Senate Chair
3. Tim Groeling, Chair, University Committee on Planning and Budget ([UCPB](#)) (*Alternate*: Robert Brosnan, UCPB Vice Chair)
4. Susanne Nicholas, Chair, University Committee on Research Policy ([UCORP](#)) (*Alternate*: James Weatherall, UCORP Vice Chair)
5. James Bisley, Chair, Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs ([CCGA](#))
6. Kristen Holmquist, Vice Chair, University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity ([UCAADE](#))
7. Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra, Chair, University Committee on Faculty Welfare ([UCFW](#))
8. Nael Abu-Ghazaleh, Chair, University Committee on Academic Personnel ([UCAP](#))

9. Amani Nuru-Jeter, Chair, UCB Senate Division
10. Kathy Bawn, Chair, UCLA Senate Division
11. Olivia Graeve, Chair, UCSD Senate Division
12. Matt McCarthy, Chair, UCSC Senate Division

Task Force Membership (September 2025 - January 2026)

1. Ahmet Palazoglu, Systemwide Academic Senate Chair & Task Force Chair
2. Susannah Scott, Systemwide Academic Senate Vice Chair
3. Robert Brosnan, Chair, [UCPB](#)
4. James Weatherall, Chair, [UCORP](#)
5. Partho Ghosh, Chair, [CCGA](#)
6. Kristen Holmquist, Chair, [UCAADE](#)
7. Karen Bales, Chair, [UCEFW](#)
8. Nael Abu-Ghazaleh, Chair, [UCAP](#)
9. Matt McCarthy, Chair, UCSC Senate Division
10. Rebecca Jo Plant, Chair, UCSD Senate Division
11. Errol Lobo, Chair, UCSF Senate Division
12. Kathy Bawn, Immediate Past Chair, UCLA Senate Division

Administration Consultants

1. Katherine Newman, Provost & Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs
2. Nathan Brostrom, Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer
3. Alex Bustamante, Senior Vice President & Chief Compliance and Audit Officer
4. Yvette Gullatt, Vice President & Vice Provost, Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs (GUEA)
5. Douglas Haynes, Interim Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs (FAAP)
6. Amy Lee, Deputy Provost, Systemwide Academic Personnel (SWAP)
7. Kathleen Fullerton, Associate Vice President & Director, State Governmental Relations
8. Caín Díaz, Associate Vice President, Budget Analysis & Planning
9. Cynthia Dávalos, Associate Vice President, GUEA
10. Deborah Motton, Executive Director of Research, Policy, Analysis and Coordination, Research & Innovation
11. Allison Woodall, Deputy General Counsel, UC Legal

Other Consultants

1. Michael Ong, Professor in Residence of Medicine & Health Policy and Management, UCLA and Academic Senate Representative to UC Regents Health Services Committee

Task Force Staff Support

1. Monica Lin, Executive Director, Systemwide Academic Senate
2. Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director, Systemwide Academic Senate
3. Stefani Leto, Principal Policy Analyst, Systemwide Academic Senate
4. Ken Feer, Principal Policy Analyst, Systemwide Academic Senate

Timeline & Deliverables

The Task Force will deliver recommendations on an ad hoc basis, as needed, to UCOP leadership and an interim report to the Academic Council by **July 16, 2025**, in advance of a planned discussion of the report at the Council's July 23 meeting. UCAD membership and subsequent milestones and/or deliverables will be determined moving forward, given uncertainties in the political landscape.