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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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June 14, 2019

**MICHAEL BROWN, PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: UC Irvine Proposed Online Business Major

Dear Michael,

At its May 22, 2019 meeting, the Academic Council endorsed the attached recommendations from the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) regarding a proposed pilot of a fully online undergraduate Business Administration degree for transfer students offered by the UCI School of Business. In January, Council opined that the proposal is a new program requiring local Senate approval, as well as a “first of its kind” program for the UC system requiring UCEP approval per the Compendium.

UCEP did not approve the degree. Neither UCEP nor Academic Council are satisfied that the current proposal has the core elements in place to be operational for admissions, financial aid, catalog rights, and access to resources. Given that the degree would provide a very different educational experience for students, some of whom would never set foot on the campus, the proposal also raises questions about the nature of the UC undergraduate experience and what UC might want or value from a fully online degree. A more comprehensive discussion of planning issues and questions is needed before a fully online undergraduate degree proposal can be contemplated.

UCEP makes two recommendations. First, that the UCI Business School consider expanding its offering of online courses in tandem with face-to-face courses in the existing BA (subject to normal campus consultation), to gather data about online student success and experience, and to clarify future decisions about moving to an online-only degree. Second, UCEP recommends a systemwide consideration of UCs engagement with fully online undergraduate degrees, with particular attention to the experiential and intellectual implications of non-residency.

The Academic Senate looks forward to working with you on this second recommendation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert C. May.

Robert C. May, Chair
Academic Council

Encl:

cc: UCEP
UCI Senate Chair Cohen
Academic Council
Senate Directors



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
Anne Zanzucchi, Chair
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May 21, 2019

**ROBERT MAY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**RE: UCI BUSINESS SCHOOL'S PROPOSED ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION DEGREE**

Dear Robert,

The University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) writes with a set of recommendations on the proposed pilot of a fully online undergraduate Business Administration degree, by UC Irvine's Business School.

The following is a timeline as context. At the end of November 2018, UCEP was advised by its UCI representative that the Business School was planning to offer a completely online version of their BA degree, with the intention to admit a distinct and new student cohort to the program in the upcoming year (Fall 2019). To the authors, the degree was only an adaptation of an existing program; within that rationale, the Senate was not consulted in a proposed degree process. On December 7, 2018, Academic Council discussed this dilemma of the School and the Divisional Senate disagreeing about the need for a Senate review, resolving that this is a Senate governance matter. On January 23, 2019, on the basis of the proposal and continued deliberation, Academic Council endorsed that the proposal is a new program requiring local Senate approval and that this degree program is "first of its kind" for the UC system which per the Compendium requires UCEP approval, too¹.

Local Senate processes have engaged the Business School program leads in two written exchanges. As the Council on Educational Policy memo from January 2019 notes in its initial deliberation, questions are extensive and could be generally categorized as philosophical and technical -- with admissions processes at the foreground. Division-level questions were exchanged in the early spring, with the most recent written exchange to address questions shared in April 2019. During the spring in its routine meetings, UCEP has discussed the proposal and division-level materials with a recent consultation by Associate Dean Maia Young (UCI) who provided to UCEP an overview of the modality, pedagogy and program goals. During

¹ According to the Compendium: University Wide Review Processes for Academic Programs, Academic Units, and Research Units, p. 12 https://www.ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/_files/compendium_sept2014.pdf

this time, the Senate Chair and Vice Chair visited UCI as part of an annual routine, with continued dialogue with the Senate-Administration leads about this initiative and degree proposal. At this juncture of Division-level process, UCEP has several recommendations that will support this overall process and UCI planning to strengthen these innovative efforts.

The following summarizes key themes from UCEP discussion to contextualize our recommendations below.

- Overall, the proposal does not have core elements in place to be operational for admissions, financial aid, catalog rights, and access to resources. Those elements are fundamental to a proposal and crucial particularly here given the proposal's emphasis on recruiting a completely new transfer population and demographic (n of 200 students).
- The limited information around how the program will operate is partly because this is proposed as a pilot program, which seemed to limit elaboration on implementation factors. During January and at other junctures of UCI Senate review, it has been noted that a pilot program cannot be approved but rather a comprehensive program proposal is necessary.
- A comprehensive description could be provided as part of the present review process; however, it is increasingly clear that the program would be best positioned to describe operational details based on a systemwide study and associated guidance on online degrees. The admissions and financial aid factors are entirely new, particularly in terms of access to campus resources, meaning that broader deliberation on what constitutes parity and equality across the board is needed, as only one example.
- A systemwide framework for operationalizing factors associated with a full waiver of the residency requirement (SR 630), and possibly other exemptions to systemwide regulations, would be predicated on a conceptual framework about what constitutes an undergraduate education -- including access to resources which have both intellectual and social dimensions.
- A separate factor was noted about quality. If an online degree is a distinct category, what are the key differences that constitute this degree category? Is the differentiation simply modality or are there a deeper set of differences, particularly access to resources and participation in undergraduate experiences specific to the UC? While undergraduate experiences should be contextual and in effect vary, quality is our constant.

To UCEP, it is evident from Division-level documentation thus far that there are several fundamental planning factors that would be difficult – maybe even impossible – to address adequately at only a program-level. The basics of admissions, financial aid, catalog rights, access to resources will likely continue to be unspecified without a systemwide study of operational factors, within a broader conceptual framework. Secondly, it is not yet clear what the University of California might value or want from a fully undergraduate online degree (if it is even desired), which then shapes how policies and regulations would be approached. At this time, UCEP does not recommend approval until this full spectrum of planning can be engaged.

Our recommendation, then, is two-fold (1) That the business school has the option to expand its offering in online courses in tandem with f2f courses in the existing BA (with a commensurate increase in enrollments). This will allow the school to continue to raise its profile as a center of excellence in online education and to gather further data about online student success and student experience (both within and beyond the business school) that will help clarify future decisions about a move to an “online-only” degree; (2) That there is system-wide consideration of the UC's engagement with fully online undergraduate degrees, with particular attention to the experiential and intellectual implications of non-residency: What is a desired direction for the UC and what are the equivalencies by policy and practice? Overall, UCEP recommends that the Academic Senate undertake a study that engages various stakeholders, especially the Administration, on offering on-line undergraduate degrees, and how this comports with the University's

conception of, and goals for, the undergraduate academic experience. We see these questions as time-sensitive and strongly encourage collaboration in the upcoming year to engage these important topics.

The role of online education in the UC is important to explore as part of overall mission and the meaning of a UC undergraduate degree. UCEP thanks the UCI Senate and Administration for fully engaging in review processes and associated dialogue to navigate this new and innovative topic; those efforts have been thoughtful and informative in offering a suggestion to best address the specifics of this proposal as well as a potential sea change on undergraduate degree planning.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Zanzucchi".

Anne Zanzucchi, Chair
UCEP