

July 28, 2020

Office of the President
University of California
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Sent Via Email: president@ucop.edu, regentsoffice@ucop.edu

Dear Presidents Drake and Napolitano:

We represent academic, educator, and healthcare unions in the UC system, and we welcome President Drake as the new President of the University of California. We wish to express our immediate concerns about campus reopenings, which are one of the most pressing issues we now face. Based on the current surge in COVID-19 cases and the status of campus reopening plans, we urge UC to commit to the following:

- Postpone the reopening of all UC campuses for in-person instruction in the fall, as campus leadership has already done at UC Berkeley and UC Merced.
- Do not reopen until the University and the State of California can guarantee a safe working, learning, and living environment for all students and workers.
- Commit to advancing equity in all decisions related to reopening, which disproportionately impacts women, the working poor, and Black and Brown students and workers.
- Maintain full employment for all staff and employees.
- Invest in students and maintain a high quality of distance learning while being attentive to issues of equity and privacy.

The University cannot return to normal operations including in-person learning until it can create a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff. This must be the cornerstone of every conversation about campus reopenings. The CSU system has already acknowledged this and proactively moved all fall courses online, which has helped its students and workers plan for the future. Numerous K-12 school districts have recently made similar decisions to maintain remote instruction, including LA and San Diego Unified School Districts, and Governor Newsom ordered that all counties on the watch list cannot reopen their schools for in-person instruction. Fully remote teaching, which began at UC in the spring, should continue except in highly exceptional circumstances (such as the double bind that entering international students have been forced into by the Trump administration's xenophobia).

To prioritize the health and safety of workers and their families, UC must commit to maintaining full employment for all staff and employees. Keeping campuses closed will mean that many workers are unable to perform their usual duties as UC employees. Work may need to be adapted to respond to the challenges of the current crisis in which we operate. The University

must partner with unions to provide adequate retraining and redeployment of staff where needed to adapt to potential changing campus and health staffing needs, and to maintain full employment of existing UC staff. In the absence of a plan to guarantee continued full employment, the University of California risks repeating the Trump administration's approach to the pandemic at the national level: making workers choose between life and income—between health and safety and full employment. This is an impossible choice that no worker should have to make, and instead of forcing workers to choose, it is incumbent on this administration to keep the entire University of California community whole during the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure that all students and workers have the resources they need to survive.

With this in mind, we urge the University to commit to the following approach to guarantee a safe working, learning, and living environment. We base our recommendations on the pillars for reopening K-12 schools developed by other teachers' unions and put into practice by local and state governments. To safely reopen campuses, it is essential that the UC implement the following framework:

1. **Adopt clear and consistent protocols to ensure spread of infection does not occur on campuses.** As a prerequisite for reopening: provide adequate supplies of masks and PPE for staff and students; mandate mask-wearing and physical distancing; eliminate new cases on campuses and risk to surrounding communities.
2. **Provide comprehensive infrastructure and resources to test, trace, and isolate new cases.** UC must provide testing on-demand with timely results (no longer than 24 hours) for all community members who are involved with the UC essential missions of instruction, research, and service. UC must coordinate with state and local agencies to provide specific interventions to ramp up testing, tracing, and isolating cases. Campuses must offer spaces in dorms and resources for students and staff who have to quarantine. UC must update buildings so that adequate ventilation will protect against aerosolized transmission and provide shields and artificial barriers at points of contact between workers or students.
3. **Deploy public health tools that prevent the virus' spread and align them with education strategies that meet the needs of students.** UC Health can inform the public health approach that the University implements by building comprehensive on-campus health education strategies. The state must augment UC's supply so that every student and worker has PPE.
4. **Invest in UC's students and workers for the best recovery.** These measures will require more investment in public health, our University, and our hospitals. In the short term, to ensure continued high level of education online, the University must also invest additional funds to support distance learning, including working to ensure that students and staff have the tools and the resources necessary to participate. Instead of layoffs and furloughs, retrain workers to serve as health and safety "ambassadors" to mitigate transmission among campus community members.

We join in the call made by the Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) to demand that a remote learning task force be formed on the systemwide level, made up of faculty, staff, unions, and students, with the knowledge and expertise to make the intense labor of remote learning work for all of us in a smart, fair, and equitable way.¹

Finally, the University must continue to bargain in good faith with our unions over the effects of COVID-19, and settle any outstanding contracts and side letters for unions that represent academic workers.

Sincerely,

UAW 2865
UC-AFT
UAW 5810
Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA)
California Nurses Association/National Nurses United

cc
Board of Regents
UC Chancellors

¹ <https://cucfa.org/2020/05/online-proctoring/>