

# Executive Summary: Report on Summer Sessions Discussions

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

Prior to 2014, the Summer Sessions Program at UC Davis was managed through a central office within the Office of Undergraduate Education (UE). Beginning in summer 2014, after analysis and campus consultation, UC Davis changed the Summer Sessions Program model, both operationally and financially, to be more distributed and integrated with the instructional activities in the academic units.

Following the first year of implementation, a number of concerns were raised by the Academic Senate about the impact of these changes on summer instruction and how, in particular, the budget model might be incentivizing unwanted outcomes. The following report outlines findings from data analysis and a round of meetings facilitated by Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Carolyn Thomas with each college and division to discuss goals for summer sessions and learn about the challenges, opportunities, practices and perspective of each unit. The participants in these meetings included department chairs, deans, associate deans, assistant deans, and some staff.

## KEY THEMES

The discussions with representatives from each college and division raised questions and concerns that fell into a number of key themes. In the report we try to summarize the following themes and present the primary issues identified:

### Major Points

- Disciplines vary in how they view the importance and purpose of summer sessions in their overall instructional program.
- Earlier course planning and greater certainty of course offerings may improve student and faculty participation in summer instruction.
- The summer sessions instructor mix may be influenced by cost, but in several units it is also strongly influenced by a belief that summer teaching provides a critical opportunity for graduate students to gain teaching experience.
- In 2014 the average class size during summer sessions increased from prior years and the number of very small sections offered decreased. Nonetheless, average class sizes remain significantly smaller during summer than the regular academic year.
- Sharing practices across the colleges and divisions may enhance understanding of how summer instruction can benefit students and the college or division.
- Greater integration of summer sessions courses into the academic planning process and more involvement of the associate deans could improve the slate of courses offered to meet student needs and assist in portfolio balancing.
- Decisions about participation in summer sessions instruction are made in the context of financial incentives and academic activities that occur year-round, not simply the summer budget model.
- A portfolio approach to managing course offerings and financial incentives is most apparent in units that employ a revenue distribution model that includes some pooling of either revenue or costs across departments.

- Purpose of Summer Sessions Instructional Activities
- Class Size
- Teaching: Ladder Faculty Participation
- Teaching: Graduate Student Participation
- Course Offerings
- Financial Considerations and Revenue Distribution

## OUTCOMES

As a result of this review, UE and BIA identified the following activities and topics that could be undertaken or coordinated at the campus level to improve summer instruction and address concerns raised:

- 1) ***Provide campus units with access to Instructional Needs Funds during summer sessions.*** For Summer 2015 this call was issued on April 23, 2015. Information is available here: <http://ue.ucdavis.edu/faculty/instructional-needs.html>
- 2) ***Identify strategies to increase the level of per SCH funds allocated to units as a result of summer activities.*** The Provost has committed to at least \$94/SCH for Summer 2015 which will be achieved through some level of central campus “buy-down” of off-the-top funds. This commitment was communicated in the 2015-16 Budget Framework letter [http://www.budget.ucdavis.edu/budget-planning/documents/2015-16/2015-16\\_Budget\\_Framework\\_Letter\\_033115.pdf](http://www.budget.ucdavis.edu/budget-planning/documents/2015-16/2015-16_Budget_Framework_Letter_033115.pdf)
- 3) ***Improve planning efforts to provide more predictability about summer course offerings earlier in the academic year.*** In coordination with the Associate Deans, UE will work to assist in identifying a slate of critical courses that will be offered in Summer 2016 during Fall of 2015.
- 4) ***Aligning courses offered with courses needed/desirable for students.*** In coordination with the Associate Deans, UE will work to assist in providing information about courses needed or desired by students that may be appropriate as a summer offering and encourage units to offer them.
- 5) ***Improve outreach efforts.*** UE will work with colleges and divisions to improve the type and amount of information available to students about summer session courses.
- 6) ***Encourage the establishment of clear principles for how decisions are made about course offerings, teaching, and revenue distribution in each college and division.*** In coordination with the Associate Deans, UE will assist in the sharing of best practices and information about issues related to summer instruction across colleges and divisions.
- 7) ***Review the financial model for offering field courses.*** Beginning in Fall 2015, BIA will work with specific units, faculty, and other campus stakeholders, who have historically offered field courses both during summer and the academic year, to consider the most appropriate financial model for delivering these courses to students.

Finally this report includes a review of summer metrics and background information on the budget model.