

The Santa Cruz Faculty Association

<http://ucscfa.org/>

Future of UC and Online Education

February 15, 2013

This letter is being sent to all SCFA members.

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To the SCFA Membership:

Articles about online education have exploded into the mainstream media this year. There is a rapid movement in this direction across the UC system. Governor Brown sees this as a tremendous cost saving opportunity.

This issue touches on many curricular and academic issues including faculty ownership rights to their lectures. In 2000 CUCFA successfully lobbied for legislation establishing that individual professors, not UC, own the intellectual property in their live performances and course materials. Within this framework it is unclear what role the campus administration wishes to play as an intermediary between individual faculty and any online provider with whom we wish to publish, and whether it proposes to make our courses for resale elsewhere and/or to purchase courses from elsewhere and resell them to students here as a condition for granting credit toward a UC degree. At the systemwide level we have not been told how its proposed online program will be monetized, how individual faculty members will be compensated and how many instructional faculty UC plans to displace (and at which campuses) as students are charged to receive UC credit for courses that are becoming available on privately owned platforms that UC may or may not control .

None of these issues are being openly discussed as UC lurches forward with online instruction-nor are the more fundamental issues of its role as a distinctively public institution in a world where knowledge is becoming more abundant while credentials based on that knowledge remain scarce. What we know is that UC's President has recently resigned after failing to provide systemwide leadership regarding online education and UC campuses seem to be cutting their own deals with online providers, even as their faculty are giving away course content for free.

How does this affect UCSC?

The SCFA has recently learned that our campus administration may already be in negotiations with Coursera and, possibly, other commercial online course providers. Unlike the faculty at

other UC campuses, UCSC faculty have collective bargaining rights under the Higher Education Employment Relations Act (HEERA) on policies affecting the terms and conditions of employment that are decided on the campus level. So, insofar as UCSC is signing a separate contract with Coursera, our faculty have a right to be included in the process through their legal bargaining agent, the SCFA.

To protect the collective (and individual) bargaining rights of UCSC faculty, the SCFA made a Request for Information based on the rumored negotiations between UCSC and Coursera (and any other commercial online course providers). In response to our request the Office of Labor Relations would like to schedule a labor management meeting with the SCFA regarding online education on Friday, February 22, 2013, in the afternoon, at the ELR office. The purpose of the labor management meeting is to listen and discuss the questions and concerns that we have, and for us to plan for one or more processes that may be required under the HEERA to address them before any proposed contract between UCSC and an online course provider could be implemented.

We hope that you will join us for this very important discussion. SCFA has the opportunity now to set a precedent on this issue which may have long term implications for UC. We would like to put together a task force of interested faculty who would consider what SCFA's bargaining position should be.

Please contact the SCFA Board at scfa.assist@gmail.com as soon as possible if you are interested in this issue.

With best wishes,

*Shelly Errington
on behalf of the SCFA Board*