



Dear Chancellor May, Provost Croughan, and Chairperson Tucker of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate:

We, the Associated Students of the University of California, Davis, express our concerns regarding the administration's failure to adequately take into consideration the academic needs of students given the recent resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Omicron variant becomes increasingly more prevalent in Yolo County and at UC Davis with 782 positive tests, a 4.30% positivity rate for tests collected between 12/30/2021 and 1/5/2022, in the first week back to campus alone, it is unequivocally clear that the current measures adopted by UC Davis administration are inadequate<sup>1</sup>.

UC Davis' positivity rate has now reached the highest level since the beginning of the 2020 academic year<sup>2</sup>. This, coupled with the fact that 34.5% of all positive cases of COVID-19 found from asymptomatic testing since September, 2020 have occurred in the last seven days as of January 5th, 2022 and the fact that UC Davis Genome Center has already reached its daily testing cap since returning and eliminated walk-in testing further substantiates our concerns<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the rapid reductions in the availability of COVID-19 isolation beds on campus are alarming; we categorically oppose the practice of moving from individual isolation to shared apartments with other positive cases. As students continue Winter Quarter through in-person instruction, the difficulties and inequities present at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the first quarter of remote learning, Spring Quarter of 2020, will return and continue to be exacerbated.

We are concerned that the priorities of the administration do not match those of students and their needs. This administration's decision to continue with in-person instruction with a single week of online modality learning has led students to significantly be harmed and feel unsupported; a recent Change.org<sup>4</sup> petition in regard to the unsafe, inaccessible working and learning conditions on campus has amassed over 5,000 signatures.

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1 <https://campusready.ucdavis.edu/testing-response/dashboard>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 [https://www.change.org/p/uc-davis-administration-we-need-safe-accessible-working-and-learning-conditions-at-uc-davis?source\\_location=topic\\_page](https://www.change.org/p/uc-davis-administration-we-need-safe-accessible-working-and-learning-conditions-at-uc-davis?source_location=topic_page)



Prior to the rise of COVID-19 cases, students had already grown increasingly concerned regarding the University's inflexible policy concerning academic accommodations. An ongoing survey on student concerns regarding the impact of the early Pass/No Pass deadline on students' mental health and their adjustment to in-person learning<sup>5</sup>, referenced in Senate Resolution #18<sup>6</sup>, found that 93.6% of survey respondents believed that the current Pass/No Pass deadline was set too early for them to effectively utilize the grading option.

Moreover, the decision from UC Davis Leadership to manage rather than contain the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic at Davis is especially harmful for immunocompromised students and students with disabilities who will be forced to choose between their health or their education. We stand in solidarity against the University's continued use of ableist language and unsubstantiated claims as expressed in the UC Davis Winter Quarter Update: Dec. 30. Particularly, the update's references to influenza and "living with COVID-19 at an endemic level" elucidate the UC Davis administration's policy of neglecting the immunocompromised, the disabled, the unvaccinated, children, those who live with people from any of these groups, and the general health of the public<sup>7</sup>. Given the significant toll COVID-19 has taken on those with pre-existing social, economic, and physical conditions, making them more vulnerable to outbreaks, the University must prioritize academic flexibility and take steps to provide a hybrid approach for those whose health is currently in jeopardy as a result of current policy.

**We urge University Administration and Academic Senate to take the following actions to ameliorate this crisis:**

1. Extend remote learning for additional weeks until students are able to secure a negative test result and walk-in testing is regularly available such that the positivity rate returns to 2.04%, the total positivity rate in the last 30 days<sup>8</sup>; and
2. Permanently extend the Pass/No Pass deadline until the last day of the quarter in order to provide academic flexibility and reduce student stress related to the uncertainties of the pandemic; and

5 [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p4m73d5JWvQSF5QImWK\\_3qjkRECAIrpqICNFoXwr4DQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p4m73d5JWvQSF5QImWK_3qjkRECAIrpqICNFoXwr4DQ/edit?usp=sharing)

6 <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Xg6vvrU9UgqHZWrwTjNH41-9eDhCTT7CT3XXS6u5fOg/edit?usp=sharing>

7 <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/winter-quarter-update-dec-30>

8 <https://campusready.ucdavis.edu/testing-response/dashboard>



3. Ensure that ScheduleBuilder is updated to reflect course times and locations in light of COVID-19 (synchronous/asynchronous) to make it easier for students to determine class participation; and
4. Should Professors, TAs, and teaching instructors be unable to provide flexibilities, take actions to ensure that the College/Department advisors provide leniencies by offering PTD and PTA numbers to accommodate students deciding courses which work best with their schedules in light of the pandemic to promote their academic success.

**We urge University Faculty to take the following actions to ameliorate this crisis:**

1. Offer full online accessibility options, including recorded lectures, alongside in-person instruction for lectures, workshops, discussions, and labs for the duration of this quarter and into the foreseeable future until this pandemic subsides; and
2. Provide flexible, virtual office hours on a weekly basis
3. Practice grading flexibilities and leniencies for assignments due during the first twenty (20) days of instruction, in order to accommodate various student circumstances including those waitlisted, enrolling after the first day of instruction, waiting for online textbooks needed for assignment completion to ship, adjusting to instruction times and deadlines in their respective time zones, facing changes to their schedule due to their health or employment, and whom may contract COVID-19 during the duration of the quarter; and
4. Refrain from utilizing attendance-based grading for the duration of the quarter in light of the uncertain circumstances and rising COVID-19 cases; and
5. Offer online testing options and flexible time slots for completing exams; and
6. Make available a pdf of required pages for assignments due in the first (15) days of instruction should a course textbook be required.

We thank and commend members of faculty, lecturers, TAs, and professors who have already taken steps to ensure academic flexibility and prioritize the health and wellbeing of their students in spite of university policy.



Should the university continue to fail to change its policies in regard to COVID-19 and academic accommodations given the growing concerns of the student body, we are of the firm belief that the University, by its inaction, has actively chosen to endanger the lives of its most vulnerable students.

**Sincerely,**

ASUCD Academic Affairs Commission Chair

Gabriela Tsudik

ASUCD Senator Radhika Gawde

ASUCD President Ryan Manriquez

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**In Solidarity,**

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ASUCD Senator Harris Razaqi

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ASUCD Senator Sergio Bocardo-Aguilar

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