



University of California Student Association  
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March 22, 2021

Chair Mary Gauvain  
UC Academic Senate  
1111 Franklin St., 12th floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Provost Michael Brown  
Office of the President  
1111 Franklin St., 12th floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Subject: Request for Continued COVID-19 International Student Academic Flexibility

Dear Chair Gauvain and Provost Brown,

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis and we are thankful for your leadership during this academic year. Last month, UC students were shocked by the death of [Kaijie Zhang](#), a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute international student, due to an irregular sleep schedule and stress associated with inflexible synchronous learning. This deeply troubling development reinforces the concerns of academic inflexibility for UC's international students.

On behalf of the UC Student Association, the representative body of the 285,000 students of the UC system, I am writing to highlight important academic policy adjustments that can support the over 38,000 international students at UC impacted by this pandemic:

Continue access to asynchronous lectures and discussion sections. We recommend divisional Senates issue guidance urging instructors to continue providing asynchronous lecture materials, discussion sections, and office hours to international students.

Offer flexible exam windows for international students abroad. We recommend divisional Senates consider the impact of synchronous exams on international students' preparation and performance in other time zones and urge instructors to offer flexible time periods to accommodate international students taking exams in other time zones.

Offer flexible class enrollment provisions for international students. We recommend divisional Senates issue guidance to faculty to update course descriptions from remote to asynchronous status if they are not conducting synchronous classes. We also recommend campuses increase enrollment capacity in asynchronous courses. These provisions will help international students maintain their full-time F-1 visa status.

Extend NRST waivers for impacted international graduate students. While UC has plans to extend time to degree for graduate students with pandemic-impacted status, implementation across campuses continues to lag. International students are particularly disadvantaged by arbitrary time barriers for receiving NRST waivers post-candidacy.

Allow temporary work abroad for impacted international graduate students. Many international students rely on teaching assistantships and graduate research positions to fund graduate study. These positions should not be rescinded if international students are unable to return to campus because of disparate vaccine distribution internationally. The threat of revocation of assistantships causes financial precarity for international graduate students and may force many students to pause their academic progress.

Accommodate foreign-language disability documentation. International students with disabilities face additional burdens in learning. We urge faculty and disability services to accept foreign-language disability documentation to better accommodate students.

Offer remote coursework options for international students for the 2021-22 year. Many international students are unable to obtain F-1 visa status in a timely fashion due to closures of American consulates abroad. We urge university leaders to consider hybrid-model classes that provide remote access options and flexible enrollment for international students to promote timely degree completion during the next year.

Thank you, and we look forward to your response and for further consultation between the UC Student Association, Office of the President, and Academic Senate on this important matter.

Respectfully,



Aidan Arasasingham  
President  
University of California Student Association

CC: Dr. Michael V. Drake, President, University of California  
Dr. Robert Horwitz, Vice Chair, University of California Academic Senate  
Dr. Jennifer Johnson-Hanks, Chair, Berkeley Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Richard Tucker, Chair, Davis Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Jeffrey Barrett, Chair, Irvine Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Shane White, Chair, Los Angeles Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. LeRoy Westerling, Chair, Merced Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Jason Stajich, Chair, Riverside Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Steven Constable, Chair, San Diego Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Sharmila Majumdar, Chair, San Francisco Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. Susannah Scott, Chair, Santa Barbara Divisional Academic Senate  
Dr. David Brundage, Chair, Santa Cruz Divisional Academic Senate