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Steve Juarez, Associate Vice President and Director

July 5, 2013

The Honorable Das Williams
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 4005
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 520 (Steinberg), As Amended May 28, 2013
Scheduled for Hearing in the Assembly Higher Education Committee on August 6, 2013
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Williams,

After a thorough review of the amendments to SB 520 that were adopted in the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 28, 2013, I must regrettably inform you that the University of California remains opposed to SB 520. While we appreciate the efforts that Senator Steinberg has made to improve SB 520, we believe that the bill continues to fall short of serving as a legislative vehicle that could add value to online course development at the University. The University believes that it has developed a preferable online development and delivery model that is built on years of work by UC representatives and is the direct culmination of four months of focused activities by over 200 University faculty and staff. That model is the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI), and I have attached a copy of the proposal for your consideration. Pursuant to funding provided by AB 110 (the 2013-14 Budget Act), the University is moving briskly but judiciously to implement a vigorous online initiative that speaks to many of the goals of SB 520, as well as the expressed desires of the Brown Administration.

In our previous correspondence on SB 520, we indicated that our position for all legislation concerning online instruction was based on the following principles:

- The Legislature should acknowledge that faculty at each of the three higher education segments (UC, CSU, and CCC) can best determine which courses meet their institution's academic standards and the needs of their matriculated students.
- The development of online courses should be led by the faculty of each segment, with the respective academic senate approving courses that can be made available across the campuses ***within*** that system. This would expand online course availability by allowing students to enroll in online offerings at their segment's sister campuses throughout the state.
- Efforts have been underway for some time at UC to address a shared desire of the UC, the Governor and the Legislature to increase online offerings to matriculated students. Any le***gislati***on regarding online education should recognize initiatives currently underway and seek to build on this work through the appropriation of <u>additional</u> funds.

Based on these principles, we cannot support the model put forth by SB 520 and believe that the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative will better serve our students. The ILTI is the product of intense work led by UC Provost Aimee Dorr and the UC Academic Senate and will address curricular bottlenecks, reduce time to graduation, and build a solid foundation of quality online courses that meet the degree and academic objectives of our students. The ILTI will focus on high demand areas regardless of where they fall in the curriculum, with the ultimate goal of producing online courses that are available to students across the UC system. The Initiative recognizes that there are a significant number of academic, operational, and financial issues that must be addressed before we can be confident that a seamless and quality set of courses will be available to matriculating students. This includes the development of a "hub" that supports necessary communication about student enrollments and course grades from one campus to another.

In contrast, SB 520 continues to rely on a statutory model that sees partnerships with outside online course providers as a vital component of developing and delivering these courses. While some of our faculty already work with online providers to provide aspects of online instruction without any statutory direction, the vast majority of online development at UC is occurring through the auspices of UC faculty working with one another. We continue to believe SB 520's emphasis on providing a pathway for external providers is misplaced and will serve as a distraction, and so we would once again request that reference to these providers be removed from the bill. We also believe that the criteria in SB 520 for allocating funding to the development of online courses, while well-intended, is overly prescriptive and fails to draw on real-world experience of our faculty

We also remain concerned that other aspects of the bill appear to be unworkable or fail to ensure quality instruction. Our specific concerns extend to the following:

- The bill calls for full academic credit to be given based on a passing score on a course examination, when successful performance on multidimensional aspects of the course (projects, papers, and presentations) may be what is actually required to ensure mastery of the subject.
- SB 520 calls for course approval under the bill to be done by the academic senate of each segment. This is contrary to current practice where department and campus approval of courses is the norm.
- The bill requires that courses to be developed by incentive grants "be placed in the California Virtual Campus, through which students may access the courses." However, the CVC does not currently have the capacity to allow students to fully access any online courses and would need to be built out, likely at substantial costs, to obtain this functionality.

In closing, the University would once again request that you and the Assembly Higher Education Committee consider the attached Initiative as a model for future development and implementation for online courses at UC. If you agree, we would be pleased to work with you and your staff on developing a legislative framework that fully addresses our shared objectives. If you have further questions, I can be reached at (916) 445-4220.

Sincerely,

Steve Juarez
Associate Vice President and Director
State Governmental Relations

Attachment

cc: Vice Chair and Members Assembly Higher Education Committee
President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg
President Mark G. Yudof
Provost and Executive Vice President Aimée Dorr
Executive Vice President Nathan Brostrom
Senior Vice President Daniel Dooley