

UC SANTA BARBARA

Academic Senate

Special Message on Curtailment - October 2020

Dear Colleagues,

In my [newsletter](#) of October 8, 2020, I mentioned the challenges posed to our University by the budget crisis, precipitated by the on-going pandemic. Since then, President Drake announced a proposed budget-savings plan that would impose a [curtailment period](#) on every UC campus during the 2020-21 academic year. The University of California is considering this action in response to the anticipated reduction in its state funding, losses of tuition revenue associated with decreased enrollment, and increased expenses related to COVID-19 prevention, mitigation, and treatment. I am writing today to provide you with some information on what we know about our budget problem, and the President's proposal. Although we cannot yet project the magnitude of salary savings that a one-time curtailment might provide, we do know that UCSB's budget gap this fiscal year is expected to be ca. \$60M, or about 10% of our permanent core budget (of which nearly 80% is used for salaries and benefits).



Susannah L. Scott

Curtailment is defined by University policy as "a period of unpaid leave instituted by a Chancellor in connection with a decision to suspend certain operations for defined periods of time, including but not limited to periods of time for energy/cost savings; transitional, seasonal, or holiday periods in the academic calendar; or the occurrence of emergency situations that adversely affect normal University operations."¹ The policy further states, with regard to this kind of curtailment: "Employees may elect to substitute accrued vacation, PTO (if applicable), and/or compensatory time off for leave without pay." Many UC campuses, including UCSB, implement a brief curtailment period each year during the winter break. This normal curtailment is primarily for the purpose of reducing energy consumption in buildings that would have been mostly unoccupied, and it does not generate any salary savings.

At this time, the Office of the President is considering a "[new systemwide program](#)" which calls for the enactment of at least five curtailment days, whose timing is left to the discretion of each campus. Some proposed features of the program are briefly described in the [October 16 email](#) distributed by Academic Personnel and Human Resources. Unlike previous curtailments, the goal of the new plan is to achieve salary savings to mitigate the budget deficit through shared sacrifice. Each campus would have the flexibility to expand the curtailment period, depending on its local financial predicament.

How does the proposed curtailment differ from a furlough, which was imposed during the financial crisis of 2008-09, or a straightforward pay cut? In order to impose either a furlough or a pay cut, the UC Regents must declare a state of financial emergency for the UC system.² The imposition of a curtailment period by a Chancellor or President requires no such declaration. However, any actions needed to ensure that unpaid curtailment leave would not affect retirement contributions or benefits (which UCOP has indicated it wants to protect) do require Regental approval.

The President's proposal acknowledges that "it will be challenging for some employees to take full advantage of the curtailment days due to the nature of their work obligations." It's difficult to see what "advantage" is envisaged; on the contrary, many of us would not see our workloads change under curtailment. Curtailment has not, to our knowledge,

¹ University of California Personnel Policies for Staff Members (PPSM) <https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4010406/PPSM-2.210>

² Board of Regents Standing Order 100. (qq) <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/standing-orders/so1004.html>

been applied before to academic-year employees who do not accrue vacation, or to fiscal-year employees without allowing them to use vacation days. For faculty, a key feature of the [curtailment proposal](#) is that it would be “implemented as an equivalent reduction in salary (based on the salary tiers to be established under the program) but would not result in additional paid or unpaid time off.” While the salary tiers have not been defined, most faculty would see their salary temporarily reduced under the program. We do not have any information yet about whether faculty would be allowed to replace some part of their curtailed salary with other sources of income such as contracts/grants.

No decision has been made at this time, so our input is important. The [proposed campus curtailment program](#) is currently under review by the councils and committees of the Academic Senate at [each division](#) and [Systemwide](#), as well as by the Chancellor’s Coordinating Committee on Budget Strategy (which I co-chair, with EVC David Marshall). I invite you to communicate your thoughts to us via email to Executive Director Shasta Delp at: shasta.delp@senate.ucsb.edu. Please note that the Senate must respond to the proposal by Monday, October 26, in preparation for a Systemwide meeting of the Academic Council on October 28. You may also send your ideas to the Director of Academic Personnel, Cindy Doherty, at: cindy.doherty@ucsb.edu.

The current budget situation is serious, and we will need to work together to get through the crisis. Indeed, faculty are already contributing a great deal by working harder than ever, in decidedly non-ideal conditions. I plan to share more information with you as this situation evolves in the next few weeks, including the expected next steps in the consultation and possible implementation process. In the meantime, consider attending the upcoming (virtual) meeting of the Faculty Legislature, at 3:30 pm on Thursday, October 22.

Sincerely,

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