

Resolution in Support of Students Impacted by Covid-19 at California State University Los Angeles

Authored by Crystal Urbano, Jafet Rodriguez, Moises Ponce-Zepeda, Ivan Lorenzana, Leroy Collins, Edwin Hurtado, Alejandro Guardado, and Cristian Ramirez.

Respectfully submitted to the Board of Directors of the California State University, Los Angeles Associated Students, Incorporated

“There has never been a better time in the history of our institution to be a student at the California State University” - Timothy White January 28, 2020

Whereas, the accelerating Covid-19 virus pandemic, now responsible for over 62,000 fatalities and 1,000,000 infections nationwide^[1], has resulted in historically unprecedented social distancing orders to ensure the safety and health of all community members and mitigate the loss of life; and

Whereas, state and local mandatory measures have impacted hundreds of thousands of CSU students who have been and will be mentally, financially, physically and academically harmed as a result of the pandemic; and

Whereas, Cal State LA students “generally represent lower median family incomes than the statewide average and tend to be older than traditional college students... A majority of the university’s students are first generation college students - and a majority of those students are also first-generation college students- and a majority of those students are also first generation Americans. Many students have family and employment obligations beyond their education.”^[2]; and

Whereas, students are now experiencing increased strain due to housing insecurity^[3], widespread job loss^[4], becoming sudden caretakers of elderly family, becoming sudden school teachers to their own children, becoming sole family income earners, becoming at-risk persons with pre-existing conditions, becoming essential workers risking greater exposure, and/or have been directly impacted by disease itself; and

Whereas, the Cal State LA Pandemic Business Continuity Plan (PBCP) report, published in 2019, anticipated, “There will be a significant number of students who drop classes or who simply stop attending classes.”^[5] as a result of a pandemic; and

Whereas, to PBCP (2019) guidelines, Cal State LA is expected to respond and plan for a pandemic crisis in a “caring, compassionate and prudent manner... delivering essential services to allow the University to continue in its important and vital mission”^[6]; and

Whereas, the pandemic has prompted the closure of all physical CSU campuses to prevent contagion, yet campuses continue to pursue academic performance expectations, with limited accommodations in grading options^[7]; and

Whereas, California State University's sudden transition to virtual remote education has left students without sufficient alternatives to access to the physical library, books, archives, computers, on-site resources for learning impaired, physical access to science laboratories, technical equipment, research materials, examination spaces, musical instruments, art supplies, on site computer software, in person mentoring and tutoring; and

Whereas, emergency funding available through Cal State LA emergency grants through the Office of the Dean of Students has been inaccessible to students in veritable emergencies due to the pandemic but who have met their financial need according to financial aid guidelines have been denied emergency grants, and emergency funding through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act have not been made available to Cal State LA students in need as of April 15, 2020^[8]; and

Whereas, student experiences as described in multiple town hall forums demonstrate how the discrepancy between PBCP recommendations and actions taken by CSULA have negatively impacted learning outcomes and the feasibility of accurately grading the semester's efforts; and

Whereas, an A or satisfactory grade in Spring 2020 currently speaks more to a students' ability to secure housing, employment, food, toiletries and pirated or expensive supplemental learning materials than their academic faculties; and

Whereas, "There are faculty requiring students to complete more work to make up for 'lost class time.' More concerned for the so-called continuity of curriculum than for the health of educators and students, such educational models devalue human life. We cannot continue to value productivity, accountability, outcomes, and profit over people."^[9]

Whereas, on April 6th 2020, in reference to teacher/student learning outcomes for Spring 2020, Chancellor White implored educators to "think about the things that *really* matter to our students—content, engagement, the *understanding of their life circumstances*, and their ability to interact either by asking questions or by chat boxes, or by email, or by phone call... It's different, but it's gonna work"^[10]; and

Whereas, chat boxes, emails and phone calls cannot adequately replace access to a world class library, on site resources and robust on campus support network in such an abrupt manner; and

Whereas, university faculty have expressed difficulty in transitioning to sudden online teaching, navigating virtual software, retaining student engagement, and adapting in person curriculum to online venue, as emergency online training has not provided enough preparation; and

Whereas, on April 6th 2020 Chancellor White stated CSU would not pay for professors need for increase bandwidth to host online classes, citing that funding would be offset by the lack of faculty gasoline expenditure^[11]; and

Whereas, CSU's refusal to fund faculty bandwidth and at home internet connection, the sole technology on which all remote learning is predicated, and the insistence of outsourcing online infrastructure to faculty's personal income, speaks to the CSU's lack of a "caring, compassionate"^[12] response and support to teaching and learning outcomes; and

Whereas, according to the CAL State LA PBCP (2019) "the basic continuity goal for the university before, during and after an adverse event is to recover and resume critical operations for teaching, research, and support services does not mean that not every building is accessible, that every class is taught... It does mean that instruction is occurring and that key services are available"^[13]; and

Whereas According to the Cal State LA PBCP "The president or his designee, may order the cancellation of classes and cessation of all but critical functions of the university."^[14]; and

Whereas, it is possible that critical educational instruction and student learning continues without a grading system that burdens students with rigid expectations and unreliable access to key services in a time of unprecedented crisis; and

Whereas, over 5,800 people have petitioned Cal State LA to Switch to Universal A's and A' minuses due to the extraneous circumstances of the pandemic^[15]

Whereas, both Cal State LA and the larger CSU system have been unable to provide the essential measures to abate the institutional disruption of student learning and performance outcomes for the Spring 2020 semester, which will unduly impact students' academic success; Let it be

Resolved, that ASI calls on Chancellor White to implement a universal A-B letter grade system across the CSU system in which all students are given a letter grade of either A, A-, B+, B.

Resolved, that ASI calls on the Cal State LA administration, including the President, Provost, and college Deans to support a universal A-B letter grade system at Cal State LA in which all students are given a letter grade of either A, A-, B+, B.

Resolved, that ASI calls on all Department Chairs and faculty to implement universal A-B grading at Cal State LA (by voting to pass in each department a universal A-B grading system in which all students are given a letter grade of either A, A-, B+, B.)

Resolved, that ASI supports transparency and accountability in pandemic decision-making by calling for the creation of a committee that will produce an internal report that enumerates the services cut or modified for the Spring 2020 semester as a result of the pandemic.

Resolved, that ASI calls on the allocation of expanded emergency funding for students.

Resolved, that ASI supports the institution of monthly digital town hall meetings throughout the duration of the pandemic at the university, college, and department level to keep stakeholders informed and accountable.

Resolved, that copies of this resolution will be sent to California State University Chancellor White, California State University, Los Angeles University President William A. Covino, Vice President for Student Life Nancy Wada-McKee, Provost Jose A. Gomez, Vice Provost for Diversity and Engaged Learning Octavio Villalpando, Vice President for Administration and Finance Lisa Chavez, the Academic Senate, Dean of Students Jennifer Miller, the Cal State LA University Times, College of Arts and Letters Dean Linda Essig, College of Business and Economics Dean Tyrone Jackson, Charter College of Education Dean Cheryl Ney, College of Engineering, Computer Science and Technology Dean Emily Allen, Rongxiang Xu Health and Human Services Dean Ron Vogel, Natural and Social Sciences Dean Pamela Scott-Johnson, Professional and Global Education Dean Harkmore Lee, University Library Dean Juan Carlos Rodriguez, Honors College Director Rennie Schoepflin, and the Risk Management/Environmental Health and Safety Department, the Educational Opportunity Program, the 3 Educational Participation in Communities program, the Dreamers Resource Center, the Veterans Resource Center, the Center for Student Involvement, and the Cross Cultural Centers

^[1] <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/us/>

^[2] http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[3] <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nearly-a-third-of-u-s-renters-didnt-pay-april-rent-11586340000>

^[4] <https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf>

^[5] http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[6] http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[7] <http://www.calstatela.edu/healthwatch/covid-19-messages>; <http://www.calstatela.edu/registrar/forms>

^[8] <http://www.calstatela.edu/healthwatch/covid-19-messages>

^[9] <https://www.latinorebels.com/2020/04/08/loveempathyuniversalgrades/>

^[10]

<https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2020/04/cal-state-coronavirus-your-questions-answered/>

^[11]

<https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2020/04/cal-state-coronavirus-your-questions-answered/>

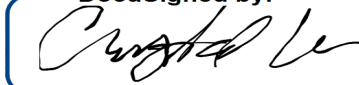
^[12]http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[13]http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[14]http://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Environmental%20Health%20and%20Safety/pandemic_master_march_2020_0.pdf

^[15]

https://www.change.org/p/eric-garcetti-for-all-csula-students-to-pass-their-classes-due-to-the-stressful-crisis?recruiter=813093826&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_initial&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial&recruited_by_id=ec53e270-b1ef-11e7-a143-71f1c9eb792d&utm_content=fht-20941017-en-us%3Av2

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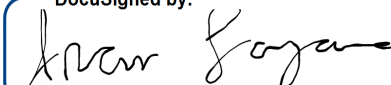
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