

February 4, 2024

TO: University of Oregon Senators
FROM: Dr. Gerard Francisco Sandoval, Senate President and Professor of Planning, Public Policy and Management

SUBJECT: Creating a Senate Task Force for Developing Significant Academic Disruption (S.A.D.) Plans

Based on the Senate's leadership and the Academic Council's recent experience developing guidelines to implement the Academic Continuity Policy for a potential labor disruption, it has become clear that the Senate needs to update and amend **Policy #: II.01.06**. This policy defines the Senate's role during unpredictable and predictable Significant Academic Disruptions. The Senate needs to improve the policy to better serve the needs of the University of Oregon during Significant Academic Disruptions.

To improve the University of Oregon's response to Significant Academic Disruptions, the University Senate President is creating a Senate S.A.D. Plans Task Force. The Task Force's objective is to *amend* the Academic Continuity Policy created in 2019 [Policy #: II.01.06] by developing parallel processes based on **unpredictable** and **predictable** Significant Academic Disruption Plans—the Senate Task Force on S.A.D. Plans would complete its work by the end of the spring term 2024 so that a Senate vote can occur in the May 22nd, 2024, meeting. Members of the task force will be chosen by the Senate President and include representation from the Academic Council, Senators, a representative from the Office of the Provost, and a representative from UO's Emergency and Safety Services.

We must maintain an academic continuity process grounded in academic integrity principles that support educational operations' ability to continue during a Significant Academic Disruption to lessen the detrimental impact on our students' education. The critical differences in the S.A.D. plans are whether a disruption is unpredictable vs predictable.

1. Significant, **unpredictable** academic disruptions are often dangerous emergencies or disasters requiring immediate action. Unpredictable Significant Academic Disruption (S.A.D.) plans need to be based on the dangerous context of the disaster, and appropriate and timely academic responses must meet specific educational needs impeded by an emergency (i.e., ice storms, fires, earthquakes, floods, are just some examples).
2. A **predictable** significant academic disruption implies that much of what will happen in an emergency or disaster can be predicted. This knowledge allows individuals and communities to anticipate the types of disasters likely to affect them and think of ways to reduce the impact or prevent them altogether. – FEMA

3. The critical difference is the emergency or disaster predictability. An unpredictable situation demands immediate attention, whereas a predictable situation provides more time for action and pre-approved guidelines. Labor Disputes fall within predictable S.A.D. plans.

Senate leadership has heard loud and clear that many are concerned that any form of continuity planning will allow the administration to harm labor unions and dictate employment policy. Separating significant academic disruption via predictability clarifies that difference and ameliorates this vital concern.

While this task force and the revision process allow us to create policy language that gives strong guidance that supports instructors of record maintaining full authority over courses, it remains crucial that we also understand that all employment decisions during a predictable S.A.D. are always subject to collective bargaining agreements and are not subject to Senate regulation.

A key focus of this revision process is to cement the authority of the Senate over any decisions made by the Academic Council during a Significant Academic Disaster. This initial proposal outlines two methods to strengthen the connections between the Senate and the Academic Council.

First, this proposal will add 3-4 elected UO Senators to the Academic Council, whom the Senate President will appoint. During a Significant Academic Disruption, the Senate President will also become a voting member and the Academic Council chair. This would occur during both a predictable and unpredictable Significant Academic Disruption. Hence, the participation of both the Senators and the Senate President would be limited to those specific time periods.

Second, the proposal that the task force will consider will create detailed templates that the Academic Council must follow during a **Predictable Significant Academic Disruption** prompted by a labor dispute. This will ensure that the Senate has the final say in creating academic continuity guidance, and those plans will be approved well in advance of an emergent situation.

The S.A.D. Senate Task Force will ensure that the expertise that is represented on the Academic Council will continue to be able to respond to and provide direction to challenges that occur during a Significant Academic Disruption while ensuring Senate leadership simultaneously.

In consultation with the Senate Executive Committee, Senate leadership sought consensus in recommending the establishment of the Senate's S.A.D. Plans Task Force. Improving the Senate's role during Significant Academic Disruptions is critical to the University of Oregon's academic mission. Hence, Senate leadership expects that to improve our Senate's role in Significant Academic Disruptions - by maintaining the principle of continued academic integrity - the Senate President should establish the Senate S.A.D. Task Force.