

Dear Colleagues:

A number of very important issues came up at the provost's office hours this morning. We'll be following up on a variety of threads in the coming days.

In honor of the weekend (brought to you by the labor movement!), a slightly shorter-than-usual message, with (presumably!) none tomorrow.

One of our colleagues wrote to us recently with this powerfully insightful set of concerns. In the best way, the message starts with the needs of our students:

A comment from several students is that if some classes are offered online and some aren't, most students will have to come to campus anyway. From a student's perspective, since classes will vary in size within a single day, many will be sitting in the library or student center taking their online classes in between attending their live classes. Since some lecture sessions can be enormous, particularly Math and Chem, you might have huge numbers of students sitting in those facilities, which are already crowded on a typical day, having to view their online lectures (if offered synchronously). This would defeat the purpose of both remote learning and physical distancing. So you likely might have to allocate safe spaces on campus where students can sit and remote learn from. Another comment is that even though the campus will safely social distance, the trains and buses that many students who have to commute on will not likely enforce physical distancing, so students will still be at risk. Given these concerns, it wouldn't be surprising if many students might likely opt for taking all of their classes online if they can do so.

We discussed some of these issues with the provost this morning. We understand, for example, that the registrar may well not know until July what kind of rooms will be available for students to use as physical safe spaces—but there will likely be very few, if any. Yet can we really wait until July to find out that we can't do anything ... when it already seems so likely that we can't do anything? The union's perspective is that these issues are not only central, but *the* issue: how can we even begin to think of having anyone on campus unless we know that we will be able to have the best possible safety policies and practices in place?

For many such reasons, and as you know, the entire California State University system—with its nearly 500,000 students—decided that the only responsible way forward was to go completely online for the fall. We all desperately want to see our students and our colleagues, and we want the university not just to survive, but thrive. Yet we fervently hope that--as a kind of booming bass line thumping in the background--the real possibility of a total fall online conversion remains a very serious consideration.

With best wishes,

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