

To: Academic Senate

From: Carolyn Thomas, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education

Re: exam accommodations/pilot testing center update

Date: April 14, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on improvements to exam accommodations and the pilot testing center. As you are aware, Jennifer Billeci, the new Director of the Student Disability Center, along with Michelle Famula and I have been meeting over the past weeks with each of our college and divisions' chairs and directors. Our purpose has been to provide an update about improvements to accommodation notification to faculty and an overview of our work to this point with the pilot testing center facility in Haring Hall. I want to make you aware of the information provided to faculty during these meetings, the concerns faculty have raised, and our suggested next steps.

#### Update on current accommodations and SDC service improvements

There have been increasing numbers of students accessing accommodation services at UC Davis over the past 10 years. Between 2010 and 2014 we have seen an increase from 750 students (2.3% of students) registered for services through SDC to 1554 or 4.5%. Most UC campuses have reported a similar percentage of students requesting services and a similar increase over this period with UC Santa Cruz and UC Santa Barbara having the highest numbers in the system.

The reasons for this increase are several. These include:

- Students with disabilities have demonstrated above average persistence
- Improved services in the K-12 system have made it possible for increasing numbers of students with disabilities to attain the academic skills and achievements necessary for admission to the UC system
- Medical advancements have allowed more students with complex medical conditions to attend classes and live on campus

And this poses several challenges including:

- The fastest growing group of students to request accommodation are those who disclose a psychiatric disability
- Students are presenting with increasingly complex, sometimes multiple, disabilities
- Stigma persists - It is much more likely for a student with a disability to forgo assistance, or to under request assistance, than it is for a student to over request accommodations

Student Eligibility and Accommodation(s) are determined by the following:

- The SDC takes direction from legislation enacted to protect those with disabilities from discrimination - Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Sections 504, 508, 503, ADA/AA, WCAG 2.0 AA, and recent court decisions

- Students must request services, submit appropriate documentation of disability, and follow SDC policy to access services
- Accommodations are extended to provide educational access – they do not create an advantage, or give a boost to student performance in an unrelated area to make up for a disability

The SDC has several immediate goals to improve services to students and faculty. These include:

- Accommodated Testing Support
  - In collaboration with Undergraduate Education, enhance services through the Testing Center Initiative (Pilot)
  - Research, and consider application of, best practices at other UC campuses
- The Implementation of new Clockwork Software
  - Allows for clearer, quicker communication between student, faculty, and SDC
  - Improve data collection and statistical reporting
  - In collaboration with UCSF and UCLA, the SDC will work with the vendor to improve program functionality through software modifications
  - Site visits where Clockwork is currently successfully in use to gather tips and strategies
- Augmented SDC Communication
  - Expanded telephone hours
  - Increased presence in various committees, meetings
- Note Taking Accommodation
  - Reevaluation of eligibility practices
  - Increased use of technological support
- Faculty education
  - Directing faculty to resources within and outside of the department on a more consistent basis

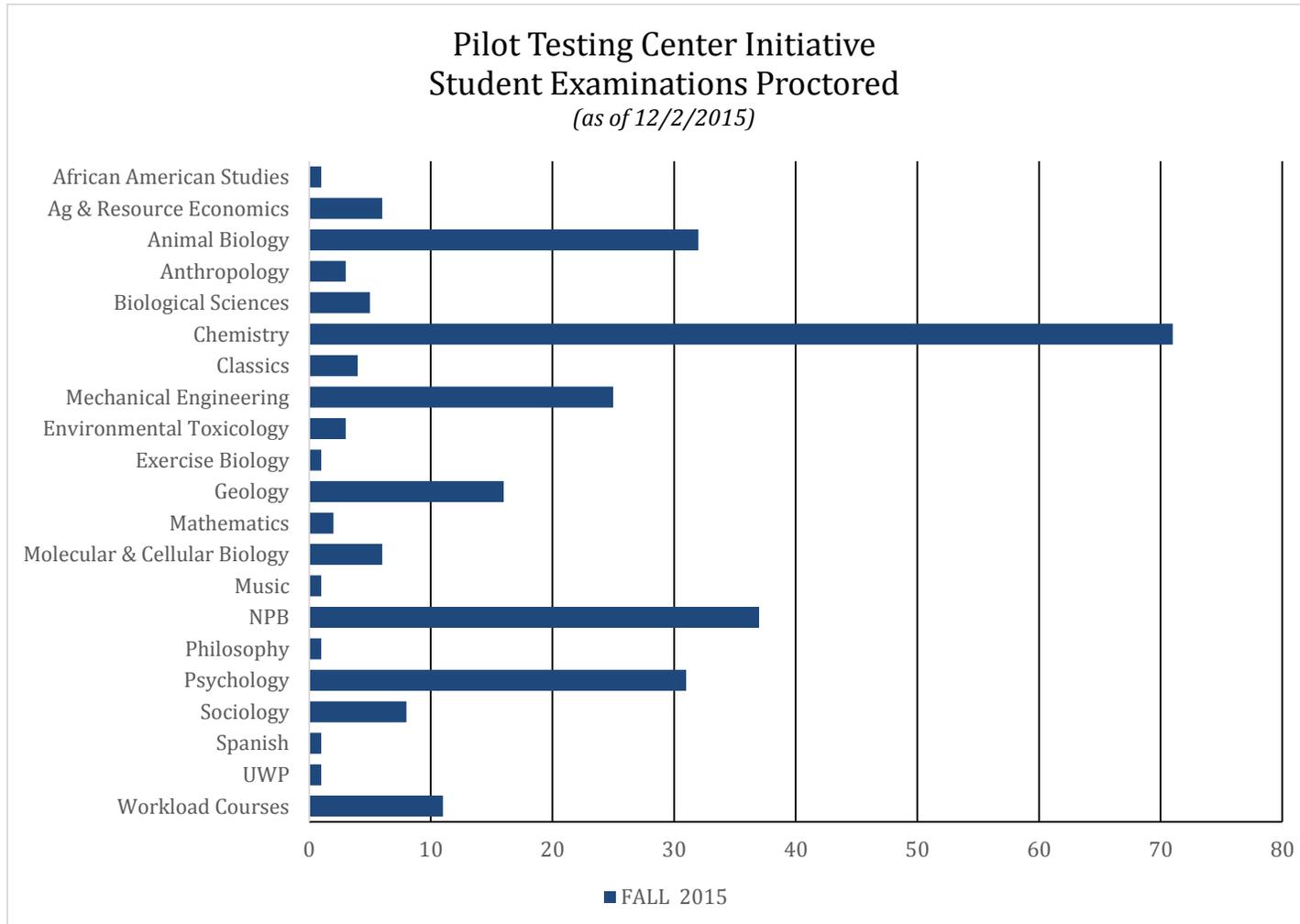
In summary, the SDC leadership is now providing faculty with a more efficient way to manage accommodation needs in courses as well as extended hours for services to support faculty who need to reach the office. There is now ongoing research into best practices on other campuses. We will also see the note taking accommodations improved in the future.

#### Update on the Pilot Testing Center Initiative

The Pilot Testing Center Initiative provides assistance for students and faculty in arranging exams with accommodations such as extended time, separate locations, and student test assistants/proctors for students identified by the SDC as requiring accommodations during tests. The goal of the pilot—which began as a limited program in spring quarter 2015—is to provide critical, centralized support for the courses with the highest number of accommodations and the least resources.

Each quarter we invite faculty with high numbers of student exam accommodations, space constraints, or other limiting factors to request proctoring services, typically provided in our Haring Hall space. We attempt to meet the needs of all requests for exam accommodations, though final assignments are based on the availability of our test proctors, space, and the exam schedule.

In Fall of 2015, the pilot Testing Center provided scheduling assistance and proctoring services for more than 260 student examinations from courses in 22 different academic departments. As highlighted in the figure, below, courses in STEM disciplines utilized the Testing Center services in high numbers, although not exclusively, with student participants coming primarily from large-format courses. A similar level of service continued through winter and spring.



Faculty who would like to request assistance from the Testing Center may do so via an electronic form available on the Undergraduate Education website: <http://ue.ucdavis.edu/faculty/testingcenter/index.html>. We are currently developing a decision tree that will be available on both the UE and SDC websites to help faculty obtain information regarding when to contact their academic department, college dean, or the Testing Center for support related to examination accommodations.

We anticipate continuing to offer the pilot Testing Center services through the 2016-2017 academic year, transitioning the Center from Haring to Hunt Hall in Winter/Spring of 2016. Beginning during the academic year 2017-2018 we plan to transition this centralized support to a dispersed set of localized “centers” within each college. We will work with the colleges as we approach this transition to identify spaces where our centrally trained proctors can continue to provide testing support services for courses with high enrollments and high

accommodation needs.

Concerns identified by faculty during our college and division meetings  
Department chairs were generally pleased to hear of the changes in informing faculty about students needing accommodations and that service levels at SDC have been enhanced. They were also supportive of the Pilot Testing Center project. Those chairs who were able to use the services or whose faculty had used the services were enthusiastic about the ease and convenience of the experience.

Questions raised included the following:

- Will faculty know when note takers are hired for students in classes who need this support? Currently faculty receive emails asking them to distribute a message to hire note takers but do not know if students' needs are actually met. *Response: the SDC is evaluating this program and will have a new approach in place soon. This will be communicated to faculty.*
- How long is required for a student to tell a faculty member they need an accommodation before an exam? *Response: Students need to provide this advance notice in a reasonable amount of time prior to an exam. The SDC will advise students to give five days notice. Faculty should consider 2-3 days an appropriate amount of time, however, should a student not provide the full 5 days notice.*
- More support is needed beyond what the Pilot Testing Center is currently offering. Will this be coming? *Response: during the 2016-2017 academic year UE will be working, along with space planning staff, with each college and division to identify where a testing center "node" might be placed within current resources or with augmented resources.*
- Why do we not have a single testing center—a large building where all needs can be met? *Response: We initially looked at having a large facility and found that UCD does not have the conditions required to generate the income required to support such an investment. With several community colleges in the region already offering testing centers, we would likely not draw sufficient numbers of fee-paying users to offset the cost. Further, localized "node" testing centers would give colleges flexibility in determining how to use their dedicated space as well as the option to decrease or expand this space in response to future demand.*

#### Next Steps

The SDC and UE will continue to partner to improve services to faculty along the lines identified above. Planning for expanding the pilot testing center to additional "nodes" will take place in earnest through the next academic year. Deans office staff and department chairs will be engaged in this process.