January 21, 2015

ELIAS LOPEZ, REGISTRAR
Office of the University Registrar
Office of Student Affairs

RE: Davis Division of the Academic Response:
     Prerequisite Management Proposal

The Prerequisite Management Proposal was forwarded to all Davis Division of the Academic Senate standing committees including school and college Faculty Executive Committees. Detailed responses were received from Graduate and Undergraduate Councils (UGC), Committees on Courses of Instruction (COCI) and Information Technology and the Faculty Executive Committees from College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Biological Sciences, and College of Letters and Science (CLS).

The Academic Senate appreciates the Office of the University Registrar's (OUR) efforts to respond to our request. The proposal provided the information requested and more. Many of the respondents praised the thoughtful and thorough plan articulated. Naturally, there were some comments and suggestions to be considered by OUR and the Davis Division of the Academic Senate (Division) before the system can move forward.

The following summarizes the issues raised and articulates steps for moving forward. In particular, it is clear that the Opt In with Exceptions process needs more work. To this end, the Undergraduate and Graduate Council's will each appoint a workgroup to partner with OUR in developing process solutions our campus can engage to successfully manage the Opt In with Exceptions process. Please refer to next steps (below) for additional detail.

Rule Collection and Encoding

CLS points out that some departments do not know who will be teaching a course before the start of registration. In reality, a majority of instructors are not assigned to a course several months before the beginning of each quarter. UGC recommends expanding the ZSADEPT form in Banner to allow staff to submit information about the enforcement of prerequisites according to departmental convention that may be altered after an instructor is assigned. We are not convinced the processes on which the system is developed should be based on working around the instructor of record given the critical nature of student communication concerning prerequisite exceptions with the instructor of record.

Prerequisite Management

Most responses contained questions or concerns about the actual implementation of Opt In and Out options. These were reasonable and made clear we need to reconsider current processes before initiating development or testing of a prerequisite management system.

With the ability to "Opt In with Exceptions" it will be important to provide sufficient lead time to allow the instructor to consider the exception request. In some cases, the current registration process only allows two days following first pass. Two days is an insufficient amount of time particularly for instructors teaching hundreds of students or if the exception requested requires research. In fact, Graduate Council suggested: "In order to provide enough time for communication between students and course instructor, an opportunity for students to challenge the extent to which they meet the prerequisites, before the beginning of "enrollment window of time" should be considered. Such an opportunity can simplify the

actual process of enrollment to classes. The process will allow communication with the instructor, if needed."

CLS asked, "Will a student still be able to add a course if they have not met the prerequisite but have a PTA number from the instructor?"

COCI suggested, the system should have four options: Strict Opt Out, Opt Out with Data, Opt In with Exceptions, and Strict Opt In. "Opt Out with Data" would allow an instructor to receive the prerequisite data about students enrolling in his or her courses but no action on the part of the student or the instructor would be required for any student to enroll in the course, regardless of prerequisite status."

At a minimum, the Division believes that should the "Strict Opt Out" be selected, the system should continue to track whether or not students enrolled satisfied the prerequisite.

Graduate Council pointed out, the conditions for enrollment of graduate students should not by default mirror that of undergraduate students.   The system needs to default to Opt In with Exceptions for all graduate students.   Graduate students have already received a bachelor's degree and many graduate students come to UC Davis from other institutions, some are international institutions which often lack a known articulation to current UC Davis courses.   Therefore, the instructor must decide.

In addition to the Opt In/Out options, every instructor should have access to a student's prerequisite completion record enrolling in the course, including final grade.

Campus Training and Communication

We are in agreement that OUR needs to take the lead in scheduling and providing training.   It would be wise to collaborate with COCI given the impact of COCI's authority on the process.

The Division will take the lead in getting information out to campus units concerning the development of a "Prerequisite Management System" after all of the details are finalized in particular after the "Opt In with Exceptions" process has been resolved.   The development and implementation timeline(s) **must** provide ample time for departments/programs to evaluate and revise prerequisites.   In particular we wish to communicate the ability to list a recommended preparatory course option in lieu of enforced prerequisites.

Additional Issues

CLS raised concern that the desire to Opt out could be influenced by the new budget model if departments perceive strong incentives to maximize enrollments and some deans pressure departments on the matter.   The Division will work with the Provost to determine how can we ensure departments are not penalized for choosing to enforce prerequisites?

As stated by COCI and UGC, faculty involved with teaching multiple sections of the same course must confer concerning prerequisite enforcement in order to assure fair and consistent treatment of our students.   The department is the best place for such discussions to occur and given department chair authority over course assignment, the department chair is best placed to encourage conferral. Furthermore, the Division believes it is the department chair's responsibility to assure all instructors assigned to teach a course understand the reason and purpose of prerequisites listed.   In doing so, we believe instructors will be inclined to enforce prerequisites.

The Division is interested in moving forward with system development and implementation.   However, we are not interested in rushing development.   The Division recognizes some of our colleagues believe the Prerequisite Management System is the highest technology priority and therefore all effort must be focused on development and implementation.   However, as a campus, we must insure time to fully develop and test all systems prior to implementation. Any Prerequisite Management System implemented will have a direct impact on student enrollment and thus extra attention must be focused on development and testing.

Data Request

The Academic Senate endorses COCI's suggestion as follows: "In order to help instructors and departments make informed decisions about the appropriate prerequisites and levels of prerequisite enforcement for each course, the OUR should be asked to generate and provide to faculty data for previous years, showing which students had and had not met the existing prerequisites for past course offerings. Faculty would then be able to assess how meeting and not meeting prerequisites had affected student performance and infer the likely consequences associated with enforcing any particular prerequisite in the future. Such data should be provided before instructors make decisions about changing prerequisites and about the level of enforcement to select for each of their courses."   We would appreciate the OUR working with COCI concerning the type of data requested and whether OUR is able to provide and distribute the data requested.

Next Steps

1. As stated above, it is clear that the Opt In with Exceptions process needs more work.   To this end, the Undergraduate and Graduate Council's will each appoint a workgroup to partner with OUR in developing process solutions our campus can engage to successfully manage the Opt In with Exceptions process for 1) undergraduate students and 2) graduate students.   The Undergraduate and Graduate Council workgroups will be appointed by February 15, 2015.   Each workgroup will submit its recommendation to the Division for review prior to moving forward with system development and implementation.   The workgroups should complete the task by April 1, 2015.

2. As stated above, the Division will communicate the Prerequisite Management System and need to review existing prerequisites in anticipation of the ability to automate enforcement.   Such communication will occur after all of the details are finalized, particularly, the process for enabling Opt In with Exceptions.

3. Academic departments and programs need more time than one calendar month to review and, if desired, update prerequisites.   Furthermore, the impending implementation of the new course approval system within the next six to nine months will impact departments/programs and colleges. It is unrealistic to expect departments and colleges to implement a new course system, update course prerequisites and implement a prerequisite management system simultaneously. There may be other systems currently in progress that may have a significant impact on our academic mission.   Informational and Educational Technology and OUR should consult concerning the potential impact of these systems and others in the queue on departments, programs, faculty and staff in the colleges/schools before the project timeline is adjusted and resubmitted to the Division. Project prioritization must occur that ensures all system development and implementation proceeds swiftly without overwhelming administrative or academic units, particularly academic departments and programs.

4. Departments need time to review and revise current prerequisites prior to full implementation. Given the opportunity, it is envisioned some departments will choose to recommend preparatory course work instead of listing a prerequisite(s). The timeline must be adjusted to allow department's sufficient time to review and discuss current and future prerequisites as well as sufficient time for review by colleges. Time should also be allocated for review of proposals by COCI when a proposal changes any part of a course proposal besides a prerequisite.

5. The timeline must be adjusted to allow adequate time for testing the system. It is more efficient to work through unforeseen issues in a test environment given the serious impact this system will have on our students. Failure to fully test/update the system before implementation of the Strict Opt In option may result in a negative impact on our students and faculty. The Division would like to review a proposal project timeline after review of the issues sited above and before moving forward.

6. We would like the Registrar to provide a monthly status report during an Undergraduate Council Meeting through calendar year 2015 or until the system is fully functional. The status report will allow Undergraduate Council to monitor the progress and alert the Divisional Chair if there are project delays or concerns. We would like the status report to provide information concerning development, testing and implementation.

In closing, the Division continues to support use of a Prerequisite Management System. However, the campus needs to work through the issues sited above before the project timeline is revised and development begins. We look forward to working with OUR throughout development and implementation of the system envisioned.

Sincerely,

André Knoesen, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Electrical and Computer Engineering

c: Committee on Courses of Instruction Chair Potter
   Graduate Council Chair Paw U
   Undergraduate Council Chair Williams
   Vice Chancellor de la Torre
   Chief Information Officer/Vice Provost Murali
   Vice Provost/Dean Thomas