

February 17, 2014

**To:** Bruno Nachtergaele, Chair, Academic Senate, U.C. Davis

Daniel Potter, Chair, Committee on Courses of Instruction, U.C. Davis

**From:** Dennis Pendleton, Dean, U.C. Davis Extension

Jeff Loux, Department Chair, Science, Agriculture and Natural Resources, UC Davis Extension, Associate Adjunct Professor in Landscape Architecture

**Re:** Consultation regarding COCI review of University Extension X100 series courses

We are writing to follow up on discussions with Dan—to seek consultation regarding a process for review of X100 series courses by the Committee on Courses of Instruction. Senate regulations stipulate that UC Extension X100 courses permit full UC academic credit to be given for Extension classes that are at the upper division undergraduate level. UC Davis Extension historically has not used the X100 series, rather using X400, graduate professional series courses, for academic credit for virtually all of our programs. X400 series courses are designed primarily for working professionals and non-UC students. UC Extension at many other campuses, including UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Riverside and UC Santa Cruz, have used X100 series courses frequently for many years. We understand now that X100 is the appropriate series for courses in the Sierra Institute, a new program at UC Davis for undergraduate students.

Just over a year ago, UC Davis Extension agreed to become the administrative home of the Sierra Institute, a program that offers multidisciplinary learning experiences in the field for undergraduate students. Originally affiliated with UC Santa Cruz and its Environmental Studies Department, the Sierra Institute has been teaching field courses for undergraduates for over 40 years. UC Davis faculty in the environmental sciences, social sciences and the humanities have enthusiastically supported the establishment of SI at UC Davis. Initial students in the program, from UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz and other universities have given outstanding evaluations of their learning experiences in SI courses. Department chairs and deans in CA&ES, the Division of Social Sciences, HArCS and the School of Education approved courses in the SI program—initially in the X400 series. Courses in this series can be applied, with certain limits, in undergraduate degree programs but we now understand that the X100 designation, intended specifically for an undergraduate audience, is the more appropriate series for Sierra Institute courses. Moreover, UC Santa Cruz, where SI courses traditionally carried X100 series credit over many years, will soon not accept X400 credit for students from that campus. By policy X100 series courses are reviewed and approved by COCI as well as by the department chair or dean of the relevant discipline.

A few words of background regarding the **Sierra Institute** and courses in this program might be useful. SI provides quarter-long field courses to undergraduates in various environmental topics including field ecology, nature philosophy and writing,

sustainability practices and environmental education. We view these courses as valuable opportunities for UC students to expand and enrich their campus experience with field immersion and inter-disciplinary exposure to environmental issues, analysis, critical thinking, writing and field study. Sierra Institute programs are open to students from any university and, while the majority of students have historically come from UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis students have participated as well, and we expect an increase in enrollments from our campus. X100 academic course credit will permit the program to be easily transferrable for any University of California student, whether at Santa Cruz, Berkeley, Davis or elsewhere. Our goal is to make this enrichment experience a viable option for undergraduates seeking a unique (and affordable) quarter “away,” much like a quarter or summer abroad. Faculty supporters from diverse disciplines have joined us in strongly supporting these types of learning opportunities, believing they round out a student’s university experience, and complement classroom, text and lab time. For many, the “quarter away” can offer life-changing shifts in perspective, understanding, motivation and direction.

We appreciate your considering our request for COCI approval of a relatively small number of field environmental courses for X100 credit at UC Davis. Dan has advised us that primary concerns in COCI’s review of proposed new courses are (1) does the course overlap with any existing campus courses? and (2) is the course acceptable for GE credit? In the case of Sierra Institute courses neither criterion should be an issue. These classes are all stand alone, new courses, and quite distinct from other campus courses and programs. In addition, we are not seeking GE credit for any of the courses. Thus we appreciate Dan’s suggestion that expedited review of courses in this program may be possible.

Prior to our request for COCI review, we have submitted complete course descriptions and syllabi, instructor CVs, reading lists, course objectives, and other appropriate materials to the department or school of the relevant discipline (e.g., field botany classes are reviewed by Plant Sciences), and received full approval from each Department Chair or Associate Dean (usually in consultation with the faculty member in each specialty). We will attach copies of signed approvals along with the review package of information for each course in requesting COCI review of the program.

To aid in the approval process we have packaged the classes into clusters representing each quarter’s program. We have also established a priority list in case COCI work-load does not permit review of all the courses in the short term. Some of the courses are being planned and advertised for this spring quarter, while others can wait until summer, fall or winter.

Thank you so much for assisting us in establishing at UC Davis this unique addition to undergraduate learning opportunities. If you have questions, please contact Dr. Jeff Loux at 530-757-8577 or [jdiloux@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jdiloux@ucdavis.edu).