

April 7th, 2023

Chancellor Khosla and Executive Vice Chancellor Simmons:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding impending changes to the School of Biological Sciences and UC San Diego educational mission. As a student-centered, research-focused, service-oriented public university, we aim to provide excellence in undergraduate education with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Biological Sciences is being asked to bear the substantially increased costs of graduate and undergraduate Instructional Assistants (IAs), which will dramatically reduce the number of IAs available in our courses. We ask that you provide any financial support you can to minimize the harm to our undergraduate students and uphold the integrity of a UC San Diego education.

Faculty in Biological Sciences have relied on instructional assistants (IAs) as critical members of our instructional teams for

- Running student-centered discussion sections, which are often the only “small-class” biology experience that students get during their early years at UC San Diego.
- Providing one-on-one help during office hours and via email/discussion boards.
- Serving as role models and informal peer advisors who help students navigate UC San Diego and their biology academic careers. This is especially critical for first-year, transfer, and first-generation students.

The School of Biological Sciences graduates the largest number of biology majors in the country, and enrollment in Biology courses exceeds 5,000 students every quarter. Biology courses are fundamental not only for our Biology majors but also for non-majors who want to pursue lucrative and societally-important careers in the healthcare professions. Without immediate additional funding from the university to offset the impact of the new UAW contract, the School of Biological Sciences has no alternative but to substantially reduce Instructional Assistant allocations and eliminate traditional (32-person) discussion sections in lecture courses **starting in Fall 2023**, replacing them with a single discussion section in one zoom room regardless of the size of the class (many of our classes have 300+ students). **This dramatic reduction in students’ instructional support will harm students’ learning, community-building, success, and retention.**

The School of Biological Sciences has worked hard to support our diverse student population. In BioSci, 22% of the students we graduate belong to minoritized ethnic groups (Black, Latinx, or Native American), as opposed to 16% for Engineering and 15% for Physical Sciences, and over 60% of our graduates are women. This reduction in IA support for students will likely significantly and disproportionately impact students from underserved communities, reversing the hard-won gains the School has made in supporting these students. This crisis is unfolding right now and only immediate action can help avoid this harm.

We are deeply concerned about the negative impacts of the impending change on the educational mission of UCSD and on the reputation of the School of Biological Sciences and

UCSD as a whole. We urge you to consider the long-term impacts on the quality and equity of the education that UC San Diego provides and to provide our School with additional funding to help ameliorate the dramatic impacts on our students' education. We also ask for priority in room scheduling so we can develop new models of instruction to replace sections.

Sincerely,
Concerned Biology Faculty

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