COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON COURSES OF INSTRUCTION
Eileen Grady, PhD, Chair

April 18, 2006

Dear Chair Greenspan:

It is with great enthusiasm that the Committee requests your consideration and support for the implementation of an online course preparation, review and approval system at UCSF. The members of the Committee recently had the opportunity to review the online course system developed by the UC Santa Barbara Academic Senate Office and strongly believes that the implementation of a similar system at UCSF would offer many advantages over the current system for faculty and the UCSF campus community for the following reasons: 1) It would add an exponential amount of efficiency to the current paper-based system by significantly decreasing the amount of time necessary for faculty to prepare course forms and respond to Committee requests for changes, as well as facilitate approvals at levels of department, school, Senate and Registrar. 2) It will facilitate maintenance of an accurate online catalog. 3) It will simultaneously serve as an archive of courses and course actions readily available to the campus community. 4) It would firmly establish a permanent delineation of the responsibilities of the Senate Committee and the Registrar to enable a smooth course review process in the future, regardless of the personnel and faculty involved.

The Committee realizes that currently there are no funds allocated to either the Academic Senate or the Registrar to develop a UCSF online course system, but would like to ask that the Academic Senate advocate for funding necessary to develop and implement such a system. The Santa Barbara Academic Senate Office indicated that they have a total of 1.8 FTE dedicated to IT and technology development, which allowed for the development of their system, in cooperation with their Registrar’s Office. We respectfully request that you forward our request to the Senate’s Academic Planning and Budget Committee for conceptual approval and support for funding. We would greatly appreciate any support to begin to formulate the necessary software required. We anticipate that this process would occur over a period of one to three years, as three years were required by the Santa Barbara’s Senate Office.

**Reasons for Investing in an Online Course System at UCSF**
The most significant advantages of a well-designed online course review system for the UCSF campus would be a significant reduction of faculty time, errors and omissions as well as an increased efficiency at all levels of the course review process. First, by automating many of the tasks now carried out on paper, delays due to the movement of the printed forms would be eliminated. For example, each course form requires three signatures before it can be submitted to our Committee. This signature approval process could be integrated into an online system, eliminating the need to transfer paper forms between offices. Second, an online course review system could be “smart” programmed to ensure that forms are completely filled in before the application could proceed to the next step. Many of the delays in the current system are due to
incomplete or incorrectly completed forms. At least 90% of the forms we currently process need correction or completion.

Most importantly for our Committee, members would be better equipped to fulfill their mandate, which includes verifying appropriate faculty titles, verifying that similar courses are not currently being taught, and understanding how the course under review fits into the curriculum offered at UCSF as a whole.

An online course review system could integrate with an electronic archive system in the Registrar’s office to make course information more readily available to the UCSF campus community. Currently, the approved printed course forms are only available for photocopy at the Registrar’s office during a ten-day period following the course review process. Through an online course system, this information could be available to the appropriate parties upon demand. In addition, an online course review system could include a course renewal option which would automatically archive courses which had not been attended in the last five years. This could keep the online course catalog up-to-date.

When UCSF is able to implement an online course review system, two critical elements of the current system should be preserved. First, the face-to-face meetings of the Committee should continue to be an integral part of the course review process. The health science curriculum at UCSF requires a careful peer review process and the working discussions held during Committee meetings are essential. The diversity of perspectives offered by a full committee review ensures that the appropriate action is taken and that a plurality of voices from each School is represented. With the implementation of an online course review system, the committee would still meet to discuss courses, however these meetings could be much shorter and more efficient. Moreover, Committee members who are occasionally called upon to submit their opinions in absentia might be able to more easily participate in the Committee’s work.

UCSF faculty are required to include course objectives for each course. Currently, these objectives are an integral part of the course review process for the Committee. However, once the course application is reviewed and the form is archived at the Registrar’s office, those objectives are not readily accessible. An online course review system could include a mechanism for accessing that information for appropriate users such as Committee members or staff.

I hope this request will be given serious consideration. The Committee would welcome the opportunity, through its established Sub-Committee on Course Form Automation, to participate in any future discussions and provide additional detail needed for consideration of this proposal.

Please feel free to contact me at 502-7920 if I can be of any further assistance, or if you would like to meet to further discuss this proposal.

Sincerely yours,

Eileen Grady, PhD
Chair, UCSF Committee on Courses of Instruction