

August 11, 2025

Mary Croughan

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

RE: START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

Dear Provost Croughan,

The START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms was forwarded to all standing committees of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. Ten committees responded: Courses of Instruction (COCI), Planning and Budget – Instructional Space Advisory Subcommittee (ISAS), Undergraduate Council (UGC), and the Faculty Executive Committees of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), the College of Biological Sciences (CBS), the College of Engineering (COE), the College of Letters and Science (L&S), the Graduate School of Management (GSM), the School of Medicine (SOM), and the School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM).

Committees express a range of opinions on the recommendation. Overall, ISAS, L&S, GSM, and UGC support the objectives of the recommendation, while COE and COCI express concern regarding several aspects of the recommendation. Additionally, CAES, CBS, COE, L&S, and COCI provide their thoughts on the “HyFlex” modality, and COE, UGC, and COCI discuss departmental space. GSM, COE, and COCI also provide a few suggestions for consideration.

After years of experimentation with remote and online instruction, I hear from an increasing number of faculty coming to the conclusion that many students need to come back into the classroom for in-person engagement and activities to achieve optimal learning and exploration. Although the reasons are varied, the theme shines through clearly in the committee responses. L&S notes that due to academic integrity issues, faculty have had to rely more on in-class activities and assignments. Both CBS and COCI emphasize the importance of in-person attendance.

The concerns are especially apparent with regard to the HyFlex modality. CBS expresses concern regarding the logistical and pedagogical drawbacks of the HyFlex modality. CAES, CBS, COE, L&S and COCI comment on the “HyFlex” modality and hybrid learning generally. CAES notes that while the HyFlex modality is a useful method to increase course capacity in a form that students already self-select, some compromise would be necessary to enable this modality on campus. COE emphasizes that the use of hybrid learning is a pedagogical question and should be based solely on the instructor’s judgement regarding the most effective teaching style for their class material, adding that they disagree with this proposal as a blanket recommendation. COCI raises the concern that although research suggests HyFlex courses can be effective in some circumstances, the committee is skeptical that instructors have enough time and training to create and implement effective versions of these courses. COCI explains that HyFlex courses are more difficult to develop and teach than fully virtual courses and suggests that resources would be better spent encouraging the development of more high-quality virtual or hybrid courses instead of HyFlex.

COE, UGC, and COCI comment on the recommendation to increase the sharing of instructional space that is currently held by individual departments. COCI is concerned that departments will see more negative consequences than positive from this recommendation, noting that departmental spaces are rarely used only for instruction and sharing these spaces may both reduce departmental flexibility and require the department to respond to maintenance and Information Technology (IT) support requests from users outside their departments. COE emphasizes that there should not be a requirement to report space usage to a centralized campus data reporting system as this could be viewed as syphoning more resources away from departments. COCI adds that it is unclear whether the rooms held by departments would fill current classroom needs as they tend to be small. In a similar vein, UGC opines that departments should maintain ultimate control of their space unless they are appropriately compensated for renting out their space. Such a scheme would encourage departments to avoid underutilization of space and buy-in for coordination, which requires scarce faculty and staff time. COE notes that any coordination that does occur between peer departments should be encouraged at the College-level (not the central campus level) insofar as this could improve efficiency in working towards the priorities of the College.

GSM, COE, and COCI provide a few additional recommendations for consideration. GSM recommends considering programs built around courses with non-standard scheduling for part-time and professional students, adding that any shared space inventory must be able to flexibly accommodate atypical course schedules. COE notes that the campus and future capital projects should focus on methods to encourage class attendance by scheduling instruction from 9am to 4pm without recommending changes in methods of instruction that may degrade learning outcomes. COE adds that enrollment targets should be set to recognize the physical capacity of our current teaching environment.

Regarding the testing center, COCI suggests that the administration should look into additional space that can be used for final week exam accommodations and midterm exams for virtual courses. Multiple committee comments stress how overstretched the testing center is, with large and persistent shortfalls in capacity during peak exam periods when they are most needed.

The Davis Division appreciates the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Katheryn Niles Russ, Ph.D.
 Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate
 Professor of Economics
 University of California, Davis

Enclosed: Davis Division Committee Responses

c: Edwin M. Arevalo, Executive Director, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

June 27, 2025

Katheryn Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

Dear Kadee:

Thank you for asking the Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI) to provide input on the RFC *START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms*. COCI reviewed and discussed the consultation materials at our June 6, 2025, meeting.

Use of departmental space

COCI agrees that if departments are inclined to share their space with other units, they should do so, but is skeptical that further encouragement in this area will make significant progress toward reducing the number of courses offered outside of prime-time hours. The incentives included in this proposal seem unlikely to outweigh the costs to departments. It is also unclear to COCI that the rooms held by departments, which tend to be small rooms, would fill current classroom needs. COCI has been regularly briefed by the Registrar that the campus struggles most in finding space in large size classrooms.

Departmental spaces are rarely used only for instruction. Allowing these spaces to be used by other units will reduce departmental flexibility to hold seminars, lab group meetings, interviews, conferences, office hours, qualifying exams, etc.; many of these activities cannot be scheduled as far in advance as course placement occurs. Sharing these spaces also means that the departments would have to be available to respond to maintenance and IT support issues from users outside their department, which they may not have interest or capacity to provide. The committee also noted previous trouble they have had teaching in space that was not centrally controlled (e.g. when a projector went out in a Student Housing controlled room, it wasn't fixed for weeks, so the instructor could not provide effective instruction to the students).

Therefore, COCI is finally concerned that departments will have more negative consequences than positive from this action.

HyFlex instruction

Part of this proposal involves encouraging the development of HyFlex courses, which are classically defined as courses in which students can attend a given class period in person, synchronously online, or asynchronously online. The present proposal seems to be assuming only in-person synchronous or online asynchronous. Some research shows that asynchronous attendance is associated with poorer outcomes in HyFlex courses.

The research shows that HyFlex courses can be effective, but much of this research is based on carefully developed HyFlex courses. The committee is skeptical that UC Davis instructors have sufficient time, training, and inclination to create and implement effective HyFlex courses, which are more difficult to develop and teach than fully virtual courses as one needs to cover multiple modalities at once.

Simply using lecture capture technologies to make recordings of classes and have some students watch these recorded lectures instead of coming in person will almost certainly cause a substantial reduction in student learning outcomes. Lecture recordings, while useful, are considered supplementary learning materials, not primary materials because the designed course materials would be likely geared for those in the classroom and create equity issues. The proposal seems to be recognizing that some students are not coming to class. From an educational quality perspective, attending lectures in person offers numerous benefits that should not be overlooked. We should be increasing (not potentially discouraging) classroom attendance unless courses are very carefully designed to provide top-quality online instructional materials.

Given that developing a good HyFlex course would be more work than developing a good virtual or hybrid course, it seems like a better solution would be to encourage the development of more high-quality virtual or hybrid courses. COCI notes that hybrid courses often reduce the need for lecture halls but increase the need for smaller classrooms, so some careful study would be needed to determine whether such courses would solve the space problems.

Testing Center Space

COCI recommends the administration look into additional space for the testing center, particularly space that can be used:

- (1) For finals week exam accommodations, as current capacity is not sufficient for SDC students during finals week.
- (2) For midterm exams in virtual courses. COCI is seeing more virtual courses requesting to hold in-person exams to aid in combatting academic integrity concerns in online exams, but space for those exam during the quarter is not consistently available.

If we can provide any additional information, please let us know.

Thank you.



Colleen Bronner
Chair, Committee on Courses of Instruction

June 6, 2025

Kadee Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: Request for Consultation: START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation:
Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

Dear Kadee:

The Undergraduate Council (UGC) has reviewed and discussed the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms.

UGC's deliberations on the RFC was generally positive. UGC supports the idea of having an inventory of Department controlled spaces especially if the inventory clearly defines the type of space (general classroom, laboratory space, performance space, etc.), amenities the space has (chalk boards, AV, etc.), and the value of the space for general classroom use, and the maximum number of occupants. Conference type rooms in general should not be part of this assessment. UGC wants to emphasize that the inventory should only be used to identify space and provide information on the space to identify potential rooms that could be used for general classroom assignment. However, this inventory should only be used for information to allow for negotiations between the Registrar's office and the Department.

UGC is in favor of allowing the Registrar to negotiate with Departments for usage of departmental space for general classroom usage. Negotiations are important because Departments may have spent their funds to establish, upgrade and maintain these rooms. Because of potential departmental investment in such spaces, UGC believes that the departments should maintain ultimate control of the space unless appropriately compensated that is agreeable to both sides. UGC would not be in favor of such space being "confiscated" or "taken over" by central campus without the approval of the Department or College. UGC believes that Departments will need incentives to reward sharing their space. This could be a "win-win" situation, since departmental funding is decreasing across campus, "renting" departmental classrooms to central campus could provide additional funds to departments. What options will be available to departments? Is central campus willing to rent the rooms to the Registrar's Office for specific days, hours, or quarters? Overall, this could be financially beneficial to departments.

Overall, UGC agrees with the recommendations/proposal and believes it could provide a mutually beneficial opportunity between Departments and the Registrar's office.

Thank you.



David Kyle
Chair, Undergraduate Council

May 20, 2025

Katheryn (Kadee) Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: Request for Consultation on the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities
Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

Dear Kadee:

The Instructional Space Advisory Subcommittee ([ISAS](#)) has reviewed the Request for Consultation (RFC) on the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation on Improving the Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms and supports the proposed recommendation.

The Instructional Space Advisory Subcommittee appreciates the opportunity to comment on the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms.

Sincerely,



Timothy McNeil
Chair, Instructional Space Advisory Subcommittee

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

FEC: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Committee Response

June 13, 2025

The CA&ES FEC reports one comment received:

"The HyFlex model is a highly useful model to allow students to engage with the course as they desire if it is online or in person or some mix. This seems to be a method by which it would be possible to increase course capacity in a form that students already self-select. Presently attendance is well below 80% unless there is some form of forced attendance requirement. However, this is at loggerheads with level of effort being requested to redesign online syllabi as discussed in the START report on the online summer courses. It would seem that some compromise would be necessary to enable the HyFlex model on campus, expecting the level of effort to shift from a pure attendance format to a HyFlex format as described in even the streamlined summer course online report is unlikely to make a dent."

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

FEC: College of Biological Sciences Committee Response

June 13, 2025

The CBS FEC has reviewed the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms and expressed mixed opinions on the proposal, with concerns about misleading terminology, inefficient use of existing classroom spaces, logistical and pedagogical drawbacks of testing centers and hyflex models, overcrowded testing resources, and the importance of in-person attendance, though some support the idea.

Anonymous faculty comments:

I am in favor of better communication and strategic use of existing classroom spaces, though I am not totally convinced this will ease much of the burden. Perhaps I am wrong, but it does not seem like departments or units often have sole control over large classroom spaces that seem to be particularly high in demand. As with other classroom allocation issues, it seems like there is a surprising lack of information and data applied to these problems. I strongly disagree that using testing centers or "hyflex" is a good solution, for pedagogical and logistical reasons (many of which *faculty* stated). In addition to those points, I will add that we are also having reduced grader and teaching assistant support, which will make alternative testing centers and proctoring even more problematic.

The intent to use space more efficiently is good. However, we should wonder whether 50% or less attendance is acceptable or if we should return to encouraging higher in person attendance on account of the data that students who attend classes tend to perform better on their tests. The testing center is severely overburdened, cannot provide testing for current accommodated students and the number of students with approved accommodations is expected to continue increase. The suggestion that they can take on additional testing of non-accommodated students seems unrealistic. The idea of assigning tests to dedicated large spaces that are distinct from the instruction classroom may work - but the extent of overlap between midterm dates with other classes needs to be better considered. There is no consideration for the implications on academic misconduct and how to ensure a fair equitable testing environment that we are required to provide as faculty according to the academic code of conduct.

This is great idea!

June 11, 2025

To: Katheryn Russ
Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

From: Michael Kleeman
Chair, College of Engineering FEC

RE: Comment on START proposal for Improving the Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

Dear Chair Russ:

The College of Engineering FEC has reviewed the START proposal for Improving the Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms. The committee agrees with the objective of increased efficiency allocating classrooms so that more students can attend class during regular hours of 9am to 4pm thereby leading to improved learning outcomes. We do not agree, however, with several of the suggested methods to accomplish these goals.

Recommendation 1 focuses on instructional space maintained by individual Departments or other units. We feel that coordination between peer Departments should be encouraged at the College level, but there should not be a requirement to report space usage to a centralized campus data reporting system. Coordination at the local level can improve efficiency working towards the priorities of the College. Scheduling by central campus will be viewed as syphoning away more resources from Departments already suffering under extreme budget cuts. We recommended against an analogous proposal for reporting lab utilization for similar reasons.

Recommendation 5 encourages hybrid learning as a method to reduce the demand for larger classrooms. The committee strongly disagrees with this approach as a blanket recommendation. Some faculty have voluntarily adopted the hybrid approach, but this is a pedagogical question that should be based solely on the instructor's judgement about the most effective teaching style for the class material. Students enrolled in in-person classes should be encouraged to attend class, participate in discussions, and contribute to the interactive learning environment that defines the University experience at UC Davis. That can only happen if there is a seat for every student enrolled in the class.

In summary, the campus should focus on methods to encourage class attendance by scheduling instruction during normal hours (9am to 4pm) without pushing changes on methods of instruction that could ultimately degrade learning outcomes. Future capital projects should maintain focus on these objectives, and enrollment targets should be set to recognize the physical capacity of our current teaching environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,



Michael Kleeman
Chair, COE FEC

Katheryn (Kadee) Russ
Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: Request for Consultation on the START Committee on Improving Our Campus Support
Services Recommendation: Shared Administrative Process Automation Platform

Dear Kadee:

The FEC of the Graduate School of Management has reviewed the Request for Consultation (RFC) on the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation on Improving the Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms. Though we support the objectives of the initiative, we ask the committee to consider programs built around courses with non-standard scheduling for part-time and professional students. For example, the GSM has classes that meet every other week, classes that meet every week for half of the quarter, intensive classes that meet for 12 hours over 3 days, and many other schedules that are not typical for full-time students. Any shared space inventory must be able to flexibly accommodate atypical course schedules.

The GSM thanks the committee for its work.

Sincerely,

Gina Dokko
Chair, GSM FEC

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

FEC: College of Letters and Science Committee Response

June 13, 2025

The L&S FEC generally supports this, but due to academic integrity issues, faculty are needing to do more in-class activities/assessments so the flex model described here may not be generally applicable.

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General Assignment Classrooms

FEC: School of Medicine Committee Response

June 13, 2025

The School of Medicine FEC elected not to review this item and defers expertise to those with direct connection to the content.

**START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities
Recommendation: Improve Capacity of General
Assignment Classrooms**

FEC: School of Veterinary Medicine Committee Response

June 13, 2025

The SVM Executive Committee has no comments to provide for this RFC.