WHEREAS faculty have primacy over the curriculum and have specialized knowledge of the skills and subject matter pertaining to their respective disciplines, as well as the expertise developed over time and through experience to determine which particular pedagogical methods can most effectively convey those skills and that subject matter to their students; and

WHEREAS well-designed and executed online programs can be a useful addition to the variety of pedagogical methods available to faculty; and

WHEREAS the best online programs develop from faculty working on their individual campuses within their particular disciplines who have immediate knowledge both of the demands of those disciplines and the needs of their students; and

WHEREAS California State University, San Bernardino, has been a leader in the development of online degree programs; and

WHEREAS a CSU system-wide initiative can offer the potential benefits both (1) in the financing and marketing of online programs due to economies of scale and (2) in serving as a repository of best practices developed at the several campuses in the system; and

WHEREAS a system-wide online initiative must (1) derive--first-of-all--from the faculty who will actually perform online instruction when and where it is appropriate, (2) address the intellectual property rights of faculty who create courses, (3) indicate how the quality and effectiveness of online courses will be determined, (4) indicate how new curricula are to be developed and what approval process will be applied to them, and (5) indicate the relationship between maintaining the quality of individual courses and maintaining the quality of degrees and programs, and assuring that the CSU degree will be meaningful and our graduates well educated; and

WHEREAS the Katz Report and the online initiative based upon it fail to address any of the foregoing considerations adequately, going so far as to proposing the creation of a twenty-fourth online campus, independent from the existing campuses;

WHEREAS the development of a CSU Online Initiative is entirely premature until adequate consultation has been engaged in with the faculty of the campuses; and because there has not been such consultation, the funding of the Katz Report, the proposed appointment of an Executive Director, and all other expenses associated with the CSU Online Initiative constitute an unwise use of critically scarce University resources; now, therefore, let it be

RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate of the California State University, San Bernardino, call upon the Chancellor to suspend the expenditure of any further University funds on a system-wide online initiative until at least 80% of the campus senates approve the basic issues involved in such an initiative has been completed; and, be it further
RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be distributed among CSU Campus Senate Chairs, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate of the California State University, Chancellor Charles B. Reed, Executive Vice Chancellor Ephraim P. Smith, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer Benjamin F. Quillian, the Technology Steering Committee Presidents (Karen Haynes, Jolene Koester, Rollin Richmond, Richard Rush, John Welty, F. King Alexander, Jeff Armstrong, Millie Garcia, Paul Zingg), and members of the Board of Trustees of the California State University.

Approved by the Faculty Senate, unanimously

__________________________       _______________________________
Jodie B. Ullman, Chair           November 1, 2011
Date
Re: Online education pilot program

Dear Mark:

Last year the Academic Council endorsed the UC online education pilot program with the understanding that only private funding was to be used to support the program. At the time it was suggested that as much as $30M could be raised from extramural sources to support this program. Since then, 29 letters of intent from UC faculty were selected out of 70 submissions for the planning phase of the online pilot courses. Despite the optimistic funding projections, however, only $748K in private funding from Next Generation Learning Challenges (funded by the Gates and Hewlett foundations) has been secured, and that funding requires that course material be open-source, available to others to freely use and adapt. The majority of funds for the online pilot courses are to come from a loan that UC will make to the program of up to $6.9M. The loan is intended to be repaid with fees from non-UC students taking the pilot online courses.

The members of the Council have received multiple expressions of concern from faculty about the changes in both the funding and planning for the project compared with that originally was endorsed by the Council. I am instructed by the Council to communicate the scope of the concerns raised across the campuses.

The Council’s concerns reflect neither on the work of our colleagues in crafting pilot course proposals, nor on our support for experimenting with online education to produce educational flexibility and to improve access to UC-quality courses for prospective transfer students. Rather, the Council’s questions are raised in relation to the pilot program as a whole, as outlined in the Project Plan: UC Online Education (March 24, 2011). There are questions on oversight and evaluation of the program, the dependence of the budget model on enrollments of non-UC students, the corresponding focus on lower division requirements and possible competition with the Community College mission, and the financial feasibility of paying back the loan. The program description, as well as any program protocols and communications regarding the program, must be clear that there is no guarantee of UC undergraduate admission upon completion of the online courses and that there is as of yet no mechanism for establishing eligibility for transfer on the basis of the courses in the program description. Additionally, there is no coherent curriculum design reflected in the courses, nor has a transfer curriculum been proposed as part of the program. The fundamental question of whether an on-line curriculum can or should provide the basis of a transfer curriculum separate from a course of study at an accredited institution has not been raised and remains to be addressed. The
Council also questions how non-UC students' qualifications are to be determined and, given other equally attractive and perhaps more affordable online courses, whether the enrollments will be sufficient to be able to pay back the loan. In short, while the pilot project was intended to enhance access and to generate revenue, it is now unclear whether these goals may be meshed and met.

Council also notes that while the project description indicates that courses will be offered beginning July 2011, to our knowledge no course proposals have yet been submitted to Senate course committees for approval as part of the pilot project. We understand that at this point courses may not be sufficiently developed to move forward as part of the project. Yet the project description lists as a program “risk” the possibility that Senate courses committees will be slow to grant course approval. The Council wants to be clear that delays in implementation of the program beyond what is contemplated in the program description are not attributable to a lack of Senate action, but to the fact that the program proponents underestimated the time required to put courses into place. Senate evaluation should necessarily encompass both the intellectual content of the class materials and the modality of delivery.

Given these concerns, the Council advises that no additional online pilot courses be developed, beyond those currently selected and funded, until the following takes place:

(1) The evaluation procedure contemplated in the proposal must be conducted and then subjected to independent rigorous review in order to assess online courses that are taught in this pilot program. We fully appreciate that evaluation tools to assess the online program are a significant element of the project and, when developed, these tools might be useful to assess the quality of other courses within the UC system. The quality and desirability of the courses as a means of producing a high-quality online component to UC education should be assessed. The efficacy of the technological aspects of the course delivery (appropriate platform, testing mechanism, etc.), the business model beyond the pilot program (profitability), and the pros and cons of this educational direction for UC should be assessed.

(2) Any full proposal for expanding the online pilot program would be developed on the basis of the findings in (1), defining the proposed expansion, its aims and objectives, the scope and impact on the system, and the funding model.

On behalf of the Academic Council,

Daniel L. Simmons, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Lawrence Pitts, Provost and EVP
    Daniel Greenstein, Vice Provost
    Robert Anderson, Academic Council Vice Chair
    Academic Council
    Martha Winnacker, Academic Senate Executive Director