

Resolution of the Academic Senate of Cuyamaca College on Behalf of Student Success and Equity:  
“Lower Class Caps to Close Equity Gaps”

**Whereas**, the vision of Cuyamaca College is “Equity, Excellence, and Social Justice through Education” and our mission is to advance “equity and social justice through student-centered and innovative approaches to education. We strive to create unique and meaningful learning experiences that build upon the strengths and socio-cultural experiences of our diverse student population and the communities we serve by providing programs that lead to certificates, degrees, transfer, career opportunities, and ultimately social and economic mobility.”

**Whereas**, creating sustainable equitable outcomes requires commitment to and investment in long-term institutional changes; the 2022-2028 strategic goals of Cuyamaca College are to increase equitable access, to eliminate equity gaps in course success, to increase persistence and eliminate equity gaps, to increase completion and eliminate equity gaps, and to increase hiring and retention of diverse employees to reflect the students and communities we serve;

**Whereas**, student-centered, equity-focused teaching practices necessarily require more individualized, care-driven, time-consuming, emotionally-taxing, and intellectually rigorous approaches to serving students than traditional teaching practices, which are often non-equitable, trauma-inducing, and white normative;

**Whereas**, many in-person and online courses at Cuyamaca College have class caps that are not conducive to individualized, student-centered, equitable instruction of the material, with some courses enrolling as many as 59 students, and in this regard, we are an outlier in the San Diego Imperial County community college region;<sup>i</sup>

**Whereas**, these subjects include but are not limited to Anthropology, Art History, Astronomy, Business, Computer Science and Information Systems, Economics, Ethnic Studies, Geography, Health Education, History, Humanities, Kumeyaay Studies, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Social Work, and Sociology;

**Whereas**, an equity lens requires us to consider context and positionality, it is important to make sure class sizes reflect discipline and student needs. Some disciplines and some courses, especially those focused on developing language and writing skills, need a lower class cap in order to offer equity-minded and student-centered instruction;

**Whereas**, smaller class sizes are pedagogically superior since instructors can offer prompt responses to student questions, provide specialized instruction and individual attention, develop supportive and trusting relationships with students, and demonstrate care for students; students in smaller classes can fully engage in discussions, collaborate with one another, and establish relationships and build trust with their instructors;<sup>ii</sup>

**Whereas**, students from historically marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by larger class sizes, especially in remote and online modalities; much of our instruction remains online, and research has shown that online learners are more likely to be Students of Color<sup>iii</sup> and are at greater risk of non-success than their in-person counterparts.<sup>iv</sup> 69% of students are from historically marginalized communities and 68% are low income; they stand at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQIA

status, low income in an age of unprecedented wealth inequality, mixed immigration status, and the cumulative loss of learning caused by Covid 19. Students face multiple challenges, and large class sizes should not be a further obstacle to their learning and success;

**Whereas**, equity gaps are smaller and students have better learning outcomes in smaller classes when compared to students in larger classes;<sup>v</sup> the detrimental effects of large class sizes is well documented and researched at both the K-12<sup>vi</sup> and college level;<sup>vii</sup>

**Whereas**, the current approach to setting class caps does not support equity-minded approaches to instruction, but rather accommodates traditional, inequitable, white-normative institutional designs; equity-minded teaching and learning is unsustainable using this approach.

**Whereas**, in order to accommodate the current system where efficiency is the priority while equity is the promise, faculty either overwork themselves in the name of furthering equity or they prioritize their well-being by streamlining their teaching, assessment, and grading practices at the expense of quality, equity-focused service to students; while this affects all faculty, part-time faculty are especially impacted by large class caps since they are paid less than their full-time counterparts and as a result often teach more than 5 classes across several districts;

**Resolved**, that we invest in fulfilling the commitments we have publicly outlined in our Strategic Goals and our Mission, Vision, and Values.

**Resolved**, the Academic Senate of Cuyamaca College upholds that current class caps are too large to support equitable teaching practices, especially in disciplines that focus on language and writing development, and diminish students' chances of success.

**Resolved**, that the Academic Senate of Cuyamaca College advocates that we adopt a 35-student class cap for courses that are currently capped at 50 with the stipulation that some programs may need lower class caps in order to deliver student-centered, individualized, and equity-focused instruction in all teaching modalities.

**Resolved**, that the Academic Senate of Cuyamaca College embraces our mission to be student-centered and to advance our anti-racism and equity efforts for our students, of whom 69% are from historically marginalized communities and 68% are low income, by recommending to our District and our Governing Board that they support lower class caps designed to help our students be successful while taking classes in any given discipline.

- i. See <https://www.imperial.edu/student-news/spring-2023-schedule-now-available>  
See <https://www.sdcity.edu/students/schedule.aspx>  
See <https://collselfserv.swccd.edu/Student/Courses/Search>
- ii. Sellers, Evie “Small College Class Size Benefits.” *Seattle Pi*.  
2021 <https://education.seattlepi.com/small-college-class-size-benefits-1269.html>  
Accessed March 04, 2023
- iii. Smith, Ember, and Richard V. Reeves. “Students of Color most likely to be leaning online: Districts must work even harder on race equity.” Brookings Institution. September 23, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/09/23/students-of-color-most-likely-to-be-leaning-online-districts-must-work-even-harder-on-race-equity/>  
Accessed March 04, 2023.
- iv. Bettinger, Eric P. et al. “Virtual Classrooms: How Online College Courses Affect Student Success.” <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/online-inperson-bflt.pdf>  
Accessed March 04, 2024
- v. Cuseo, Joe “The Empirical Case against *Large Class Size*: Adverse Effects on the Teaching, Learning, and Retention of First-Year Students.” 2007, page  
8. <https://www.classsizematters.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/Week-13-Cuseo-1.pdf>  
Accessed March 04, 2023.
- vi. Schanzenbach, Diane Whitmore. “Does Class Size Matter?” National Education Policy Center, February 2014. [https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/pb\\_-\\_class\\_size.pdf](https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/pb_-_class_size.pdf)  
Accessed March 04, 2023.
- vii. Yelkper, Daniel et al. “Effects of Large Class size on Effective Teaching and Learning at the Winneba Campus of the UEW, Ghana.” *US-China Education Review A* 3 (2012)  
319-322; <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED532900.pdf>  
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