

December 18, 2024

ELIZABETH H. SIMMONS  
Executive Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Implementation of Academic Support Model (ASM)

Dear Elizabeth:

In recent weeks, Senate leadership has heard significant concerns from faculty expressing uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion regarding our new Academic Support Model (ASM). To gain a better sense of the concerns, we consulted with the Senate members of the Fall 2024 Implementation Advisory Committee. Our takeaway is that the transition to the ASM gives individual schools on general campus more autonomy to make decisions about funding priorities and allocations. This move allows school deans greater flexibility to determine how limited resources are distributed to address school needs. While this proposed model is a reasonable path forward in principle, the details matter significantly, and it seems that there are some remaining issues and questions that still need to be finalized.

Effectively responding to these remaining issues, defining a clear and transparent communication protocol that is smoothly implemented (as we have previously discussed), and responding to faculty questions (perhaps in the form of a Q&A document that can be shared with faculty), would go a long way in facilitating a smooth rollout to the campus community and assuage the many concerns we have heard. Given the current budget climate, there is already significant anxiety across campus. Rolling out the ASM while some questions remain unresolved is likely to contribute to this sentiment and cause unnecessary confusion, anger, and misinformation among the faculty. There is an aggressive timeline for the rollout, with implementation beginning in January 2025 in preparation for a July 1, 2025, effective date. Based on what we have heard from our constituents, it would be unwise to announce in January that we are now under the new model, without first making sure that concerns are addressed.

Below we outline some of the main concerns and questions:


1. **Rationale for the Development of a New Academic Support Model.** Faculty have limited context from which to determine whether the new ASM is an improvement over our current model. A clear rationale is required to explain why an updated ASM is needed and how the new ASM addresses existing problems and strengthens our academic and research objectives. Under the new ASM, it is our understanding that growth for units is primarily driven by class size and enrollment. It is unclear how other priorities, such as the growth of our research enterprise, maintenance of quality undergraduate experiences through experiential learning and small class sizes, and new program development efforts, are factored into the decision-making process. This should be explained.
2. **Plans to Enhance Transparency.** Since school deans will have more discretion over budget decisions, concerns have been raised that this will lead to less transparency for departments. At present, departments understand the current centralized model well enough to reasonably predict their funding allocation. For the ASM to be successful, deans will need to articulate a clear and predictable allocation process and communication plan for sharing decisions with departments.
3. **Phased Approach to Implementation.** Advisory committee members explained that while the new ASM will be implemented for July 1, 2025, this does not mean that there are immediate and drastic changes to school or department allocations this year, although deans will have greater fiscal accountability. It would be helpful to clarify with departments and programs what to expect for the upcoming fiscal year. Communication plans need to clearly convey the timeline for which

elements of the new ASM are being implemented and when, specifying what changes departments can expect in the short term and plans for the long term.

4. **Clear Plans to Address Faculty FTE Allocations and Salary Programs.** Uncertainty remains about how FTEs will be allocated under the new ASM and where funding comes from for various types of salary increases (cost of living adjustments, merits and promotions, including accelerations, and retentions). Faculty will inevitably ask questions about funding for new FTEs and what happens to existing FTEs in the event of retirement, separation, or cases when faculty at the Assistant-rank are not promoted.
5. **Incentivizing Research.** Support for research is already strained based on current IDC rates. If more responsibility for supporting research is shifted to the schools, it would be beneficial to communicate impacts of the ASM to research support and growth.
6. **Assessment.** Defining plans and a timeline for evaluating the new ASM from the onset is critical to assure faculty that the model can be further refined and adjusted over time and there is accountability and transparency for school decisions. When Senate Council reviewed the Spring 2024 Task Force report, it was noted that smaller departments and programs that cannot grow may be negatively impacted by the new ASM's emphasis on enrollment growth, yet these departments and programs are still critical to the university's academic mission. This is an issue that faculty will pay attention to in the coming years, and I strongly recommend that Senate representatives be part of the oversight structure.

Thank you for taking these suggestions into consideration. The Academic Senate would very much like to collaborate with you and your team to successfully implement the new ASM. Adoption of the ASM on a timeline that factors in Senate consultation and time for Academic Affairs to ensure potential issues and common questions have been addressed in a well-reasoned manner will benefit the campus.

Sincerely,



Olivia A. Graeve  
Chair  
San Diego Divisional Academic Senate

cc: Pradeep K. Khosla, Chancellor  
Rebecca Jo Plant, Senate Vice Chair