

From: Vice Provost and Dean Robin L. Garrell and Graduate Council Chair Andrea Kasko

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Subject: Supporting your Academic Success at UCLA



Graduate Division Graduate Council

To the Graduate Student Community,

Navigating your graduate education can be demanding even under the most ideal circumstances. Whether you are in a master's or doctoral degree program, academic or professional, each academic goal carries unique opportunities and challenges. Spring quarter and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought many challenges that were unforeseen: stresses and barriers that are impacting your life both within and outside the university.

We are offering this message as a reminder that we are here to support your academic success. Students have voiced concerns about the suddenness of the transition to an online academic environment while being asked to sustain their prior level of productivity. We hear your concerns when you describe struggling with the expectations for research, classwork, and teaching, all while managing the stress of a pandemic. Although we are living through a time where so much can feel outside of our control, we want to make sure that students reach out for support, and we are encouraging staff and faculty to meet those concerns with understanding and fairness to all.

If you are having trouble coping with the collective amount of work that you are expected to do, we would like to offer some guidance to ensure your voice is heard.

- If you are struggling in a particular class or classes where the workload feels overwhelming, your first step should always be to engage with the instructor directly. Self-advocacy should not be seen as a sign of weakness, but as a way to let your needs be known.
- For students whose primary focus is on research, make sure you are communicating realistic short-term goals with your mentors, PIs and research committees. Long-term goals may be difficult to map in detail at this moment, but it is important to have discussions about the possibility of temporally shifting your research focus, using alternative data collection methods, or identifying different opportunities for data analysis until clearer guidance is provided for ramping up research on-campus and in other locations.
- If instructors/faculty/Pis seem unsure about how they can provide support, students can attempt to reach out to department Student Affairs Officers, who often are able to facilitate communication with various faculty bodies (e.g., area heads, graduate vice-chairs, department chairs and divisional deans). Department administrators are there to ensure timely degree progress of all students and can consider flexibility in applying departmental benchmarks.
- Connect with student peer representatives in your department who are there to help bring forward collective student issues. Advocate for the creation of these positions if none currently exists.

- There are a variety of central campus resources to help students better understand campus policy and protections, including: the UCLA Graduate Division, UCLA Graduate Council, Student Affairs, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Title IX Office and ADA/504 Compliance Office.

UCLA offers many resources for students that can help you achieve your academic goals, while encouraging you to be mindful of your personal health and wellness. The [Graduate Division's COVID-19 Guide and FAQs](#) and [Spring 2020 Graduate and Professional Student Resource Guide \(DOC\)](#) provide up-to-date information about resources that are available across the campus.

Now more than ever, it is important to take care of your mental health by engaging in activities such as talking with others about something unrelated to your research, pursuing hobbies and activities that you enjoy, and surrounding yourself with people who encourage you to take care of yourself. Always remember that you – as a person – are defined by much more than a constant cycle of academic goals and expectations. Please make sure you take the time to treat yourself and others with kindness, compassion, dignity, and respect.

With best wishes,

Robin L. Garrell

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