

Resolution of the Academic Senate of Grossmont College on Behalf of Student Success and Equity:
“Students Thrive at 35!”

Whereas, the vision of Grossmont College is “to advance our antiracism and equity work as we venture further into the 21st century” and our mission is “to cultivate an equitable student-centered learning environment, and we hold ourselves accountable for improving student outcomes through data-informed decision-making;”

Whereas, many in-person and online courses at Grossmont College have class caps at 50 depending on the academic subject, with some courses enrolling as many as 65 students, and in this regard, we are an outlier in the San Diego Imperial County community college region;ⁱ

Whereas, these subjects include but are not limited to Administration of Justice, Anthropology, Art History, Astronomy, Business, Computer Science and Information Systems, Economics, Ethnic Gender & Social Justice Studies, Exercise Science, Geography, Health Education, History, Humanities, Mathematics, Physics, and Sociology;

Whereas, we must recognize the actual number of students disproportionately impacted by large class sizes. The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District enrolled a total of 17,384 students in the Fall of 2021 and 13,202 were Grossmont College students, of which 743 were African American students, 1,111 were Asian Pacific Islander students, 5,165 were Latinx students; 1,014 were Middle Eastern students, 38 were Native American students, and 4,103 were White students, 178 students were categorized as Other/Unknown, and 850 students were of two or more ethnicities;

Whereas, there were a total of 8,963 Low Income Flag students at both campuses and 6,828 were Grossmont students, of which 443 were African American students, 552 were Asian Pacific Islander students, 2,789 were Latinx students, 816 were Middle Eastern students, 15 were Native American students, and 1,773 were White students, 65 students were Other/Unknown, and 375 students were two or more ethnicities;ⁱⁱ

Whereas, our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by large class sizes, particularly in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic in which Black, Latinx, and low-income students were most at risk of learning losses, having received low quality remote instruction or no remote instruction immediately before the pandemicⁱⁱⁱ due, in part, to living under low-income conditions;^{iv}

Whereas, small class size -- defined as at most 35 students, and often much smaller at 25 -- are pedagogically superior since instructors can offer prompt responses to student questions, specialized instruction, and individual attention for students who are falling behind; while students in small classes can fully engage in discussions, collaborate with one another, and establish relationships with their instructors;^v

Whereas, students in small classes close achievement gaps and have better learning outcomes when compared to their large class counterparts whose “academic *achievement* (learning) and academic *performance* (*grades*) are lowered in courses with large class size,”^{vi} and the deleterious effects of large class sizes is well documented and researched at both the K-12 level^{vii} and college level;^{viii}

Whereas, much of our instruction is now online, and research has convincingly shown that online learners are more likely to be students of color^x and are at greater risk of non-success than their traditional in-person counterparts,^x additionally, the optimal size for an online course is at most 35;

Whereas, 35 students may be the “maximum limit before an instructor is forced to incorporate more timesaving, but less academically meaningful, assignments to the detriment of student learning and, ultimately, student achievement,”^{xi} thus curtailing our attempts to evaluate students in equity-minded ways, such as in “ungrading.”^{xii}

Resolved, the Academic Senate of Grossmont College recognizes that class caps of 50 and beyond diminish our students’ chances of success. 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. Our students face multiple challenges, and large classes should not be a further obstacle to their learning and success.

Resolved, that the Academic Senate of Grossmont College realizes that many of our students, especially our BIPOC students, are opting for the online modality, which means, *a fortiori*, that we adopt a 35 cap as soon as possible because attrition rates in online classes are significantly higher – and success rates are lower -- compared to in-person classes.

Resolved, that the Academic Senate of Grossmont College embraces our mission to be student-centered and to advance our anti-racism and equity efforts for our students, of whom 69% are BIPOC and 68% are low income, by recommending to our District and our Governing Board that instructional faculty and counseling faculty will be in a better position to meet our students' needs if Grossmont College adopts class caps at 35 because “Students Thrive at 35!”

i. See <https://www.imperial.edu/student-news/spring-2023-schedule-now-available>
See <https://www.sdccity.edu/students/schedule.aspx>
See <https://collselfserv.swccd.edu/Student/Courses/Search>

ii. “Key Performance Indicators” as identified by the Student Success Framework established by the GCCCD Student Success Committee in 2013. <https://www.gcccd.edu/research-planning/kpi/sections/section-2/unduplicated-head-count.php>
Accessed March 05, 2023.

iii. Emma Dorn, et.al. “COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime: New Evidence shows that the shutdowns caused by COVI-19 could exacerbate existing achievement gaps.” MCKinsey & Company, Public Sector, June 2020
Practice. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20and%20Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/COVID-19%20and%20student%20learning%20in%20the%20United%20States%20The%20hurt%20could%20last%20a%20lifetime/COVID-19-and-student-learning-in-the-United-States-FINAL.pdf>
Accessed March 04, 2023.

iv. Spector, Carrie. “Digging Deeper on the pandemic learning loss: Research by Stanford’s Institute for Economic Policy Research’s (SIEPR) Sean Reardon and colleagues offers the clearest picture yet of pandemic learning loss, revealing patterns that vary from one school district to the next.” October 28, 2023. <https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/digging-deeper-pandemic-learning-loss>
Accessed March 04, 2023.

v. 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

vi. 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.

vii. Schanzenbach, Diane Whitmore. “Does Class Size Matter?” National Education Policy Center, February 2014. https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/pb_class_size.pdf
Accessed March 04, 2023.

viii. Cuseo, 2007.
Yelkperli, 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>
Accessed March 05, 2023.

ix. 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-learning-online-districts-must-work-even-harder-on-race-equity/>
Accessed March 04, 2023.

x. 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

xi. Flaherty, Colleen. "Much Ado about Class Size." *Inside Higher Ed*. June 18, 2020. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/06/18/study-some-things-matter-more-class-size-when-it-comes-student-success>

Accessed March 04, 2023.

xii. Blum, Susan, Ed. *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press. 2020.