College of Natural Sciences
Statement on Distributed Learning
December 5, 2022

The statement below describes the College of Natural Science's educational mission and practices with respect to distributed learning, as referenced in CSUSB's Distributed Learning Policy (FAM 827.3), which states (section A.2): "Distributed learning courses (hybrid and fully online) and programs shall be consistent with the educational mission and practices of the department, college, and the University."

The College of Natural Sciences (CNS) is committed to pedagogical innovation and increased educational access through technology. Simultaneously, the College seeks to ensure students have a preponderance of course offerings available in-person. This is our university's primary mode of instruction and the teaching format most conducive to the learning needs of the majority of our students.

The College strongly encourages the use of technology to enhance the student learning experience including in the face-to-face learning environment.

Consistent with CSUSB's existing "Distributed Learning Policy" (FAM 827.3), the College strives to ensure that academic excellence and the educational needs of our students takes precedence over managerial efficiencies, economic considerations, or the instructional preferences of individual faculty members. As directed by FAM 820.1, "Department chairs/School directors, college schedule coordinators, and college deans are the individuals who bear primary responsibility for developing class schedules." Decisions to offer courses in online or hybrid modes should be strategic, student-centered decisions made in the context of a coherent plan for the use of various delivery modes in the program as a whole, and taking into consideration the following:

- In-person instruction is essential for the development of many laboratory and clinical skills and is the most conducive to opportunities for hands-on activities and real-time group work or that can be monitored and facilitated by the instructor. In-person practices can help students to process new concepts they are learning and experience real-time interaction with instructor and peers.
- Online synchronous instruction can reduce or eliminate commute time and expenses for students. Similar to in-person instruction, it can provide opportunities for real-time interactions between students and instructors as well as between students and other students.
- Online asynchronous instruction provides flexibility for students, enabling them to schedule their learning time around work and family commitments. However, it lacks opportunities for real-time interactions and feedback between instructors and peers. Asynchronous instruction also requires more self-discipline from the students to avoid procrastination.
- Hybrid instruction with an in-person component and an online component can offer a blend of the strengths (and weaknesses) listed above.
- All courses, whether in-person, online or any form of hybrid should provide substantial opportunities for instructor-student interactions and include opportunities for real-time

interactions with faculty (e.g., through synchronous class meetings, and/or through specified times at which the instructor will be available each week for in-person and/or virtual office hours, etc.). Note that FAM 852.6 requires at least one hour per week of in-person office hours unless the department chair has agreed to an exception.

In light of the above considerations, the following provisions will guide the use of online and hybrid courses within CNS. These provisions may be amended in the future, as discussions with Academic Programs, other Colleges, CNS Department Chairs and the Faculty Senate's Academic Technologies and Distributed Learning committee continue.

Training for instructors of online and hybrid courses

1. Effective Spring 2022, instructors of online and hybrid courses must have completed the CSU Chancellor's Office online training course, "Introduction to Online Teaching Using QLT".
   a. This is a 15-20 hour commitment spread over three weeks and is generally offered several times per year. This course is typically offered once per semester. For more information and to register, see the Chancellor's office professional development courses website.
   b. For instructors with prior training or experience in online teaching, submission of a completed QLT self-evaluation rubric, covering the 24 Core Objectives, or submission of ATI's "Core 22" instrument, for each online or hybrid course they will teach may substitute for the "Introduction to Online Teaching Using QLT" course.
2. Effective Fall 2022, instructors of asynchronous online courses must have completed the CSU Chancellor's Office online training course, "Advanced QLT Course in Teaching Online". For more information and to register, see the Chancellor's office professional development courses website.
3. Courses completed in the Quality Matters (QM) program may be substituted for the appropriate QLT course, upon recommendation by ATI.
4. Instructors are encouraged to seek QLT or QM certification for any online courses that they teach in asynchronous mode.

Program delivery modes

The current P-form template provides four delivery mode options for programs:
- Face-to-Face means all courses in the program offered in-person
- Online means all courses in the program offered online
- Hybrid Optional means students may take a mix of online and in-person courses
- Hybrid Required means students must take a mix of online and in-person courses

Approval of program and course delivery modes

5. The default mode of instruction for CNS courses is in-person, unless the C-form indicates that other delivery modes have been approved through the normal curricular approval process. A single course may be approved for multiple delivery modes.
6. The default mode of program delivery is face-to-face. Departments that wish to offer an existing (or new) program in one of the other delivery modes must submit a revised (or new) P-form requesting one of the other delivery modes and must attach appropriate justification, as described below.
7. Approval of Hybrid-Optional, Hybrid-Required, and Online programs will require progressively greater degrees of justification and planning. It is recommended that chairs discuss their thoughts about online or hybrid-required programs with the Dean early in their planning and development process.

Documentation to be submitted with C-forms

8. A completed CNS Course Delivery Mode Approval Form signed by the department chair should be attached to any C-form that is requesting a delivery mode other than in-person. This CNS

Course Delivery Mode Approval Form requests information on whether or not the course will be offered in asynchronous online mode, or in hybrid mode with an asynchronous component. If so, the form requires that an explanation be provided for how the instructor will engage with students asynchronously. Also, if a hybrid course will be offered with less than 50% of instruction in-person, the percentage of in-person instruction must be stated on the form.

Note: If multiple courses will have identical course delivery modes and explanations for how asynchronous interaction will occur, one Course Delivery Mode Approval Form may be created listing all of the courses to which it applies, signed and then uploaded with each of the relevant C-forms.

Note: An acceptable alternative to the CNS Course Delivery Mode Approval form is to complete the CNS Program Course List and Instruction Mode Approval Form for all courses in the program that are offered by the program's host department.

In addition to uploading one of these documents as an attachment to the C-form, it is recommended, as a matter of convenience, that the department chair and ASC keep a record of which courses have been approved for which delivery modes and refer to this when scheduling courses. The department may also consider posting this list publicly. Departments should ensure that future instructors of courses that have been approved for partial or complete asynchronous delivery are aware of the departmental expectations for instructor engagement with students in these courses.

Documentation to be submitted with P-forms

9. Any P-form that is requesting **Hybrid-Optional** delivery mode should include the following in a document uploaded as an attachment to the P-form.
    a. **Description and rationale for how various delivery modes will be used in the program.**

    For example: *Are there certain courses or types of courses that will always be offered in-person? If so, which ones? Which courses or categories of courses will be offered in different instruction modes in different terms? If courses will be offered in different modalities in different terms (or if different sections will be offered in different modalities in the same term) explain the program's rationale for making decisions about how frequently or under what circumstances sections will be offered in each modality.*

    CNS expects Hybrid-Optional programs to offer at least 75% of lower-division courses in the program in-person and at least 60% of upper-division courses in the program in-person in each semester. Summer and winter sessions are excluded from this expectation.

    b. **A copy of the language that has been entered into the program description in the P-form, describing to students what they can expect from the program in terms of instructional modality**. See appendix A for examples*.*

    c. **Explanation of how the program will meet the needs of students who want to complete the program with in-person courses in a timely fashion**.

    An example of a satisfactory response would be: *"All courses in the program that are offered every academic year will be offered in-person at least once per academic year."*

    If there are specific courses for which this will not be true, they should be listed and an explanation given, so as to determine whether the program should be classified as Hybrid-Required instead of Hybrid-Optional.

d. ***Explanation of how decisions will be made equitably about teaching assignments to in-person and online courses.***

An example of a satisfactory response would be: *"No faculty member in the department (including lecturers) will teach more than 1.5 courses online for the department in a given semester. Hybrid courses count as half online as long as at least 50% of the instruction is in-person. Thus, a faculty member or lecturer may teach one online course and one hybrid course, or three hybrid courses for the department in a given semester. More than 1.5 courses may be taught online as along as the total WTU for those courses does not exceed 4.5 WTU. The WTU may exceed 4.5 as long as no more than 1.5 courses are taught online. Chairs may approve exceptions for lecturers when no other alternatives are available. Summer and winter sessions are excluded from these limits on the number of online courses an instructor may teach."*

Departments that have multiple programs with some approved as Online or Hybrid-Required and others approved as Hybrid-Optional may consider adding a statement such as this to section 9d of the P-form attachment for their Hybrid-Optional program(s). *"Online courses that are taught for programs that have been approved as Online or Hybrid-Required programs do not count toward the 1.5 course limit for faculty who are also teaching in this Hybrid-Optional program. However, these instructors will have lower priority for teaching online courses in Hybrid-Optional programs than instructors who are not yet scheduled for 1.5 courses online and would like to be."*).

If a department wishes to choose a higher limit to the number of online courses a faculty member can teach online, they should present here an analysis based on data from the past semester that shows that, if all faculty in the department (including lecturers) had taught that many online courses, each Hybrid-Optional program in the department would still have been able to offer at least 75% of their lower-division and at least 60% of their upper-division courses in-person each semester. Even if the above expectations for % of sections that are offered in-person are met, faculty should be assigned no more than 2 courses (or no more than 6 WTU) of online teaching per semester for all of their CNS teaching assignments combined. Any exceptions should be approved by the Dean.

If a department wishes to implement other mechanisms for ensuring equity while maintaining at least 75% of lower-division and at least 60% of upper-division sections in-person, they should describe it here. For example, the department may wish to provide guidelines on questions such as: Will there be a rotation of online sections among faculty who prefer to teach online? Or a limit to the number of online sections taught by a single instructor in a semester or year and/or a limit to the % of a faculty member's workload that may be composed of online or hybrid courses? Will any priority for online teaching be given to lecturers versus tenure-line faculty, or vice versa? Will priority be given to instructor-course pairs that have received QLT or QM certification? Who will make decisions about how to apply the answers to these questions in specific cases, and who will resolve claims of inequity in the opportunity to teach online courses?

Chairs are encouraged to seek feedback from the Dean's office on their draft statements before submitting their P-form.

10. Any P-form that is requesting **Hybrid-Required or Online** delivery mode should include the following in a document uploaded as an attachment to the P-form.
    a. **An explanation of the need for online or hybrid-required delivery mode for this program, along with any data that support this assessment**. *For example: Who are the target audience(s) for this program? Why does an online or hybrid-required delivery mode serve these potential students well, and how do you know? If an online delivery*

mode is requested, explain why a Hybrid-Required delivery mode would not serve the students well.

b. **Description and rationale for how various delivery modes will be used in the program.**
For example, for <u>Hybrid-Required programs</u>: Which courses or types of courses will always be offered in-person? Which (if any) courses or types of courses will always be offered online or in hybrid mode? Are there certain courses or types of courses that will sometimes be offered in-person and at other times be offered online? Explain the program's rationale for these decisions. Which components of the program are important to deliver in-person and why? Which components are important to deliver online or in hybrid mode, and why? How will students be informed as to which courses they can expect to be offered in-person, in hybrid mode or online?

<u>For online programs</u>: Will there be any requirements for in-person orientation or in-person final exams? What proportion of the instruction will be delivered synchronously and what proportion will be delivered asynchronously? If a significant portion of instruction will be delivered asynchronously provide a statement describing the department's expectations for the level of faculty-student engagement in asynchronous courses. Provide examples of combinations of various types of engagement that are considered acceptable, and examples of combinations of types of engagement that are considered insufficient.

c. **A copy of the language that has been entered into the program description in the P-form, describing to students what they can expect from the program in terms of instructional modality**. See appendix A for examples.

d. ***Explanation of how decisions will be made equitably about teaching assignments to in-person and online courses (does not apply to online programs). Will there be a rotation of online sections among faculty who prefer to teach online? Or a limit to the number of online sections taught by a single instructor in a semester or year and/or a limit to the % of a faculty member's workload that may be composed of online or hybrid courses? Will any priority for online teaching be given to lecturers versus tenure-line faculty, or vice versa? Will priority be given to instructor-course pairs that have received QLT or QM certification? Who will make decisions about how to apply the answers to these questions in specific cases, and who will resolve claims of inequity in the opportunity to teach online courses?***

Regarding General Education courses

11. If a program requires a GE course that is offered by its own department, the provisions above will apply to that course.
12. If a department offers GE course(s) that are not required by any of its own programs (e.g., BIOL 1000, CHEM 1000, PHYS 1000, GE Math courses, upper-division science GE courses, etc.) and wishes to offer one or more sections online, the department should submit a C-form and attach documentation, as described in section 9 above. The justification in the C-form should include an explanation of the reason to offer the course in online or hybrid mode and an estimate of the approximate frequency with which it will be offered in each of the requested modes. (e.g., "approximately 50% of sections will be offered online and 50% of sections will be in-person" or other statement). Please note that even after approval, the College may seek to keep a reasonable balance of the number of online/hybrid and in-person sections across the College within each GE category.

Guidelines for scheduling courses approved to be offered in hybrid mode

13. For simplicity, we encourage a norm of 50% online and 50% in-person instruction for hybrid courses. When a hybrid course is scheduled, the schedule should clearly indicate the days and

times for in-person meetings and for any synchronous online meetings. See the <u>Instruction and Learning Mode Guide</u> at the Academic Scheduling website for guidance. If the percentage of instruction online will be other than 50%, this must be stated in the CNS Course Delivery Mode Template that is submitted with the C-form, and it should be indicated in a note in the schedule within CLSS/PeopleSoft.

14. If the in-person class meetings will not occur on the same days and times every week, a note that is visible to students should also be entered into the schedule to specify the dates for in-person meetings.

15. Courses that meet primarily online but have exams in-person are considered online courses. The dates and times of any in-person exams in an online course should be included in the schedule, if possible, in a note that is visible to students, and should also be published in the syllabus by the first day of class.

Temporary use of online instructional mode

16. As an alternative to cancelling an in-person session in the event of illness, emergency, professional conference attendance, etc., the CNS Dean delegates to CNS department chairs the authority to approve faculty requests to substitute up to one week per semester of scheduled in-person class sessions with synchronous or asynchronous online classes without needing to change the official mode of instruction of the course. As an example, for a course that meets twice per week, the chair may approve up to two class meetings per semester for that course to meet online as an alternative to canceling class for the reasons listed above. Changing the instruction mode for more than one week per semester (whether consecutive or not) requires approval by the department chair/school director <u>and</u> dean and should be for compelling reasons only.

APPENDIX A.

Regarding 9b and 10c above, the general description of the program within the P-form should include a short paragraph summarizing for students the role of different course delivery modes in the program. Below are some possible examples. Write something that will give potential students a good idea of what to expect regarding delivery modes in your program.

Hybrid-optional example 1: Although a few courses in this program may be offered in online or hybrid mode, most courses are only offered in-person.

Hybrid-optional example 2: Many of the courses in this program are offered in different modalities (in-person, hybrid, or online), but it is not possible to take all of the program courses in online or hybrid mode. All courses will be offered in-person at least once per year.

Hybrid-required example 1: In this program, theory courses are offered online and clinical courses are offered in-person.

Hybrid-required example 2: In this program, most lecture sections are offered in hybrid mode (50% in-person and 50% online), but all labs are offered in-person only.

Hybrid-required example 3: This graduate program is aimed at working professionals. Consequently, students normally take one online course and one hybrid course (50% in-person/50% online) course each term, although there may be some variation. Electronic proctoring and a lock-down browser may be required for any online exams.

Online example 1: This is an online program. Some courses are offered in online synchronous mode and others are offered asynchronously. Asynchronous courses must be completed by the end of the term in which they are offered. Most courses require in-person final exams, although arrangements can be made to have the exam proctored online, if necessary.

Online example 2*: This is an online program. Some courses are offered in online synchronous mode and others are offered asynchronously. Asynchronous courses must be completed by the end of the term in which they are offered. For courses that require exams, exams will be proctored electronically and a lock down browser system is required.*