

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 2, 2025
1:45pm – 2:45pm

I. Consent Calendar – Chair Cleary – 1:45pm – 1:50pm

- A. Today's Agenda
- B. [February 19 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

II. Chair's Report – Chair Cleary – 1:50pm – 2:05pm

- A. February 7 and March 7 BOARS Meetings

Vice Chair Spencer attended the February 7 BOARS meeting on Chair Cleary's behalf and shared the following updates:

- Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the State Board of Education, discussed the need for stronger alignment between K–12 and higher education in California.
- Discussions were held regarding the influence of the 1892 Committee of Ten devised curriculum that became the outline for A–G requirements.
- Concerns were raised about students entering UC Merced underprepared despite strong performance in high school, suggesting misalignment between K–12 and college expectations.
- Academic Senate Chair Cheung mentioned upcoming changes in faculty discipline policies, with directives from the UC Regents signaling shifts to be prepared for. The Senate is working with Academic Personnel at UCOP to provide a set of recommendations to the Regents by May.
- As of February, several executive orders were introduced, creating uncertainty across higher education institutions, and the UC system is actively working to navigate these changes. Other universities, such as Harvard, UCLA, and UC Berkeley, were reportedly under increased scrutiny or investigation, indicating broader federal attention on higher education. These developments could affect admissions and financial aid, especially if federal education policy changes how student loans and grants are administered.
- Discussions were held regarding the importance of strengthening collaboration with CSU campuses, particularly around joint program development. The need to build stronger relationships with local CSU faculty was emphasized as a way to align efforts and explore new academic initiatives. Strengthening CSU partnerships may also support student recruitment into UC academic programs.

- A discussion took place about creating a subgroup to initiate conversations around curriculum and DEI-related initiatives. Some participants expressed concern that UC Merced should be included from the beginning, rather than being consulted at the end of the process. Given UC Merced's unique student population, it is important that any proposed changes reflect its needs. The point was made that all campuses, especially those serving underrepresented students, should have a voice throughout the decision-making process, not just during the final review stages.

Chair Cleary shared the following updates from the March 7 BOARS meeting:

- The Board amended its bylaws to establish at least one regular meeting per year with the State Board of Education and K–12 education representatives.
- Discussions were held regarding California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC), particularly regarding flexibility in Area 5 (science-based courses). One proposed change, which was approved, allows transfer students to take two lab courses within the same discipline, rather than requiring one in chemistry and one in biology. However, a proposal to allow four courses to be deferred for transfer students was not approved. There were concerns about the impact on UC and CSU campuses, particularly regarding potential additional resource burdens for faculty and staff. UCOP will review data on this issue and report back, delaying the decision on this change until more information is gathered.
- There was discussion regarding the idea of replacing the 7-course eligibility pathway for transfer students with Cal-GETC to simplify the process. However, the Board's decision is leaning against this change due to concerns over disagreements between UC and CSU systems. While the differences seem minor, CSU representatives are concerned that these discrepancies could become problematic. It appears that BOARS is considering aligning the 7-course transfer eligibility pathway with the Cal-GETC system, but without completely replacing it.
- BOARS met with former Academic Senate chair James Steintrager, who now leads a systemwide work group focused on AI issues, including its potential use in admissions. explored positive uses like evaluating applications, scoring essays, detecting fraud, and improving transparency. Concerns were raised about equity, as not all applicants may have access to AI tools. A proposal to provide UC applicants with access to tools like ChatGPT led to debate about fairness. The UC system already endorses AI use in its essay tutorials, implying many students are likely using it. UC Merced currently has a work group focused on AI issues, and it was suggested that AFAC connect with them to discuss their progress and insights on AI-related issues in admissions.

Action:

- The AFAC Analyst consulted with Senate Executive Director Paul for more information about the UC Merced workgroup focused on AI issues and inquired about AFAC's potential involvement.
- An update will be provided to members at the May 7 AFAC meeting.

B. February 25, March 11, and April 1 DivCo Meetings

February 25 Meeting:

- VCEM Hagg visited DivCo to present the latest recruiting and application data. A key takeaway was the request for more faculty involvement in the recruitment process. While some feared being sent to high schools and community colleges without clear direction, VCEM Hagg emphasized that faculty involvement would likely focus on smaller, more manageable groups, including meetings over Zoom, rather than large-scale outreach efforts.

March 11 Meeting:

- Dean of Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) Annette Roberts Webb, joined the meeting and discussed professional degree certificates and alternative credentials. While AFAC is not directly involved in this area, it was noted that PACE is a strong program. One key takeaway for faculty is the growing effort to engage departments when offering certificates related to specific majors. For example, PACE is expanding its outreach to Public Health faculty for certificates in areas like home care aid, presenting opportunities for faculty to contribute to these programs and help shape future offerings.

April 1 Meeting:

- The Medical Education Dual Degree program proposal was unanimously endorsed by DivCo. In this program, students complete their bachelor's degree at UC Merced and are guaranteed admission into an MD program at UCSF, provided they meet specific requirements.

III. Campus Review Items – 2:05pm – 2:35pm

A. [Accounting B.S. and Minor Proposal](#)

The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#), and for minors, [here](#).

Chair Cleary summarized the lead reviewer's assessment in their absence, highlighting the following points:

- The proposal requests Accelerating Campus Evolution (ACE) funding to support three new faculty lines and an additional 0.5 FTE for staffing. However, this is a significant ask given the current hiring freeze, and it is suggested that the proposal be revised to reflect the hiring constraints.
- The proposal estimates an enrollment of 218 to 427 students by 2032. However, the proposers acknowledge that 10-15% of these students may not be new to the university, but rather those transferring from existing majors such as Management and Business Economics (MBE) and Economics.

- There is concern that the projections are overly optimistic, as they do not account for a predicted decline in college enrollments across the U.S. due to demographic changes, which could affect future enrollment numbers. Despite these concerns, there is still demand for the Accounting major.

It was clarified that the Accounting emphasis track has been removed from the proposal and that the request for ACE funds is not impacted by the hiring freeze. Concerns were raised about the feasibility of hiring three new faculty members given current constraints. In response, a member (also an author of the proposal) responded that only two Unit 18 lecturers currently manage lower division Accounting courses for MBE majors, and additional faculty are essential to support a standalone Accounting major. AFAC remains hopeful that ACE funding can help meet this need.

Action:

- The draft memo was approved (4 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions, 2 members not present at time of voting).
- The AFAC Analyst transmitted the final memo to the Senate Chair on April 2, 2025.

B. [Business Administration B.A. and Minor Proposal](#)

The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#), and for minors, [here](#).

The lead reviewer summarized their assessment, highlighting the following points:

- The proposal argues that the Business Administration B.A. (BBA) degree will enhance students' job market prospects and increase overall university enrollment.
- The proposal notes that a significant number of UC Management and Business Economics (MBE) admits choose not to attend UC Merced because their desired major is not offered, suggesting that a more generalist Business Administration degree could fill this gap and appeal to a broader range of students.
- The proposal projects that in its first year, the BBA program could attract between 186 and 225 new first-year students. By 2032, average enrollment is estimated to exceed 800 students. However, like the Accounting major, these projections are considered optimistic, especially in light of the overall decline in college enrollments. Despite this, the general nature of the degree is expected to appeal to a broad range of students and has strong potential to attract interest.
- Reviewers in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA) emphasized the need for the Department of Economics and Business Management (EBM) to clearly differentiate its degree offerings. In response, the proposal clarifies that the BBA will provide foundational business training and offer students flexible tracks in high-demand areas like finance and management. Unlike the more analytically rigorous MBE degree, the BBA is designed to be less quantitatively intensive, which could reduce barriers for

students. It also distinguishes itself from the Accounting major, which targets professional accounting careers, and the Economics major, which is geared toward research and graduate study.

- Similar to the Accounting major, the BBA raises concerns about faculty line allocation. EBM is requesting five new faculty lines to support the program and believes the BBA is a strong candidate for securing a portion of the \$21 million available through ACE funding. Importantly, this request is not impacted by the current hiring freeze.
- While the use of ACE funding for hiring new faculty is seen as a positive opportunity, the SSHA Executive Committee expressed concerns about equity across the School. They emphasized that hiring should proceed cautiously and strategically.
- There are no major barriers for transfer student participation in the program. Transfer students will need to complete course equivalents in areas like economics, business, finance, accounting, statistics, and quantitative reasoning. While Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) or California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) certification is not required for admission, it is recommended for all SSHA majors.

In response to concerns about equity and faculty resource allocation, it was clarified that the proposers are actively collaborating with other SSHA departments, such as Communications and Philosophy, to share teaching responsibilities. This collaboration is intended to reduce the number of new faculty lines needed for the BBA. They acknowledged the challenges posed by current constraints and expressed a commitment to supporting both their program and other departments within SSHA by working resourcefully and minimizing the overall hiring burden.

A member pointed out that, since the Accounting emphasis track has been removed from the proposal, AFAC's memo should be updated accordingly to remove "Accounting" from the list of tracks mentioned in point 2.

Members also agreed to remove "...could benefit from clarification" and replace with "AFAC recognizes the following key issues" in the opening paragraph.

Action:

- The draft memo was updated accordingly, and the AFAC Analyst transmitted the final version to the Senate Chair on April 2, 2025.

C. [Liberal Studies B.A. Proposal](#)

The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#).

The lead reviewer summarized their assessment, highlighting the following points:

- SSHA has conducted studies showing that many of its students are transferring to California State Universities (CSUs) to complete Liberal Arts

degrees. In response, the proposed Liberal Arts Studies program is designed to provide a clear pathway for these students to earn a UC Merced degree, thereby supporting both student success and retention within SSHA.

- There is currently no clear evidence that first-year students would choose to enroll at UC Merced as Liberal Arts Studies majors. However, the program is primarily designed to attract and retain students who might otherwise transfer to local CSUs or community colleges. Importantly, it is not expected to compete with existing SSHA departments or majors for students, as its primary goal is to offer a flexible degree option that helps retain students who are otherwise at risk of leaving UC Merced.
- The proposed program is intended as a reentry pathway and does not request new faculty lines or additional resources.
- The proposal was developed with the support of former SSHA Dean Gilger and has the endorsement of current SSHA Dean Arriola, the SSHA Curriculum Committee, and all SSHA department chairs, as documented in the supporting memos included in the proposal.
- There were concerns that the proposed program might draw students away from established departments; however, it is not believed that this will happen. Some individuals said that they would not support a new program until UC Merced provides better support for existing departments.
- There were concerns about how a multidisciplinary program would function and the lack of an established departmental structure to provide support for students.

Action:

- The draft memo was unanimously approved, and the AFAC Analyst transmitted the final version to the Senate Chair on April 2, 2025.

IV. Any Other Business – 2:35pm - 2:40pm

No other business was discussed.

V. Informational Items will be regularly uploaded on the “Informational Items” AFAC Box Folder [here](#).