

DIVISIONAL COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, September 2, 2021

Attendees: Chair LeRoy Westerling, Vice Chair Patti LiWang, Christopher Viney, Ramesh Balasubramaniam, Kevin Mitchell, Erin Hestir, Holley Moyes, Abbas Ghassemi, Jason Sexton, Jesus Sandoval-Hernandez, David Jennings, Justin Yeakel, Min Hwan Lee, Jeff Butler

I. Welcome and Introductions – Chair Westerling

Chair Westerling welcomed the AY 21-22 Divisional Council members and asked members and Senate staff to introduce themselves.

II. Consultation with EVC/Provost Camfield

EVC/Provost Camfield announced that this is the year in which academic planning – which the campus has been working on for the past few years – will be implemented. CAPRA will be a key partner in this effort. EVC/Provost Camfield feels positively about the campus budget in large part due to the newly agreed upon MOU with UCOP. The MOU will eliminate a portion of the campus’s debt and will provide UC Merced with the same funding mechanism for incremental student growth that other campuses have. The campus will also be able to grow graduate studies in a way that is supportable and will have the ability to make important strategic investments. Finally, the EVC/Provost will prioritize the processes, procedures, and the facilities required to improve the campus research infrastructure.

EVC/Provost Camfield mentioned the annual Senate faculty grants program. He suggested tying the program’s future funding to faculty numbers and creating a separate budget area for the Senate. He plans to consult with all Senate committees on this topic, with CAPRA as the lead reviewer. Currently, the funds for the grants program reside with the EVC/Provost’s office, causing the Senate to have to re-confirm the available funding each year. By allowing the Senate to maintain its own budget, the Senate can make augmentation requests through the normal budget cycle. This is consistent with the campus’s goal of moving away from a central budget model.

EVC/Provost Camfield stated that the campus has until now been spending money on graduate education but funneling it through the temporary academic budget using TAs positions that are not needed for undergraduate education. EVC/Provost Camfield, the Chancellor, and Interim CFO & Associate EVC/Provost for Academic Planning and Budget Schnier want to give that money (approximately \$1 million) to the Graduate Division for graduate student fellowships. EVC/Provost Camfield emphasized that this is not an augmentation but rather a redirection. The goal is to complete this redirection to the Graduate Division this month because graduate groups need to know soon how much money they have in order to recruit graduate students. The campus will be scrupulous about not increasing TA positions beyond the needs that the undergraduate curriculum has.

EVC/Provost Camfield added that the longer-term goal is to examine graduate student growth vis-à-vis the new MOU. With CAPRA and GC’s help, the campus needs to determine a number or formula to identify where the support needs and costs are so the campus can figure out the balance between direct support for graduate students and the structural support (people and processes) needed to serve the students.

EVC/Provost Camfield mentioned two additional items with regard to graduate student support:

- the campus wants to allow more graduate students to be able to teach their own classes as instructors of record when they advance to candidacy. Spark seminars would be a good option. EVC/Provost Camfield wants to ramp this up next year.
- part of the enrollment growth plan is to continue strengthening the campus's ties to community colleges. Community colleges are lacking faculty members in key areas, so this creates an opportunity for UC Merced's advanced graduate students who are seeking teaching experience.

A Divisional Council member asked EVC/Provost Camfield for updates on the procurement system which is creating serious impediments to faculty research. EVC/Provost Camfield confirmed that appropriate staff (two per School) will be on campus a few days a week to help with purchasing. This is a temporary solution while the campus addresses the large systemic problems. EVC/Provost Camfield is also assembling a team that will include faculty to advise the administration on all the procurement pain points to help propose alternatives. The campus is also close to signing a contract with a vendor who will be available on campus for picking up high volume chemicals and managing invoicing.

A Divisional Council member cautioned EVC/Provost Camfield about reducing the number of TAships. Some courses, such as those that are writing-intensive, require TAs. EVC/Provost Camfield replied that the campus will allocate funds to the temporary instructional budgets according to the best guess of what the student load will be. However, Deans do have the authority to allocate the funding differentially according to their Schools' pedagogical needs.

EVC/Provost Camfield added that the campus is heavily dependent on unit 18 lecturers and he is exploring the possibility of shifting some of the workload to graduate student instructors.

A Divisional Council member raised the problems of delayed reimbursements and pointed out that it is untenable for graduate and undergraduate students to shoulder the burden of costs. EVC/Provost Camfield requested that the Senate Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) write him a memo that he can use as leverage with the administration.

Action: The EDI committee will draft a memo about delayed reimbursements and transmit to the EVC/Provost.

III. Consent Calendar

- A. The Agenda
- B. [Conflict of Interest Statement](#)

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

IV. Chair's Report – LeRoy Westerling

- A. Debrief from the Shared Governance Retreat (August 22-23, 2021)
- B. C19 Leadership Meetings
 - Social events are paused.
 - Teaching is in-person but with contingency planning.
 - Fifty-one beds are set aside for quarantine. Student housing remains a serious problem and Senate Chair Westerling will meet with an ASUCM representative about this today.

- Comprehensive COVID-19 testing is being conducted.

A Divisional Council member asked about the status of unvaccinated employees. Chair Westerling answered that these employees have to either upload their vaccination cards or provide a vaccination exception request. If the exception is granted, these employees must undergo weekly COVID-19 testing. The campus keeps the test results. Supervisors are also reminding their staff about the vaccine mandate and encouraging their staff to read all information about testing requirements.

C. UC Merced R1 Status

The campus research infrastructure is experiencing serious challenges in all areas including, but not limited to, invoicing, budgeting, grant management, and staffing. Chair Westerling explained that in the early years of the campus, the main focus was getting the campus built and opened. A culture of non-transparency and a silo structure for staff was established as was the practice of reacting to crises rather than long-term planning. Compounding these problems was the hiring of several new faculty without the appropriate infrastructure to support them. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, the campus is in a place of dysfunction in which faculty cannot conduct their research. The Senate needs to work with the administration to solve these problems.

V. Conduct of Committee Business

A. DivCo Membership, Meeting Schedule and Bylaws available [here](#)

B. Committee Confidentiality

Chair Westerling asked Divisional Council members to respect confidentiality. Members should be conduits of information to their colleagues, but they are asked to summarize Divisional Council discussions and not share verbatim comments spoken by Council members. Sharing of confidential discussions will inhibit Divisional Council members from speaking freely in the future.

C. [Principles to Guide the Practice of Executive Sessions](#)

D. [Consultation Guide](#)

E. Distributing work on Divisional Council

All correspondence, campus and systemwide review items are posted on DivCo's Box [here](#)

Review items can also be accessed on the Senate website, [here](#)

Chair Westerling encouraged committee chairs to contact him or Senate Executive Director Paul with any questions about the aforementioned documents.

VI. Discussion: Senate Goals for AY 2021-2022

Available here: <https://ucmerced.box.com/s/v2i7oufrgsillfiqdb6xu7wtadi7kj19>

Prior to this meeting, Divisional Council members were asked to prepare to discuss their top goals for AY 21-22 and determine if there are campus leaders that they would like to invite to future Divisional Council meetings.

Chair Westerling stated that eliminating obstacles to conducting research should be a priority.

UGC Chair Moyes:

- Create a committee to implement an honors program in the Schools.
- Online education. While faculty have learned that they can teach effectively in a remote setting, the campus does not want to discover that students have received an “accidental” online degree, as this will affect UC Merced's WSUC reaccreditation. UGC is also discussing this issue with

the deans. UGC will work on various policy changes related to online education and the approval of online courses.

- UGC wants to work with GC, VPDUE Sarah Frey, and VPDGE Chris Kello on various issues including thresholds and COVID-19 impacts.

GC Chair Hestir:

- Work with UGC on the online education issue as master's programs will be affected by remote coursework if those students also end up with "accidental" online degrees.
- Working with AFAC on 5 plus 1 policy review.
- Working with UGC to develop heuristics to trigger the process and plans that VPDUE Frey has developed with regard to the response to COVID-19.
- GC revised its bylaws last year to include a post doc representative and the committee looks forward to working with that individual.
- Working with the Graduate Division on enrollment management.
- Working with APO on post doc and other academic appointments as well as a lack of clarity about TA supervision.
- GC will review a document currently being drafted by graduate students on graduate students' rights and responsibilities. GC will also ask Divisional Council to review the document.

CoR Chair Sexton:

- Continuing to administer the annual Senate faculty grants program.
- Developing a policy for the establishment, disestablishment, and review of Centers.
- Support for ORUs.
- Addressing impediments to research including grants management and procurement. CoR will advise the administration on addressing the gaps in research capacity.

Action: Due to time constraints, the remaining committee chairs will discuss their goals at the next Divisional Council meeting.

A Divisional Council member pointed out that there are differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty research. Many faculty members in the humanities are negatively impacted due to the inability to travel and faculty in the social sciences have been unable to conduct their human subject research. In addition, individuals on soft money are unable to conduct their data collection work so they can renew their grants. Senate Chair Westerling stated that Divisional Council should invite key members of the administration to consult with Council.

Action: Interim CFO & Associate EVC/Provost for Academic Planning and Budget Kurt Schnier and Interim VCORED Marjorie Zatz will be invited to the next Divisional Council meeting.

VII. Update on Fall Instructional Plans – UGC Chair Moyes and GC Chair Hestir

GC and UGC are working with the administration to approve additional requests for remote instruction due to approved medical accommodations. The GC chair plans to meet frequently with VPDUE Frey and VPDGE Kello on ongoing issues. UGC approved requests from TAs and unit 18 lecturers to teach remotely due to approved medical accommodations.

A Divisional Council member expressed concern about the impact on Senate faculty teaching load if unit 18 lecturers go on strike.

Action: SNS Dean Betsy Dumont will be invited to the next Divisional Council meeting to discuss contingency planning in the event of a Unit 18 lecturers' strike.

VIII. Breach of UC Data System – FWAF Chair Jennings

FWAF Chair Jennings shared that faculty members contacted him with concerns about the UC data breach. Faculty are concerned that the university's response – providing one free year of credit monitoring through Experian – is inadequate. There is also no guidance on what to do if employees' private information has appeared on the internet other than freezing their credit. Another concern is protecting employees' data privacy when using third party software, as such software does not have the same constraints on data sharing as UC software. Divisional Council agreed that this is a systemwide issue.

Action: FWAF Chair Jennings will speak to his committee about drafting a memo for Divisional Council's review that would ultimately be transmitted to the systemwide Senate.

IX. Modality of Future Divisional Council Meetings

Chair Westerling asked Divisional Council members if they preferred the next meeting to be in person or remote. A member in favor of remote meetings encouraged Divisional Council members to review a document of best practices for remote meetings.

Action: The next two Divisional Council meetings will be held in person with an option for members to join via Zoom.

X. Executive Session

No minutes were recorded.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm

Attest: LeRoy Westerling, Senate Chair