

CoC's Guide to Populating Academic Senate Committees: Leadership and Membership Commitments

Academic Senate

The system of shared governance gives University faculty, operating through the Academic Senate, a voice in the operation of the University. The Academic Senate is the conduit through which faculty share in the operation and management of the University of California. As mandated by the University's governing body, the Board of Regents, the faculty is empowered to determine academic policy; set conditions for admissions; authorize and supervise courses and curricula; and advise the administration on faculty appointments, promotions, space and budget planning. [Board of Regents Bylaw 40.2](#) codifies the organization of the Academic Senate. The Merced Division of the Academic Senate derives its authority from [Board of Regents Bylaw 40.1](#). Among its responsibilities, the Academic Senate:

- Determines the conditions for admissions, certificates, and degrees;
- Authorizes and supervises all courses and curricula (except courses in the Hastings College of the Law, San Francisco Art Institute, in professional schools offering work at the graduate level only, or over non-degree courses in the University Extension.);
- Determines the membership of several faculty and councils;
- Selects a committee or committees to advise the Chancellor concerning the campus budget, or the President concerning the University budget;
- Has the right to lay before the Board of Regents views on matters of conduct and welfare of the University;
- Advises the Chancellor or the President concerning the administration of libraries;
- Is authorized to select a committee or committees to approve the publication of manuscripts by the University of California Press.

Serving as a chair, vice chair, or member of an Academic Senate committee is thus a crucial opportunity to shape the future of the university. With this power comes responsibility. It is crucial that every participant comprehends their duties and obligations to the committee. Presented below are essential points that must be communicated to all prospective members, irrespective of their position. Each member (including committee leadership) should commit to the following items during the duration of their appointment.

Members have the role and responsibility to do the following:

1. Work with Senate Analysts (SA) and/or the Senate Executive Director (ED)

Senate Committees are supported by a Senate analyst and/or the Senate ED. The analysts and Senate ED have a specific job to perform for the committee, and they are not there as a proxy for the chair, vice chair, or members. These staff collaborate closely with Senate faculty, and this collaboration is essential for committees to work effectively and with impact. Effective collaboration with the Senate analyst and/or Senate ED hinges upon clear and transparent communication. Timely and comprehensive responses are essential to ensure that the analyst and/or Senate ED is/are equipped with the necessary information regarding the topics discussed. The chair and vice chair must maintain close collaboration with the analyst and the Senate ED.

Prioritizing emails from the analyst and/or ED is essential, given the time-sensitive nature of many topics requiring prompt attention. The Senate analysts and ED represent continuity, and they possess extensive institutional knowledge of the committee and Senate operations. Demonstrating respect for their expertise and prioritizing their communications are vital components of fostering a well-functioning committee.

2. Meet the Full Scope of the Committee's Charges

Faculty members exhibit passion for a variety of campus topics, often gravitating towards Senate service that resonates with their personal interests. Nonetheless, it is imperative that every member, including the chair and vice chair, wholeheartedly engage in the committee's work, even if the topics do not directly align with their individual interests or benefits. Each member bears responsibility for ensuring the seamless operation of the committee, encompassing all facets of its oversight.

3. Participate in Committee Tasks

Every member plays a pivotal role, and membership numbers are carefully calibrated to ensure the effective functioning of the team. Complete participation and full commitment to the committee's missions are essential. It is expected that all members actively volunteer to take the lead on committee-specific tasks, undertaking these responsibilities with thoroughness and strict adherence to deadlines.

4. Prepare for Committee Meetings

Just as attending to email correspondence is crucial for the smooth operation of the committee, thorough preparation for meetings is equally essential. Members must thoroughly review all materials linked to the agenda ahead of the committee meeting. The agendas are created with precise timing, necessitating that every member is well-versed in the background information to facilitate effective discussions on each topic. Failure to adequately prepare can result in wasted time catching up or a lack of active engagement during discussions. Each member should approach every agenda item with full engagement. Should any questions arise regarding an agenda item before the meeting, members are encouraged to reach out to the analyst, Senate ED, and committee chair for clarification, which will further enhance participation during the meeting.

5. Participate in Timely Email Communications

It is imperative to prioritize emails and requests from the analyst, Senate ED, committee chair, or other members. When a member agrees to join a committee, they are committing clear and consistent correspondence with the other members, the committee leadership, the analyst, and the Senate ED.

6. Maintain Confidentiality

All Academic Senate committees address sensitive matters that demand discretion. It is essential to maintain confidentiality by ensuring that discussions during meetings and email exchanges remain confined within the committee membership. Committee discussions are meant to encourage open dialogue to inform recommendations and decisions. Part of how committee discussions function effectively is by assuming that the specifics of conversation stay in the room. It is important, then, to treat all discussions as in progress and specific to committee activity; unless an update or information share is part of a designated activity. Similarly,

committee documents circulated are considered confidential in nature or still in draft form; they are not to be shared with campus constituents or anyone outside the meeting. If meeting participants are unclear as to the nature of a discussion or a document, they should be reminded to seek clarification from the Chair and the Senate ED.

Consultants/Guests

Consultants and guests have specialization in areas that can enrich and inform committees' routine activities and duties. Roles may include advising members on policy considerations and special projects.

An email/memo requesting the service of a proposed consultant is sent to the relevant unit by the relevant Analyst with a copy to the Senate ED. Consultants provide Senate committees with specific data sets upon request by the Chair. Consultants attend meetings for the relevant part of the agendas and specified times.

Additional Points Specific to Senate Committee Chairs

- The Chair is responsible for the committee being fully operational and meeting the charge/Bylaws of the committee. They must clearly and regularly communicate with the Senate ED and/or Senate analyst, Vice Chair, and members about the business of the committee.
- The Chair is responsible for setting a reasonable schedule of meetings (e.g., twice monthly), working with the Senate ED and/or analyst to set the meeting schedule, and leading the meeting.
- Deadlines set by the Administration, Senate ED, or Senate analyst must be adhered to.
- The Chair is responsible for communicating expectations with members, as well as motivating members to get their committee work completed by the specified deadline.
- If there are issues with a member's performance, then it is the Chair's responsibility to communicate with the member and work out a system for improving the performance. When needed, consultation with the Senate ED, CoC Chair, or Senate Chair/Vice Chair may be warranted.
- The committee Chair is also a member of the corresponding systemwide committee and must attend meetings, report back to the campus committee, and perform duties as requested by the systemwide committee Chair.

Additional Points Specific to Senate Committee Vice Chairs

It is expected that the Vice Chair will step into the Chair position if asked by CoC. This rotation into the Chair position may occur in the following academic year (normal rotation of leadership roles), or it may happen if the Chair steps away for some unexpected reason (e.g., pulled into an administrative position mid-year).

Please see the next page for additional information about the Senate.

If you have any questions about this document, please contact Fatima Paul (fpaul@ucmerced.edu)

UCM Senate Committees	Systemwide Corresponding Committees
<i>Admissions</i>	
Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)	Board of Admissions & Relations with Schools (BOARS)
<i>Teaching/Education</i>	
Graduate Council (GC)	Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA)
Undergraduate Council (UGC)	University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) University Committee on International Education (UCIE) University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE)
<i>Research/Scholarship</i>	
Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) Reserve CAP (RCAP) Committee on Research (CoR) Library and Scholarly Communications (LASC)	University Committee on Academic Personnel (UCAP) No systemwide equivalent University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) University Committee on Library & Scholarly Communication (UCOLASC)
<i>Budget Planning and Resources</i>	
Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA)	University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB)
<i>Service/Outreach</i>	
Committee on Committees (COC)	University Committee on Committees (UCOC)
<i>Faculty Interests and Rights</i>	
Divisional Council (DivCo) Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) Committee on Faculty Welfare (CFW) Committee for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee on Rules and Elections (CRE) Committee on Privilege and Tenure (P&T)	Academic Council (AC) University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE) University Committee on Rules & Jurisdiction (UCR&J) University Committee on Privilege and Tenure (UCPT)

AY 25-26 UCM Faculty Representatives on Systemwide Senate Committees

Committee	Divisional Representative Name	Department/School
ACADEMIC COUNCIL	Kevin Mitchell	Physics/SNS
BOARS	Joel Spencer	BioEngineering/SOE
CCGA	Irene Beattie	Sociology/SSHA
UCAADE	Sean Malloy	History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies (HCRES)/SSHA
UCACC	TBD	
UCAF	Patti LiWang	Molecular Cell Biology (MCB)/SNS
UCAP	Ajay Gopinathan	Physics/SNS
UCEP	Susan Varnot	Global Arts, Media & Writing Studies (GAMWS)/SSHA
UCFW	David Rouff	History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies (HCRES)/SSHA
UCIE	TBD	
UCOC	TBD	
UCOLASC	Sholeh Quinn	History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies (HCRES)/SSHA
UCOPE	TBD	
UCORP	Ramen Saha	Molecular Cell Biology (MCB)/SNS
UCPB	Mike Beman	Life & Environmental Sciences (LES)/SNS
UCPT	Christopher Viney	Chemical and Materials Engineering/ SOE

UCM Senate website: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/>

Senate Bylaws and Regulations: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/code/academicsenate>

Policies: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/policies>

Guide to Membership and Practice of Executive Session:

<https://senate.ucmerced.edu/membership/executive-session>

Committees' Annual Reports: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/annual-reports> *(Some reports are still pending review of relevant Chair and will be uploaded when ready)*