

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL (UGC)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2025-2026

Undergraduate Council (UGC) establishes policy for undergraduate education on the Merced campus and advises the Chancellor or Chancellor's designee on all matters pertaining to undergraduate education. UGC reviews, coordinates, and takes final action on all matters relating to courses of undergraduate instruction and approves or declines to approve, the establishment, discontinuation, or modification of undergraduate programs, majors, minors, courses, and certificates.

Undergraduate Council Organization and Representation on Campus and Systemwide Committees, Work Groups, and Task Forces:

- **Divisional Council:** UGC Chair Susan Varnot (SSHA)
- **University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP):** UGC Chair Susan Varnot (SSHA)
- **University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE):** UGC member Aurora Pribram-Jones (SNS)
- **University Committee on International Education (UCIE):** UGC member Fan Jia (SSHA)
- **Periodic Review and Oversight Committee Representative (PROC):** UGC Vice Chair Catherine Keske (SoE).
 - **Program Review:** UGC Chair Susan Varnot participated in each program review that included an onsite review team in AY 2025-2026, with Vice Chair Catherine Keske designated as a backup.
- **Joint Senate Work Group on Academic Senate Procedures for PACE Programs -** UGC member Catherine Keske (SoE)
- **WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) Steering Committee for Reaffirmation of Accreditation:** UGC Chair Susan Varnot (SSHA) with member Lindsay Crawford (SSHA) designated as a backup.
- **Retention Committee:** UGC Chair Susan Varnot (SSHA) and member Santosh Chandrasekhar (SoE), with member Jason Lee (SSHA) designated as a backup for Chair Varnot.
- **UCM Climate of Respect Task Force:** UGC member Lindsay Crawford (SSHA)
- **AI Advisory Council (Teaching and Learning Subgroup):** UGC member Mindy Findlater (SNS)
- **Academic Integrity Task Force (Teaching and Learning):** UGC members Francois Blanchette (SNS; research faculty), Mindy Findlater (SNS; teaching faculty), and Jason Lee (SSHA; teaching faculty)
- **Strategic Planning Workshop:** UGC member Lindsay Crawford (SSHA)
- **Administrative Review Workshop:** UGC members Francois Blanchette (SNS) and Mindy Findlater (SNS)
- **Alumni Survey Workshop:** UGC Chair Susan Varnot (SSHA) and UGC members Lindsay Crawford (SSHA) and Mindy Findlater (SNS)
- **Course Approval Subcommittee (CPS):** UGC members Francois Blanchette (SNS),

Santosh Chandrasekhar (SoE; subcommittee chair), Safeeq Khan (SoE), Jason Lee (SSHA), and Jesus Sandoval-Hernandez (SSHA)

- The CPS developed guidance in response to the Registrar's request regarding the number of course requests submitted to UGC in previous years. The memo transmitted to Department Chairs on November 6, 2025 outlines what constitutes a valid exception request and reinforces adherence to UGC's curricular deadlines.
- **Policy Subcommittee:** UGC members Aurora Pribram-Jones (SNS) and Lindsay Crawford (SSHA)
 - The Policy Subcommittee reviewed and provided feedback on the following:
 - Revised Faculty Instructional Accommodations Due to Disability Policy (10/6).
 - UC Merced Guidelines Concerning Scheduling Conflicts with Academic Requirements (12/17).
 - Revised Review Guidelines for Undergraduate Academic Certificates (2/27).
 - Draft Generative AI Policy (along with AI Advisory Council Representative Findlater on 3/13).

AY 2-27 Catalog and Course Proposals

- UGC reviewed 207 new and modified course proposals.
- UGC granted 37 exceptions to the February 3, 2025 and October 13, 2025 deadlines to submit new course proposals, to modify existing course proposals in Curriculog, or to change the course modality.
- UGC approved the AY 26-27 Catalog revisions (1/23).

Petitions

- UGC reviewed 56 Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) petitions.
- UGC reviewed one Petition of Academic Policy for an exception to the 120-unit graduation requirement.

4+1 Hybrid Degree Program Proposals

- **BA/BS to PharmD Hybrid Degree Program Proposal**
 - UGC conducted its preliminary review and transmitted a memo to the proposers on November 26, 2025.
 - Following review of a revised proposal, UGC and the Graduate Council (GC) transmitted a joint memo with additional concerns to the proposers on March 31, 2026.
- **MBSE 4+1 Hybrid Degree Program Proposal**
 - UGC conducted a preliminary review and transmitted a memo jointly with the Graduate Council (GC) to the proposers on April 15, 2026.
 - Following review of a revised proposal, UGC and the Graduate Council (GC) transmitted a joint approval memo to the Senate Chair on June 1, 2026.
- **ME 4+1 Hybrid Degree Program Proposal**
 - UGC conducted its preliminary review and transmitted a memo to the proposers on May 11, 2026.
 - The proposers submitted a revised proposal on May 13, 2026, which both councils

plan to review in Fall 2026.

Campus and Systemwide Review Items

- Presidential Policy for the UC's Use of Online Program Management Companies (9/12)*
- UCAD Interim Report and Recommendations (9/24)*
- Systemwide Senate Bylaw 140 - Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (10/17)*
- Presidential Policy on Sustainable Practices (10/17)*
- UCM Interim Policy on Micromobility Devices: Electric Scooters & E-Bikes (11/19)
- Presidential Policy on Education Loan Practices (11/19)*
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) Degree in Computer Science (2/5)
- Proposed Amendments to Senate Bylaw 192 and Senate Regulations 636 & 761 (4/3)*
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) Degree in Artificial Intelligence (5/13)
- Presidential Policy Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (PACAOS) 100.0 and PACAOS-Appendix H (4/17)*
- 2026-2031 Five Year Planning Perspectives (5/1)

*Systemwide review items

New Policy Development and Revisions to Existing Policy

1. Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy :
 - On December 1 and 5, 2025, Chair Varnot convened with GC Chair Irene Beattie, Senate Chair Kevin Mitchell, and Executive Director Fatima Paul on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Charge.
 - On December 17, 2025, a letter was transmitted to department chairs, graduate group chairs, and the Library on behalf of UGC Chair Varnot and GC Chair Beattie, outlining their efforts in spearheading the development of a campus-wide educational policy on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning, which aims to provide clear guidance, uphold academic integrity, and support instructors across all disciplines. Following outreach and campus feedback received by February 20, 2026, Chair Varnot provided an update to UGC members at the March 13, 2026 meeting. UGC Policy Subcommittee members Aurora Pribram-Jones and Lindsay Crawford, along with AI Advisory Council Representatives Keske and Findlater, were invited to review and provide feedback on draft policy materials.
 - At its April 10, 2026 meeting, UGC discussed the draft policy and campus feedback. Following the meeting, Chair Varnot and GC Chair Beattie revised the draft policy and prepared an accompanying cover memo. The final revised draft policy and cover memo, incorporating comments received during the review process, were transmitted to the Senate Chair on April 17, 2026
2. Campus-wide Policy for Minor Programs, Multiple Major Policy, and new Multiple Minor Policy:
 - UGC transmitted to Divisional Council for review and approval proposed amendments to the Campus-wide Policy for Minor Programs and the Multiple

Major Policy (11/12).

- During its February 6 and April 3, 2026 meetings, Divisional Council identified concerns and requested additional clarification regarding the proposed amendments.
- Following the Divisional Council meetings and receipt of Divisional Council's April 7, 2026 memo, Academic Senate Executive Director Fatima Paul, and subsequently UGC, developed additional revisions to address Divisional Council's concerns.
- UGC approved and transmitted to Divisional Council for further review revised amendments to the Campus-wide Policy for Minor Programs and the Multiple Major Policy, along with a proposed new Multiple Minor Policy (6/10).
- While the policies remained under review, UGC approved and transmitted two one-time limited exceptions to the 2025 Campus-wide Policy for Minors for the Spring 2026 and Summer 2026 graduating cohorts (5/13, 6/16).

3. Review Guidelines for Undergraduate Academic Certificates

- Following submission of a policy for undergraduate certificate programs in AY 24-25, UGC Chair Varnot, the UGC Analyst, and Senate Executive Director Paul met with SSHA Associate Dean Anne Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Catherine Koehler on October 23, 2025, to discuss the development of a Campus Policy on Undergraduate Certificate Programs.
- Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director Koehler submitted to UGC a revised proposal, renamed *Review Guidelines for Undergraduate Academic Certificates* (11/20).
- UGC reviewed the revised proposal and provided comments, including the recommendation for a one-year pilot program (2/27).
- SSHA Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director Koehler joined the April 10, 2026 UGC meeting to discuss the proposal and answer questions.
- Following the UGC meeting, Associate Dean Zanzucchi, Executive Director Koehler, Chair Varnot, VPDUE Bergerson, and the UGC Analyst met on May 4, 2026 to further develop the pilot proposal and discuss its components.
- Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director Koehler submitted the proposal for a *Pilot Program for Undergraduate Academic Certificates* (5/28).
- On June 29, 2026, Senate Chair Mitchell, Executive Director Paul, Chair Varnot, and the UGC Analyst met with Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director Koehler to discuss proposal processes and next steps. Divisional Council will review the proposal in Fall 2026.

Other¹:

- UGC unanimously approved the Revised Faculty Instructional Accommodations Due to Disability Policy (10/3).
- UGC transmitted a memo to VPDUE Bergerson regarding a request related to USTU 090 being offered online in Fall 2025 (11/07).
- UGC transmitted a memo to Facilities and Campus Safety regarding review of emergency access and safety measures in classrooms (11/12).
- UGC offered comments on the UC Merced Guidelines Concerning Scheduling Conflicts with Academic Requirements (12/17).
- UGC received a request to consider amending the UC Merced Divisional Bylaws to grant voting rights to non-Senate faculty members. Following prior discussion and consultation with the Committee on Rules and Elections (CRE), voting members voted not to pursue amendments to the bylaws (2/26).
- UGC offered comments on the General Education (GE) Program Review Consultation that GE Program Chair Utter provided at the October 31, 2025 UGC meeting (3/05).
- UGC transmitted a memo to Senate Chair Mitchell requesting a copy of Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Kurt Schnier's response to the UC Merced Faculty Association budget memo (3/11).
- UGC offered comments on the PACE Work Group's Draft Recommendations (5/15).
- UGC transmitted a memo to Assistant Vice Provost Alisha Kimble requesting approval of WRI 010 as a course to satisfy the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) (6/02).
- Following an email request from UCOPE Chair Bradley Queen to relevant UC campus committee chairs, which provided an update and recommended that UGC consult with their respective campus Entry Level Writing Requirement Coordinating Council (ECC) representative, UGC Chair Varnot transmitted a memo to Merritt Writing Program Director Estee Beck requesting an overview of the writing placement processes and a copy of the annual ECC report (6/02).

Guest Consultations:

- Director of Employer Connections & Internships Elizabeth Atilano to discuss career resources (9/19).
- AI Workgroup Member Lisa Yeo to provide an overview of the work group's activities and progress (10/17).
- Professors Ryan Baxter and Kirk Jensen to present the Hybrid BA/BS to PharmD Between UC Merced and UCSF School of Pharmacy Program Proposal (11/14).
- Professor Christian Fon Rosen to discuss the Gallo School of Management (12/5).
- University Police of Chief Chou Her, Assistant Vice Provost for Facilities Management Jonathan Lampman, and Director and Facilities Manager Tyler Grise to discuss emergency access and safety measures in the classroom, particularly large lecture halls (1/16).

¹ Items that will carry over to AY 26-27:

- Pilot Program: Review Guidelines for Undergraduate Academic Certificates
- Campus-Wide Policy for Minor Programs, Multiple Minor Policy, and Multiple Major Policy
- Overview of the writing placement processes
- Generative AI Policy

- Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) Dean Annette Roberts Webb and Director Michael Pierick joined to discuss XM courses in general and a specific request related to LBST – XM191 (2/13).
- SSHA Associate Dean Anne Zanzucchi and Director of Degree Completion Catherine Koehler to discuss the revised Guidelines for Undergraduate Academic Certificates (4/10).

UGC also received regular updates from VPDUE Amy Bergerson, VCSA Tonantzin, and Deputy Registrar Reinhold on several topics, including student retention and recruitment, student accessibility services, online accessibility changes, student conduct policies, budget cuts, academic advising, academic integrity, artificial intelligence, general education, weekend exam policies, CLSS software, and more.

Respectfully Submitted:

UGC Members:

Susan Varnot, Chair, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, UCEP representative
 Catherine Keske, Vice-Chair, School of Engineering, PROC representative
 Francois Blanchette, School of Natural Sciences
 Santosh Chandrasekhar, School of Engineering
 Eric Cheng, School of Engineering (Spring 2026)
 Lindsay Crawford, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
 Melinda Findlater, School of Natural Sciences
 Fan Jia, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, UCIE representative
 Safeeq Khan, School of Engineering
 Jason Lee, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
 Aurora Pribram-Jones, School of Natural Sciences, UCOPE representative
 Jesus Sandoval-Hernandez, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (Spring 2026)
 Maria-Elena Zogbhi, School of Natural Sciences (Spring 2026)

Ex-Officio:

Amy Bergerson, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education
 Tonantzin Oseguera, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement

Staff:

Melanie Snyder, Senate Senior Analyst, Academic Senate
 Fatima Paul, Executive Director, Academic Senate