

**GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**Wednesday, September 25, 2019**

Pursuant to the call, Graduate Council met at 1:30 p.m. in Room 397 of the Kolligian Library, Chair LeRoy Westerling presiding.

**I. Executive Session 30 Min**

**II. Vice Chair Report – *Hrant Hratchian***

A. [Divisional Council meeting](#) (9/18)

The Vice Chair reported that the Council discussed preparations for the Chancellor’s search. The Vice Chair noted he was surprised that the membership is largely not from UC Merced. He encouraged members to attend the October 2 townhall, and identify others who can, if they cannot. He has also learned that the faculty subcommittee has to pre-approve any finalist. The Senate Chair noted that the current advertisement does not mention the need for academic background and exhibited academic excellence, and does not mention R1. If these are of concern to GC members, Vice Chair encourages them to bring them up at the townhall.

The new Chief Human Resources Officer is learning about campus. She found it alarming that staff are unable to move upward through the UC in current positions (which lead to staff moving to different offices), and is working to remedy the situation. It had been pointed out to her as an existing priority. There is a white paper that is being developed at the system level HR leadership as well.

**III. Consent Calendar**

A. The agenda (9/25)

- B. [Revised management and reporting process for approving non-Senate faculty for graduate course instruction](#). Per discussion at the 9/11 GC meeting, the following two items were added to the information to be reported to GC annually: the type of course (regular, PDST, or SSP) and the number and percentage of courses in the program taught by non-Senate faculty.

C. The following requests for modifications to existing courses have been approved by the GC CRF Subcommittee:

- [MIST 202](#) - Managerial Finance and Accounting
- [MIST 241](#) – Management Information Systems
- [PH 208A](#) – Professional Skills A
- [PH 208B](#) – Professional Skills B
- [MBSE 295](#) – Graduate Research
- [ME 290](#) – Topics in Mechanical Engineering

D. The following requests for course discontinuations have been approved by the GC CRF Subcommittee:

- [BEST 214](#) – Tissue Engineering Design
- [BEST 291](#) – Research Seminar
- [BEST 294](#) – Responsible Conduct of Research
- [PHYS 249](#) – Introduction to Quantum Field Theory
- [QSB 280](#) – Advanced Mathematical Biology
- [PSY 214](#) – History of Psychology

Consent calendar was approved as presented.

**IV. Consultation with LAUC-M Representative**

Jerrold Shiroma, a member of the [Librarians Association of the University of California-Merced](#), was invited to Graduate Council to discuss LAUC-M representation on the committee. Mr. Shiroma explained the reasons LAUC-M is requesting its representation, mainly to more proactively develop and plan programming and services for graduate students and programs. After some discussion, the Council motioned to invite the library representative on an ongoing basis for the rest of the semester, and then mutually assess the utility of this relationships. The motion carried unanimously.

**ACTION:** The analyst will send the library representative the meeting schedule and let him know to expect the agenda for every meeting; also add him to GC box folder.

**V. [Sponsored Projects Redesign Initiative Request](#) – Vice Chair Hratchian**

Members discussed the following two questions regarding the administrative organization of sponsored projects, in preparation for DivCo discussion on October 2, 2019.

1. Whether to have all sponsored projects staff report to ORED, or to maintain some version of the current model with some staff reporting to ORED and others to schools/ORUs.

Although the physical location of the staff does impact the effective communication between the grant-submitting faculty and the support staff, this is at the moment outside the inquiry of the ORED. The focus is on building structural accountability for staff to provide quality support to faculty. Which is why the organizational chart is under review/revision. Currently, research administration staff are housed in (and thus report to) the schools, with dotted lines connecting them to ORED.

VPDGE, who is a member of the ORED's advisory group, noted that the answer to this question should be informed by what quality service looks like. Chair Westerling expressed his disappointment that, in the advisory group discussion, continuity of relationships was not regarded as a priority and criterion for higher quality. The reasoning was that, with training and better organizational chart, any staff member would be able to provide good quality service. Chair Westerling disagrees, because by working with the same faculty members, the staff person gains expertise in handling the types of grants and spending categories that are common to the faculty's research field and methods. Vice Chair agreed on the importance of building relationships, and of the support staff having knowledge of faculty's research.

Chair added that, to keep staff with whom faculty develop good relationships, the staff need to be paid well and be treated well by other staff with whom they work, which are both lacking at the moment. Vice Chair added that grant support staff in general doesn't seem to see that getting grants benefits them, not just faculty, that they are all part of the same team.

A member asked about seeing the consultant report from last year, which was paid for and issued, but has not been distributed as far as GC members knew. If the report cannot be made available, it was suggested that GC ask for a report on the report.

**ACTION:** The analyst to ask for the consultant report from last year.

Chair Westerling proceeded to consult the committee members on answering the above question, stating he was in favor of having staff report to both ORED and ORUs, to avoid centralized allocation of staff, which may result in staff members being shifted away from faculty with whom they have developed relationships and expertise. The rationale for

centralization is to develop back up support intrinsic to the system, given the current and forecast staff shortage. But without additional, knowledgeable people, this leads to inadequate support (since the “back up support” would be taking staff time away from other, existing grant services).

**ACTION:** Chair Westerling will ask for more information and clarification.

2. Whether to have the post-award, budget management component of research administration (contract and grants) continue to report to ORED or to have it report to the Division of Finance and Administration.

Vice Chair pointed out that, when post-grant issues arise, they affect faculty, post-docs, and students. As least ORED is naturally inclined to work with the academic side of the house, whereas this may not be the case with the Business and Financial Services (within the Division of Finance and Administration). The Chair and a member stated their agreements.

**ACTION:** Chair Westerling will communicate GC’s general consensus in favor of the existing reporting structure (for the Contracts and Grants office to report to ORED).

**VI. Discussion Item: [Curriculog System Review Report](#) – Chair Westerling**

Last year at the Graduate Council Chair’s request, a review of Curriculog and the CRF process was undertaken. Members had been encouraged to review the [resulting report](#) with the goal of advising Graduate Council’s representatives to the [CRF Policy Work Group](#) being established to address the report’s recommendations. GC’s representatives to the group are Chair Westerling and Member Newsam.

**ACTION:** Reschedule for a future meeting, after a meeting with UGC.

**VII. Discussion Item: Graduate Group Size and Enrollment – Chair Westerling**

Members discussed minimum graduate group size and the idea of establishing a cohort admissions model, which was promoted as a way to improve the consistency in recruitment effort, and improve the number and quality of applicants.

Cohort model seemed like a good model to boost enrollment, wherein students are not under one particular advisor for the first year. But have been told that this is not possible in some disciplines, as a lot of educating happens in the lab and field and need to engage students from the beginning. Also learned that lab rotation model does not always work well because students don’t necessarily get picked up.

What can we do to boost the number and quality of applicants to programs. What about leveraging the reputations of faculty who not necessarily want to take a student but to get the student interested. Could also use a co-advising (with a senior and a junior faculty partnering) model to do this as well. Perhaps should discuss with graduate group chairs, just don’t want to stay on auto-pilot and have inconsistent recruiting efforts from one year to the next across some graduate groups. And that perhaps that some groups could adopt a cohort model where appropriate. And try to leverage the reputation of all faculty, including in other groups, for recruitment, recruiting as schools/colleges, with senior faculty mentoring and networking junior faculty.

A member described rotational model, which is very common in her field (molecular biology). She noted that finding a home lab was not a problem in other, large institutions; only a problem at UC Merced because of insufficient labs/smaller scale. Also, students were supported by a training grant from the graduate group during rotations, which are unavailable at UCM. Not using rotational model will likely disincentivize applicants, negatively affecting recruitment. Vice Chair Hratchian noted that chemistry has hybrid programs – students may do rotations or can go to a lab directly. He further cautioned against a top-down approach, suggesting that recruitment is a matter of individual leadership in individual programs, with different cultural (mentorship) context.

Chair Westerling would like there to be at least a conversation with graduate group chairs. Some professors have not received adequate mentorship from senior faculty to effectively mentor and support students. Vice Chair mentioned that the most challenging aspect of cohort/rotational models is summer funding, when TA-ships are not sufficient to cover all students. Given the young faculty at UC Merced (compared to other UCs), it is challenging to fund students, especially when they have not demonstrated ability to work effectively in labs (one year of rotations is not sufficient time to develop the needed skills for specific labs).

Graduate Student Representative asked for clarification on the cohort model, whether the cohort was envisioned to be across departments and programs. Chair answered in affirmative, although with expected exceptions in some disciplines, to give students time to work with different professors before they commit to working with one (as done in the current, pure apprenticeship model). Chair thinks it would be valuable for UCM students, given that they likely have little or no exposure to the academia beyond their undergraduate education, as was the case with himself.

The VPDGE predicted strong opposition if the campus went straight to a cohort model, and suggested some intermediate steps that GC could propose as a council:

- Encouraging rotations as a possibility.
- Building more of a sense of responsibility in the unit, that they, as a unit, have admitted the student, not just one faculty member. This may help bring in students who would strengthen the program's areas of research that the program identifies as priorities, and, in turn, ensure students receive the needed support even when they stop working with the original mentor.

VPDGE suggested that GC compiles best practices. Chair proposed to use the phrasing “alternative models that we think might help boost recruitment and retention” as a basis for a conversation, taking into account that there are fields and disciplines that are exceptions, where individual mentorship in the apprenticeship model is necessary for students to gain the needed skills for the field. Each graduate group could discuss the alternative models in the context of improving recruitment and retention. Chair asked Vice Chair to lead this effort, as Vice Chair attends the Graduate Group Chairs' meetings. Vice Chair expressed his skepticism about the effectiveness of proposing the models in improving recruitment and retention efforts in the programs that are seeing recruitment and retention issues, as he believes it is the problem of individual leadership, but agreed to draft a document for GC members' review.

**ACTION:** The Vice Chair will draft a memo and circulate it for comment by the GC membership.

**VIII. Consultation with VPDGE**

A. Updates There were no updates at this meeting.

**IX. New Business?** There was no new business.

**X. Informational Items**

- 9/16 – The [final report](#) of the Academic Planning Work Group is transmitted to the faculty (Senate and Non-Senate) and membership of Joint Council.
- 9/16 – The Provost transmits to the Senate [the revised Policy for the Establishment of Schools and Colleges](#), together with a cover letter that responds to the comments each committee offered in AY 2018-19. The policy will be piloted with the Gallo School pre-proposal this year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:03PM. Attested by Chair LeRoy Westerling.