

**DIVISIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Friday, September 25, 2020**

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**Attendees:** Chair Robin DeLugan, Vice Chair LeRoy Westerling, Christopher Viney, Ashlie Martini, Patti LiWang, Hrant Hratchian, Matthew Hibbing, Abbas Ghassemi, Kara McCloskey, Jesus Sandoval-Hernandez, Carolin Frank, Erin Hestir, and Justin Yeakel.

**I. Consultation with GE Executive Committee (GEEC) Chair Valerie Leppert**

GEEC Chair Leppert joined the meeting to present proposed plans for realignment of the GE program. By way of background, Chair Leppert reminded Divisional Council members that the GEEC drafted bylaws for the GE program last year. Following the Senate faculty vote to approve the GE program as an academic program, the campus invited a consultant, Kate McConnell, from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, to generate a report on UC Merced's GE program. The report was provided to Divisional Council members prior to today's meeting and incorporates both offsite review and onsite review of faculty, staff, and students. Based on this feedback, the GEEC has drafted proposed revisions to the GE program and is seeking input from Senate committees and School leadership. Chair Leppert emphasized that the revisions will be issued for a Senate faculty vote after all input has been incorporated.

Chair Leppert then summarized the main concerns about the GE program she received from campus constituents. One concern is the large number of distinct requirements. School advisors pointed out that the number of requirements is potentially extending the time to degree. Also, some students are funneling through a small subset of courses in order to meet the GE requirements which is the opposite of what a GE program is supposed to be. The intent of the GE program is to be exploratory and to provide students with a broad education. In addition, there has been confusion with regard to study abroad programs about how the courses will transfer. When the consultant conducted a focus group with students, she reported their concerns about a checklist mentality and the confusion surrounding a long list of requirements. Furthermore, students did not understand the goal of the GE program.

Chair Leppert pointed out that the entire GE program has fewer resources than CORE had to manage one course. A robust GE program requires sufficient resources. She also discussed the need for faculty development. For example, Writing in the Discipline (WID) requires a great deal of faculty work. Another issue is that many faculty outside the humanities are not accustomed to the format of the first-year seminar with its emphasis on exploratory topics. Faculty would benefit from development in this area. She also pointed out challenges regarding the sustainability of Spark seminars given that 86% of the seminars are delivered by SSHA (which now houses the Writing Program). The intention was for each School to deliver at least 20% of GE which is currently not the case. There are issues surrounding the capacity to conduct seminars for high impact majors and a perceived lack of alignment with program interest in goals.

Chair Leppert stated that she is soliciting ideas for alternative first-year seminars. Suggestions she has received so far are to add a seminar component to the Living & Learning Communities, seminars related to women in engineering, and a seminar with a Service Learning component. Medical Education has also suggested alternative seminars. Chair Leppert plans to pilot these ideas next year and assess them before the GEEC officially approves any alternative seminars.

Chair Leppert then discussed the ePortfolio which is a high impact practice. In addition to collecting products, ePortfolio involves a reflective and curation process and agreement among the faculty. All faculty who teach courses with GE requirements must have an ePortfolio designation. There is currently a two-thirds compliance among the faculty, but there are no resources to assist. The consultant estimated that an additional four staff members in the areas of technology and pedagogy would be required to make ePortfolio more robust. ePortfolio was conceptualized as being valuable for assessment but other campuses do not utilize it. Chair Leppert is trying to identify what information programs are assessing so that she can sample it for GE assessment. GE PLOs align well with program PLOs.

A Divisional Council member praised Chair Leppert's success in cultivating the necessary campus constituents to buy in to the new GE program. The member also supported the idea of alternative Spark seminars. The member inquired whether the GE program will receive the necessary resources given the bleak budget outlook. Chair Leppert responded that she has been receiving one-time budget approvals each year at the end of August/early September. The campus needs to move to a more sustainable budget process while recognizing the current budget constraints. She added that she has had resource conversations with the administration.

Chair Leppert then briefly shared with Divisional Council members a comparison of UC Merced and UC Berkeley GE requirements across the categories of UC wide, campus, essential skills, and breadth requirements. UC Berkeley is an appropriate comparator institution given that it is the only other semester-based UC campus. Chair Leppert stated that she is discussing with Student Affairs the possibility of moving the student badges to a digital badge program. The badges embed the criteria which is importable to a data base and which is used by many employers.

Chair Leppert ended her presentation by pointing out that the GE revision process will occur in stages. She requested Divisional Council feedback in two weeks.

**Action:** Divisional Council members to send their input on the proposed GE program revisions to Senate Chair DeLugan in two weeks.

## II. Chair's Report – Robin DeLugan

### A. Meeting with Chancellor Muñoz and EVC/Provost Camfield (9/14 and 9/17)

Chair DeLugan informed Divisional Council members that the main topics of conversation were mitigation for faculty caretakers in light of COVID-19, the status of the ECEC, and some faculty's desire to return to their offices. A space survey was distributed to the faculty by the administration recently and Chair DeLugan encouraged Divisional Council members to respond. Finally, Chair DeLugan reported that if UC Merced will implement budget cuts, they will likely be instituted on January 1, 2021.

### B. Deans' Council (9/15)

### C. Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture and Inclusion (9/15)

### D. Divisional Chairs, Vice Chair, Executive Directors (9/18)

### E. Academic Council (9/23)

Chair DeLugan reported that UC President Drake, Provost Brown, and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (and former, interim UC Merced Chancellor) Nathan Brostrom consulted with Academic Council members. President Drake congratulated UC Merced for its success and its appearance in the new rankings.

Chair DeLugan then mentioned the Chancellor and EVC/Provost's recent email communication to the campus about Medical Education and the future undergraduate degree program. Several faculty

members were dismayed by the communication as it implied that the degree program is already approved. Per the Standing Order of the Regents and UC policy, the faculty have authority over curriculum. Any proposal for a new degree program must be reviewed by the Senate. No such proposal has been sent to the Senate. Chair DeLugan stated that she contacted EVC/Provost Camfield and reminded him of the memo that Divisional Council transmitted to Medical Director Thelma Hurd in June 2020 that recommended the addition of Senate faculty on her task force. Divisional Council never received a response to that memo. Divisional Council members were surprised at the circumventing of shared governance. They agreed that the proposed Medical Education task force should include the Senate representatives from UGC, GC, AFAC, and CAPRA. A Divisional Council member also pointed out that one of the agreements from the summer Senate Governance Retreat (which was attended by faculty and administrators) was “no surprises”.

**Action:** The Senate ED will draft a memo on behalf of Divisional Council and circulate for review via email.

### III. Consent Calendar

- A. Approval of today’s agenda
- B. [Approval of the September 4 Meeting Minutes](#)

**Action:** The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

### IV. Graduate Council’s Revised Conflict of Interest Policy – GC Chair Hratchian

GC Chair Hratchian stated that the revision to the policy adds graduate groups to departments and programs. Divisional Council members had no comments.

**Action:** Divisional Council unanimously approved GC’s revised conflict of interest policy.

### V. Emergency Educational Continuity Policy – Chair DeLugan

EVC/Provost Camfield has asked the Senate to consider extending the [Emergency Educational Continuity policy](#) throughout the Spring semester. Actions taken by the Senate since the implementation of the policy in March 2020, can be found here:

<https://senate.ucmerced.edu/educational-continuity>

UGC and GC were invited to share thoughts on any aspect(s) of the policy that might need clarification. UGC had no concerns with the policy as presented. The GC chair summarized for Divisional Council his questions about the policy, mainly regarding TAs. The policy states that if the instructor of record cannot continue to teach their course, the TA will take over the delivery of the course. GC Chair Hratchian asked whether there should be a time limit. He also raised questions about TA contracts and whether the union would permit the TA to deliver the remainder of a course. In addition, what are the modality expectations for a course to be continued? He requested that both UGC and GC be given additional time to review the policy. Senate Executive Director Paul stated that she will contact the Registrar and the EVC/Provost’s office on a possible extension of the deadline to review.

Another Divisional Council member suggested that UGC and GC consider how this policy intersects with existing leave policies. For example, while it is not in the TAs’ contract that they can teach a course if the instructor of record becomes ill, there are current medical leave policies independent of COVID-19 that already exist.

**Action:** The Senate Executive Director will contact the Registrar and EVC/Provost’s office about a possible extension of the deadline to review the emergency educational continuity policy and will inform Divisional Council of the outcome.

**VI. Senate Action Plan to Address Structural Racism – Chair DeLugan**

On June 17, 2020, members of the Divisional Council established a work group that, over the summer, produced a draft action plan for AY 20-21 with a lens on the Academic Senate's realm of responsibility and/or in collaboration with other campus stakeholder.

The work group charge is available [here](#).

Chair DeLugan reminded Divisional Council members that she, AVC Dania Matos, and AVC Jonathan Grady are co-chairs of the Valuing Black Lives @ UC Merced task force. The task force includes five subcommittees dedicated to various topics and are comprised of faculty, students, staff, administrators, and community members. She requested input from Divisional Council members on the task force's draft action plan, especially with regard to the section on campus climate and culture. That part of the plan calls for the formation of a working group that would include representation from all three Schools and at least one representative from FWAF and D&E.

In response to a Divisional Council member's question, Chair DeLugan confirmed that there will be engagement at both the systemwide level and the campus level on these issues. UC President Drake confirmed this at the last Academic Council meeting. Chair DeLugan stated that the Chancellor announced that UC Merced would receive \$100,000 for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. He also announced his willingness to fund external consultants to conduct workshops for UC Merced.

**Action:** Divisional Council members will send Chair DeLugan their feedback on the draft action plan, specifically potential members of the campus climate and culture working group, by the close of business on Monday, September 28.

**VII. Other Business**

A. FWAF Chair Frank stated that the ECEC remains closed and she is unable to locate any additional information. Other UC campus child care centers are reopening. FWAF is drafting a memo requesting additional information on the status of the ECEC, as the availability of child care affects faculty recruitment and retention. Chair DeLugan responded that she will ask EVC/Provost Camfield to include FWAF in future conversations about the ECEC and child care in general.

**Action:** Chair DeLugan and Senate Executive Director Paul will discuss next steps.

B. GC Chair Hratchian pointed out that several members of CoC serve on other Senate committees and expressed concern over the conflict of interest. Senate Executive Director Paul confirmed that CRE is discussing this issue at their meeting next week.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

Attest: Robin DeLugan, Senate Chair