

DIVISIONAL COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, September 30, 2021

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

I. Chair's Report – *Chair Westerling*

A. Welcome CoC Chair Martin Hagger

B. C19 Cabinet Meetings (September 20 and 27)

Chair Westerling reported that the number of unvaccinated individuals on campus is small and many of the infected individuals contracted COVID off campus. The campus drafted a detailed set of decision trees regarding possible infection waves after the Thanksgiving holiday. Plans include holding small classes in large classrooms and a shift to online courses. The GC and UGC chairs are meeting weekly with the VPDGE and VPDUE. Any decision to shift instruction modalities or reduce population density on campus will include a formal consultation process.

C. Academic Council (September 22)

One of the discussion topics was the potential Unit 18 lecturer strike.

II. Consultation with Cecil Howard, Vice Chancellor/Chief Diversity Officer

CDO Howard stated that he looks forward to engaging in and enhancing the EDI endeavors of the university. Some good initiatives are progressing such as the Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Institute which stalled last year. CDO Howard's office will coordinate the 2022 institute and the campus can anticipate promotional materials. Applications will be accepted in the spring semester. The Valuing Black Lives initiative is also ongoing as is the campus EDI plan. CDO Howard asked that Divisional Council members contact him if they are interested in collaborating on any initiatives. He added that the Schools are considering hiring Associate Deans for diversity and he is in favor of this plan. The Associate Deans would not report to him but would work in conjunction with his office.

III. Consent Calendar

A. The Agenda

B. September 16 Meeting Minutes

C. Revised CAP Conflict of Interest Policy

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

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

UGC Chair Moyes announced that UGC will not permanently approve any requests for online courses until it is determined how those courses will be tracked. Temporary requests for spring and summer 2022 will be approved. UGC will consult with department chairs and the deans about course tracking to ensure that students do not accidentally end up with online degrees. UGC is also reviewing the policy for reviewing and approving course requests.

GC Chair Hestir stated that GC is collaborating with UGC on an improved tracking system for online courses. GC has also paused all online CRF reviews until a tracking system is implemented and there is well-defined review criteria for online courses and courses with dual modality. GC also wants to set a deadline for requesting accommodations for online courses to avoid a situation in which the Senate discovers a week before instruction that accommodations were made but never reviewed by the Senate or the Registrar. GC wants to accommodate individuals but does not want to change the modality of courses after registration as this would be unfair to students.

V. Campus Research Infrastructure – CoR Chair Sexton

CoR drafted a memo on research obstacles and sent it to the chairs of GC and FWAF for their feedback. CoR Chair Sexton acknowledged that the administration issued an email recently with a list of immediate solutions in response to the faculty town halls last week. CoR will revise the memo to take into account these improvements. A revised memo reflecting feedback from CoR, GC, and FWAF, will soon be transmitted to Divisional Council for the Council's endorsement.

Senate Chair Westerling suggested that the memo mention the fact that grant management processes have been dysfunctional for many years and were not caused by Oracle. He also recommended adding reconciliatory language to the memo that acknowledges the immediate actions that the administration is undertaking. He added that the Senate was not informed that the faculty town halls were scheduled, and this poor communication is problematic.

Action: CoR will revise its memo on research obstacles to incorporate GC and FWAF's feedback. A final memo will then be transmitted to Divisional Council.

VI. Endowed Chairs Proposals – Vice Chair LiWang

The Department of External Relations has requested the Senate review and approval of the following new endowed chairs:

- UC Merced Presidential Chair in Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies
- UC Merced Presidential Chair in African American Studies
- UC Merced Presidential Chair in Chicano and Latino Studies

Per Senate procedures, proposals for endowed chairs are reviewed by the Senate Vice Chair in consultation with the relevant School Executive Committees. The comments from the three School Executive Committees were linked on today's agenda.

Senate Vice Chair LiWang briefly summarized the School Executive Committee comments. Overall, the comments were positive. Two Executive Committees did suggest that the description of the Presidential Chairs be revised to make it clear what research is to be undertaken so that the best scholars are appointed. Divisional Council members suggested changing the wording from "studies" to "engagement" to indicate that these Presidential Chairs are open to faculty from all three Schools.

Action: Divisional Council will transmit its recommendation to the Department of External Relations.

VII. Other Business – Chair Westerling, UGC Chair Moyes, GC Chair Hestir

School of Engineering Executive Committee Chair Keske’s Request for Approval of Emergency Provision to Allow Unit 18 Lecturers and Adjunct Faculty to Deliver Lectures Remotely in Spring 2022.

Divisional Council members acknowledged the positive aspects of this request: the School would be able to cover the courses and accommodate the instructors who live a significant distance away from the campus. Some members were concerned that if the emergency request is approved, it will be difficult not to make it a permanent change. One member was concerned that this request may be influenced by a labor/faculty FTE line issue in the School. While there are solid pedagogical reasons why online lectures are valuable (e.g. a guest speaker), it may not be advisable to change modality to accommodate a labor issue.

Another Divisional Council member inquired how many Engineering courses would be offered remotely under this emergency request. If it is 50% of the courses in the major, that would put the campus in violation of WASC requirements. UGC Chair Moyes stated that she is meeting with EC Chair Keske and will ask for clarification.

Action: Divisional Council will continue the discussion of the emergency request at a future meeting after UGC Chair Moyes has received additional information from the School of Engineering Executive Committee Chair.

VIII. Consultation with EVC/Provost Camfield

EVC/Provost Camfield acknowledged that the two faculty town halls on research were very difficult and the administration is taking the faculty’s feedback seriously. He referred to the email sent by the administration to the campus recently with a list of emergency temporary measures to alleviate the worst of the problems. EVC/Provost Camfield admitted that the temporary measures are “band-aids” but the campus is committed to fixing the user interface of the Alpha Financials system. The administration is in discussions with users across the campus on various ways of improvement. With regard to EH&S, much of the issues are due to insufficient staffing. Several EH&S staff left the university over the past several months and replacement hiring is in progress. The EVC/Provost stated that EH&S wants to hire staff with expertise that faculty need, e.g. chemicals. Working with the Fire Marshal continues to be a challenge and the Chancellor is exploring ways to handle the situation.

Senate Chair Westerling reminded EVC/Provost Camfield that several problems on the campus pre-date the implementation of Oracle but have worsened due to the financial system. The EVC/Provost agreed and stated that the campus is exploring organizational improvements and identifying problematic areas. He emphasized that the Chancellor is committed to fixing the problems as is Interim Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Patrick Lenz.

A Divisional Council member expressed the need for urgency in addressing the problems caused by the Alpha Financials system. He asked whether the campus has a way to communicate faculty’s needs directly to Oracle. EVC/Provost Camfield replied that faculty and other system users are meeting with Deloitte. Interim VCORED Zatz is also empaneling a committee to work on this. He added that the campus is hiring temporary staff to help with data entry such as COAs. A Divisional

Council member asked for a timeline for a revised version of the software and EVC/Provost Camfield replied that there is no timeline yet. The campus is still scoping the problem and analyzing the downstream consequences of the changes that will be implemented.

Senate Chair Westerling reiterated his concern that the administration did not appear to understand the full scope of the crisis until he attended a Cabinet meeting and separate meetings with the Chancellor and the EVC/Provost. The campus has a serious communication issue. He suggested the campus create an early warning system for research infrastructure problems. EVC/Provost Camfield apologized for the administration not addressing the immediacy of the problems and acknowledged that the administration should have communicated to the faculty about what issues were already being addressed.

EVC/Provost Camfield stated that Assistant EVC/Provost Martin sent a spreadsheet about the Senate's input on the campus Strategic Plan and that he is also working with CAPRA. The work on the medical education program is progressing. One of the proposals from the faculty who worked on medical education planning is to do conduct a soft launch of an outreach initiative for Admissions and high school guidance counselors to inform them of this future medical education program.

IX. Consultation with Follett Higher Education Representatives, Sarah Foisy and Jon Neeper

UC Merced Store Manager Neeper gave a brief overview of the suite of tools offered by Follett Discover. Students can shop online using their student IDs and coming soon, the course schedule and registration system will contain links to the courses' required textbooks and their prices. A Divisional Council member asked about the percentage of students who purchase their textbooks from the University Store versus another, possibly less expensive source. Mr. Neeper did not have that information available but stated that the campus has a faculty-driven program for digital materials called Inclusive Access where the campus works with the publishers to negotiate more favorable pricing. Digital materials are made available to students by the first day of classes and the campus charges their student accounts. Students do have the option to opt out of the program if they wish to purchase course materials elsewhere.

Mr. Neeper asked Divisional Council members for their desired deadline for submission of course materials for spring 2022.

Action: The chairs of UGC and GC will discuss a spring 2022 course materials deadline and will inform Mr. Neeper.

X. Potential Unit 18 Lecturer Strike

A Divisional Council member questioned whether faculty are aware of the negotiations and wondered if having that information would affect their decision to not cross picket lines. The member emphasized that he understands the need for confidentiality about the negotiations but also stressed the need for faculty to be informed in the spirit of shared governance. Another Divisional Council member requested the formulation of a communication strategy. Senate Chair Westerling stated that the EVC/Provost is assembling a group of faculty and administrators to work on this. Senate Executive Director Paul added that Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Personnel Kelly Anders is the lead contact for this effort.

Action: Divisional Council will send a memo to EVC/Provost Camfield and Assistant VPAP Anders informing them that the Council intends to communicate with the Senate faculty about the strike and welcomes their input in terms of the legality of what Divisional Council can share. Senate Chair Westerling will follow up with EVC/Provost Camfield at their next standing meeting. Divisional Council will continue this discussion at their next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm
Attest: LeRoy Westerling, Senate Chair