

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)**Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 15, 2021
10:00am - 11:30am****I. Chair's Report – Abbas Ghassemi – 10:00am – 10:05am****A. DivCo September 30 Meeting****1. Senate Chair Westerling's Report:**

- The number of unvaccinated individuals on campus is small and many of the infected individuals contracted COVID off campus. There are several contingency plans in place for after the Thanksgiving holiday, including holding small classes in large classrooms and possibly shifting to online instruction. Any decision to shift instruction modalities or reduce population density on campus will include a formal consultation process.
2. Consultation with Vice Chancellor/Chief Diversity Officer, Cecil Howard,
- Several initiatives are progressing such as the Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Institute, which stalled last year. The Valuing Black Lives initiative and the campus EDI plan are also ongoing. The Schools are also considering hiring Associate Deans for diversity.
3. Update on Fall Instruction Plans
- 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. The UGC and GC Chairs are collaborating on an improved tracking system for online courses.
4. Endowed Chair Proposals
- There are proposals for three 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

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.

B. DivCo October 14 Meeting**1. Senate Chair Westerling's Report:**

- Research administration. The pre-award process is still hampered by inefficient and onerous processes. Chair Westerling intends to meet with SPO Director Jue Sun and Interim VCORED Zatz.
- Global Climate Leadership Council. Senate Chair Westerling pointed out that Professor Roger Bales attended a Divisional Council meeting last year, and regularly discusses with the Chancellor and EVC/Provost about measures the

- campus can take to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Academic Planning Council. Senate Chair Westerling was appointed by systemwide Provost Brown to serve a two-year term. The Council is a joint Senate-Administration effort. Senate Chair Westerling reported that the Legislature imposed a mandate on the UC to enroll more students. UC President Drake proposed to the Regents that the UC will determine how to grow enrollment over the current commitment. The systemwide goal is to enroll 20,000 students by 2030; 16,000 undergraduate students and 4,000 graduate students. In order for UC Merced to increase enrollment, the campus needs resources and more staff support.
- 2. Undergraduate and Graduate Councils' Updates:
 - UGC is not approving permanent online courses but is approving requests for temporary online courses for Spring and Summer 2022.
 - UGC and GC are forming a joint task force to determine a common definition of hybrid across undergraduate and graduate programs.
 - In regard to SoE's emergency request for Unit 18 lecturers to deliver their courses remotely in Spring 2022, there is an enrollment crisis in CSE. The student:faculty ratio is 80:1; they have a very difficult time hiring faculty. There is ongoing engagement with AFAC, UGC, GC, and CAP regarding this issue, and DivCo is working on next steps.

II. Consent Calendar – 10:05am – 10:10am

- A. The Agenda
- B. [September 15 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The agenda was approved with the above recommendation.
- The September 15 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

III. Consultation with Dean Dumont and Dr. Hurd – 10:10am – 10:45am

1. Progress in Medical Education

Dean Dumont and Dr. Hurd gave a PowerPoint presentation on the progress in medical education at UC Merced. The main points of their presentation are noted below:

1. The development of the SJV Prime + Program relates to a long-standing interest in building medical education and serving the community in the Central Valley.
2. The program has been funded by the state legislature, with a \$15 million annual allotment.
3. The program includes representatives from all three institutions: UC Merced, UCSF, and UCSF Fresno.
4. The program has developed a charter, mission, vision, goals and objectives.
5. The program includes a series of workstreams including Outreach,

- Admissions, F1 foundations, F2 foundations, Undergraduate Education, etc.
6. The goal of the Outreach Workstream is to reach out to high school students and guidance counselors in the area to tell people about the program.
 7. Implementation of the Outreach is on hold until January 2022 after Senate feedback is provided.
 8. The goal of the Admissions Workstream is to identify an admissions process that would admit individuals into an 8-year track (BA degree and MD degree).
 9. There is a lot of collaboration involved between the three campuses to determine the requirements for admission – applications, interviews, holistic reviews, milestones, etc.
 10. The goal of the Baccalaureate Workstream is to enhance and customize the undergraduate experience at UC Merced in order to make students successful in medical school.
 11. Currently identifying majors in which students can take the courses that are required for UCSF and their major in a timely manner.
 12. The goal of the Foundations 1 Workstream is to adapt the UCSF F1 Bridges curriculum for delivery at UC Merced with a focus on rural and population health, including local challenges, while ensuring LCME equivalency/standards.

Several members raised the following questions:

1. What does the timeline look like?
 - The entering Freshman class is slated to start in August 2023 and the first Medical School class will matriculate in 2027.
2. In terms of the admission's process, is this an add-on program? Do students apply to UC Merced and then also apply to the SJV Prime + Program, or do students only apply to the SJV Prime + Program, and if they are not accepted, they can still get accepted into UC Merced?
 - Students will apply to UC Merced, and then there will be a secondary process for applying to the medical program. A representative clarified that they are looking into the current admissions software to determine how to filter those that are interested in the program to then complete a secondary application. They are also determining the admission requirements for both UC Merced applicants and Medical School applicants.
3. What is the estimated number of students that will be accepted in the first cohort?
 - It is estimated that hundreds or possibly thousands will apply, but there will be a class of 12.
4. Historically, students have had to work a significant amount of time in order to support their education. How will that work, considering the heavy workload of the Medical School, both from the recruitment side and the retention side?
 - Financial aid will be a critical component. Philanthropy is also being considered to determine if a recently used model can be replicated so

students' educational costs will be covered. Dr. Hurd hopes to reach out to AFAC members as they begin working on the philanthropic component of the program to see if members know of anyone who may be willing to contribute.

5. A member noted that, in order for the medical program to be competitive and to attract highly qualified applicants, a very generous financial aid package will need to be offered. On the other hand, UC Merced's financial aid costs may be much lower than competing institutions because UC Merced can leverage Cal Grants and Pell Grants. Does UCSF have money to contribute, and in addition to seeking private philanthropy, is there state funding available?
 - Director Radney explained that, while a student is a UC Merced student, UC Merced would be their home campus for financial aid, and once the student transitions to UCSF, the financial aid office at UCSF would become the student's home campus for financial aid. A donor has already started a scholarship for the UC Merced Medical Program, and there are hopes for many more. Financial aid packages will look very similar to other UC Merced students except for the scholarships specific to this program.
 - Dr. Hurd also noted that the net debt burden on a student who finishes this eight-year program is approximately \$130,000, which does not include any philanthropy, only loans and financial aid.
 - A representative noted that part of the admissions work stream charge is to attract a diverse population from backgrounds who may not usually get accepted into such programs. The target is not to attract people living in the San Joaquin Valley whose parents are already doctors, but rather those who have just graduated high school and are first-generation students that are very committed to the medical field. These particular students are going to need financial aid because they are not going to have the family support.
6. What is the anticipated number of students in the program in five years from now?
 - The class size will remain 12 students because growth in the program is based upon the number of clinical training slots. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education has approved 12 students per year, so by the end of eight years, there will be 96 students in the program. Ultimately, we would like to see 48 to 50 students per year, so that at full maturity, there would be 100 medical students at one time at UC Merced.
7. How narrow of focus is the Medical School portion of this program?
 - Dr. Hurd clarified that a student will not differentiate into their specific field until they reach residency, but students will have exposure to different fields during their training in the first 30 months of the program.

IV. Report from the Office of Admissions – Dustin Noji and Ruben Lubers – 10:45am – 10:55am**A. [Approval of admissions selection process and scoring for fall 2022](#)**

The Office of Admissions is not suggesting any changes to the admission scoring or selection process for first-year students; however, they would like to ask AFAC for continuous flexibility of the part C scoring for applicants. There will likely be a need to admit students who meet minimum eligibility in order for the campus to meet their enrollment targets, which are increasing this year by 4% - 8%. Depending on what the applicant pool looks like in December, the part C scoring may be removed if the enrollment modeling is exceeding the enrollment targets.

Director Noji asked members to review the admissions selection process and scoring for Fall 2022 and provide any recommended changes. He is currently drafting an additional memo and will send it to the AFAC Analyst next week. Director Noji would appreciate a response from AFAC members by the November 12 AFAC meeting.

Action:

- AFAC Analyst will invite members to review the admissions selection process and scoring for Fall 2022 via email, and members will vote on the changes at the November 12 AFAC meeting.

B. [Review and approval of final A by E Report](#)

Director Noji shared Admissions by Exception highlights for new members. The PowerPoint slides are available [here](#).

Action:

- AFAC Analyst will invite members to review and provide comments on the final A by E report via email with a deadline of 4:00pm, Tuesday, October 19, 2021.

V. Students' Institutional Debts– Member Charlie Eaton - 10:55am – 11:10am

Over 20 HBCUs and some public universities have used Biden Rescue funds to cancel these debts: <https://www.businessinsider.com/howard-university-cancels-student-debt-latest-hbcu-use-stimulus-funds-2021-8>.

Additional materials may be found [here](#).

Requested Action: AFAC to engage in informational discussion.

Linked above, is a news story from Business Insider about how more than 20 historically black colleges and universities have used American Recovery Act funds to cancel institutional debts. Institutional debts are debts that students owe to the university. These debts arise mainly if students receive a Pell Grant or a federal student loan and sometimes withdraw from classes early before finishing the term. If a student withdraws early, the

Federal Student Aid Policy requires some or all of the financial aid that they received in Pell Grants or federal student loans to be returned to the Federal Government. Universities will typically return the funds on behalf of the student and send a bill to the student, which often end up in collections. Several historically black colleges have realized that if they have students who are withdrawing mid-term, it usually means that they are in financial distress, especially during COVID. So, universities sought permission and guidance from the Department of Education to cancel some of these debts.

Another policy issue that arose is that some institutions not only send the student a bill that could be sent to collections, but they also withhold the student's transcripts to prevent them from enrolling at a different university or re-enrolling at their university until the debt is paid. If students are unable to pay those debts because they are in financial distress, they lose their credits and they become "stranded credits".

Along with the two reports (linked above), member Eaton also shared a Department of Education guidance document that explains how American Recovery Act funds can be used to cancel institutional debts. Member Eaton is in current communications with UC Berkeley law professor, Jonathan Glater, who leads the UC student loan lot initiative. He is also in communications with the current Student Regent about ways that UC could do something similar to the historically black colleges. Member Eaton is trying to determine if there are funds that might otherwise go unused that could be used to cancel such debts.

Director Radney noted that there was some federal guidance that suggested that campuses may use the institutional portion of those funds to help offset debts for students. Director Radney forwarded this information to UC Merced Chief Financial Officer, Kurt Shnier, but is unsure if those funds were used for said reasons.

A member noted that the UC no longer holds students' transcripts, and if a student would like to transfer to UC Merced from a different institution, the Office of Admissions would not be able to admit them because they would not be able to acquire the student's transcripts from the other institution. Member Eaton is interested in learning how many students currently owe institutional debts to the university. Director Radney confirmed that this information can be retrieved from the Student Business Services Office.

A member raised the following question:

- When a UC Merced student's financial aid is used to offset their tuition and room and board, if the student withdraws from the university, does the system know to stop charging them for room and board?

Member Eaton clarified that, if a student withdraws early and their Pell Grant or federal student loans have been used to pay tuition or room and board costs, the institution must return some of the financial aid to the Federal Government. Director Radney noted that a student earns financial aid for every day that they are in attendance. If the student officially withdraws from the university, a withdraw calculation is conducted, which consists of the total number of days in the term minus the number of days that the student was in attendance. The student will keep that percentage of their aid and the rest must be returned to the Federal Government. If there is no academic activity reported for a student, regulations state that the institution can use the midpoint of the term, which would be 50%; the student keeps 50% of the aid and returns 50%. Once a student receipt reaches 60% time, and they withdraw after

that (officially or unofficially), they get to keep all the aid for that term.

VI. Consultation with Director Ron Radney – 11:10am - 11:25am

Materials are available, [here](#).

A. Adjustments to financial aid awards under the new academic activity policy

- An updated count of how many students had their aid adjusted downward and total amount of aid expected to be returned to Dept. of Ed. Ron reported a count of 390 students at our last meeting with hopes that the count would come down further.

At the September 17 AFAC meeting, Director Radney reported that 390 students were missing their academic activity reported. Director Radney reported that out of those 390 students, only 4 students had their aid reduced due to lack of academic activity reported for one course for each of them. This dropped each of the four students below 12 units but still above 6 units, so their Pell Grant was affected, but their student loans were unaffected. In order for students to avoid their aid being adjusted, for Pell Grants, the student must report academic activity for 12 units, and for student loans, the student must report academic activity for at least 6 units (half time). The amount of aid reduction for these four students totaled \$4,347.

- Counts of how many students had their aid adjusted in each semester of 2019, 2020, and spring 2021. Director Radney suggested the count of 91 students who had their aid adjusted downward following the 2019 audit was low because it only involved the sampling of 250 students who had all Fs in all of their classes. It seems this further information would help us know more about the baseline prior to this policy.

At the time of the Federal Program Review, the way in which the Office of Admissions confirmed that a student was enrolled but had unofficially withdrawn was by reviewing all F reports at the end of each term. According to regulations, if the student unofficially withdraws, the institution could use a 50%-point calculation for those students if they do not have a date of last academic activity reported. Director Radney noted that even if there is academic activity reported, they will still review all F reports because the student may still have dropped out at some point. In this case, calculations would be easier because a last date of activity would be provided.

Director Radney reported the following all F reports for the last two academic years:

<u>Fall 2019</u>	<u>Spring 2020</u>	<u>Summer 2020</u>	<u>Total for AY 19/20</u>
Total- 53	Total- 45	Total-12	Total - 110
Aid Revised -13	Aid Revised -19	Aid Revised -119	Total Aid Revised - 33

<u>Fall 2020</u>	<u>Spring 2021</u>	<u>Summer 2021</u>	<u>Total for AY 20/21</u>
Total- 156	Total- 173	Total- 40	Total - 369
Aid Revised – 45	Aid Revised – 68	Aid Revised – 0	Total Aid Revised - 113

AY 19/20 and AY 20/21 combined

Total – 479

Total Aid Revised – 146

- Information on what policies other UC campuses have implemented if any and how it influenced the rate of aid adjustments on those campuses

UC Davis and UC Merced are the only two universities that have implemented a solution thus far, which was a result of a federal audit that occurred at both campuses. None of the other UC campuses have received a federal program review yet. The same auditors were at both UC Davis and UC Merced. UC Merced's initial proposal on academic activity was the same as UC Davis' proposal, which was that the student would essentially certify their own academic activity via an app that UC Davis created; however, the auditor claimed that the proposal would not meet the federal requirement because the institution, not the student, must document that the activity is academic or academically related to the student's attendance.

Furthermore, the Office of the President (UCOP) issued guidance on commencement of that academic activity back in January, indicating that UC Davis' approach is risky from a compliance standpoint. The Department of Education stated that when reviewing a student's academic activity, some interaction must take place between the institution and the student. It is each campus's responsibility to develop a plan and balance risk and administrative burden. Several other universities are considering implementing Davis' policy because they are concerned that many of their faculty do not use Canvas, which would help track students' academic activity. Although several universities are considering this policy, the approach is risky because it does not actually meet the Department of Education requirements.

A member recommended conducting a full Senate review of the Academic Activity Policy. The main interest is to reduce administrative burdens for students and to minimize inadvertent adjustments to financial aid because of administrative burdens.

Requested Action: AFAC to formally request that DIVCO conduct a full Senate review of the new Academic Activity Policy with the possibility of recommending changes for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Action:

- AFAC Analyst will look into next steps for formally requesting that DIVCO conduct a full Senate review of the new Academic Activity Policy with the possibility of recommending changes for the 2022-2023 academic year.

VII. Any Other Business – 11:25am – 11:30am

Director Noji noted that if any adjustments are made to the criteria for Computer Science and Engineering or any other departments, to please let the Office of Admissions know so that they can train and certify their Readers on a revised process.

VIII. Informational items will be regularly uploaded on the "Informational Items" AFAC Box Folder: <https://ucmerced.app.box.com/folder/140193076190>