

[Undergraduate Council \(UGC\)](#)

Meeting Minutes
Friday, January 14, 2022
1:00-2:25pm

I. Chair's Report – Holley Moyes – 1:00pm – 1:10pm

A. Honor Program Working Group (HPWG)

Members of the HPWG met in Fall 2021 and have drafted a proposal which has not been approved by HPWG members yet. The proposal will be transmitted to UGC for comments soon. Chair Moyes noted that the proposal includes several components that were suggested by some UGC members thus, it is anticipated that UGC will be satisfied with the outcome.

B. Volunteer reviewers for the [Library Undergraduate Research Award](#)

- Reviewing Undergraduate Submissions
 1. A committee of five reviewers (**2 faculty**, 2 librarians, 1 library staff) review student submissions (research paper/project, abstract, and research reflection) via a rubric.
 2. Each submission is reviewed by two individuals. To date, each reviewer has reviewed six applications max.
 3. Reviewing takes place within [UC Merced's scholarship platform](#). We coordinate access with Financial Aid/Scholarships.
 4. Anticipated timeline for reviewing, January 24th – Feb. 7th, 2022 (approx. a 2 week+ window)

Action:

- Member Siddaiah Yarra volunteered.
- Chair Moyes suggested that a faculty member from the Library and Scholarly Communications (LASC) Committee be a reviewer as well.
- UGC analyst will notify Sara Davidson Squibb (completed 1/19).

C. Update on the January 13 Meeting with the Provost, VPDUE, VPDGE, GC Chair and School Deans

The goal of this meeting was to discuss the current COVID situation vis-à-vis instruction. All instructors will be teaching remotely until January 31, 2022, and the return to in-person instruction may be phased. The reason for a phased return is because Omicron infection rates may have increased drastically by then. If the phased return is the desired approach, lab and performance courses would be the first to return in-person to campus. VPDUE Frey emphasized that this is a tentative plan, and a message will be circulated to all instructors once the decision is made.

II. Consent Calendar – 1:10pm – 1:15pm

A. The Agenda

B. [December 3 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The consent calendar was approved as presented.

III. Approval of Courses – Jason Lee, Ryan Baxter, Siddaiah Yarra – 1:15pm -1:25pm

Courses are available at the links below.

Action:

- The following courses were approved by UGC and Curriculog will be updated accordingly (completed 1/19):

1. [NSED - 172 - Teaching for Learning: Instructional Learning Assistant Pedagogy Course](#)
2. [ENVE - 160 - Sustainable Energy](#)
3. [PHYS - 123 - Galactic Structure and Interstellar Medium](#)

IV. [Request from SSHA for One -Time Exception for Summer 2022 Modalities](#) – Chair Moyes – 1:25pm – 1:35pm

Many Instructors of Record (IORs) are listed as “TBD” on the (petitions, forms?) because the application/appointment process does not begin until later in the Spring; therefore, only Senate faculty are listed.

Chair Moyes noted the importance of approving online courses for the Summer term because these types of courses tend to fill quickly. GC and UGC have formed a joint committee to evaluate the processes for approving online modalities. Chair Moyes recommended that instructors who would like to deliver their courses online in the Summer term should not have to submit the request in Curriculog and should seek temporary approval from UGC for Summer. UGC must, however, ensure that instructors do not deliver *all* their courses online during the Summer.

A member noted the complications that could arise by approving online modalities long-term beyond the pandemic and disagrees with making permanent changes to course modalities.

Another member agreed with courses being delivered online in the Summer; however, feels that there are complications associated with approving some courses when referring to the pedagogical implications of remote delivery for an online PhD.

Two UGC members raised the following questions:

1. Can UGC approve courses with permanent Summer designation only?
 - Registrar Webb confirmed that this is possible.
2. Is there a current limit on how many courses can be offered online by a department? A proportion, or any other hard limits?
 - Chair Moyes explained that she and GC Chair Hestir are working to establish a plan for departments to track their online courses. Departments will also provide a 3-4-year curriculum map to show how a student can navigate through their program without taking too many online courses. If a student takes too many courses online, they can inadvertently receive an online degree, and it is important that departments are aware of this issue in order to prevent this from happening to their students.

VCSA Nies noted that it makes sense to designate online courses to Summer because, pedagogically, instructors will have to think about how they are going to teach a 16-week course in 8 weeks. He also noted that offering more remote classes in past summers has increased enrollment numbers because many scholars cannot afford to remain living in the Merced area and must return home for the summer. This allows those students to take the courses they need online during the Summer term. This also increases graduation rates and helps students complete their time to degree in four years. If the goal is to decrease total cost of attendance, decreasing students' time to degree allows them to graduate in a timely fashion, while also reducing the amount of overall debt they accumulate.

A member noted the increase in opportunity for students to complete a minor during the Summer term. Chair Moyes also informed members that the joint UGC/GC committee is discussing what the thresholds should be for notifying students when they are taking too many courses online. Further discussion will take place at a future UGC meeting.

Action:

- UGC members unanimously approved the list of courses requested by SSHA for a one-time exception for Summer 2022 online modality.
- UGC analyst will notify the SSHA Instructional Manager (completed 1/19).

V. VPDUE Frey Report – 1:35pm – 1:45pm

- A. Update on the exploratory conversation about academic policy modifications to allow for first year student exploration and academic recovery. The proposal is available [here](#).

Requested Action: Members to vote during executive session to approve the potential policy changes.

VPDUE Frey proposed several policy modifications that might help students, particularly in their first semester if they are struggling. Many students find it difficult to adjust to the college experience but are capable of succeeding. Better mechanisms would make it easier for them to recover. With her policy suggestions, VPDUE Frey's goal is to provide forgiveness to students in their early struggles while still requiring them to complete coursework in their major without jeopardizing their financial aid.

1.A. provides students with the opportunity to exclude a certain number of units from their GPA only, so they would still receive workload credit. This option would allow a student who completed a class with a bad grade to exclude the units from their GPA, provided that they transfer to a new major that does not require the course. Registrar Webb noted that this option would be possible but difficult to implement. 1.B. and 1.C. would allow a student to switch from a letter grade to Pass/No Pass. This option would only apply to students in their first year or first semester and would require them to take action before the final.

A member asked VPDUE Frey to provide a rationale for why excluding units from one's GPA would be better than choosing Pass/No Pass. VPDUE Frey clarified that a student would be able to decide if they want to exclude units from their GPA decide later on, whereas a student changing from a letter grade to Pass/No pass for a course would require them to make their decision while still taking the class. One issue with the Pass/No Pass option is that students cannot use this option for courses that are required for their major. If a student accidentally switches to Pass/No Pass during a class and later realizes that they need a letter grade because it is required for their major, they will have to retake the class for a letter grade. VPDUE Frey also explained that removing units from one's GPA would be done through an automated system, choosing the lowest grade that is not a degree requirement for their chosen major.

Another member noted their concerns regarding accreditation, as well as how it may appear to those outside of UC Merced if students' GPAs are altered. Would it look like they cheated? Also, why would a student not be allowed to change from letter grade to Pass/No Pass for a particular course years after completing the course; why must it be decided while the student is currently taking the course? Lastly, 1.C. may cause problems for departments and majors; a department may not want to have their major satisfied by a pass rate instead of a letter grade. VPDUE Frey clarified that these policy modifications would be an expansion of current practices that allow students to make up for bad grades. VCSA Nies also noted that some type of designation would need to be noted on the student's transcript, which UC Merced already does when a student repeats a class. When a student

retakes a class, the new grade is reflected in their GPA. A similar mechanism would be used if a student were to eliminate units from their GPA.

VPDUE Frey explained that several students change majors and continue to repeat classes in their previous major. VPDUE Frey would like to prevent students from continuing to do this. Referring to 2.A. of VPDUE Frey's proposed policy modifications, a change would not be required at the systemwide level to allow students to retake a course as Pass/No Pass grading that was originally taken for a letter grade. Another option for students would be to offer parachute classes, which would allow students to drop a course out of "w" and move into another class, which would prevent many students from retaking unnecessary classes. Parachute classes would be specifically designed courses that start five-weeks into the semester, not existing courses that start at the beginning of the semester. Parachute classes may be an alternate GE course requirement that a student will be more successful in. A member suggested to allow students to change from a letter grade to Pass/No Pass several years after they complete the class rather than requiring them to make a decision while they are currently taking the class. This would solve a lot of the issues related to students retaking a course that they do not need for their current major.

The third proposed policy modification suggests that instructors do not give exams or projects to their students during the last week of instruction. This is a suggestion for mitigating the number of final exams and projects that students are required to complete in the last week of classes to allow them more time to study for exams scheduled for the following week.

The last policy suggestion is related to students who decide to switch majors. There are currently only two days a year that students can switch majors. A lot of first-year students are stuck in a major that they dislike because there are a lot of policies in place regarding when a student can switch majors. This policy modification would allow for students to easily switch majors during their first year.

A member noted that some instructors give their students a research project over the entire course of their 16-week class with a due date during the last week of class, but that it does not actually mean the students are completing the research paper that last week of class. If instructors move the deadline up a week for such research projects, it may put a lot of pressure on students. VPDUE Frey explained that a research paper could potentially be approved under [Policy 772](#). Another member suggested to have final research papers due during finals week; however, some instructors argue that it is difficult to grade and return them to the students in a timely manner.

Action:

- UGC members will further discuss the proposal via email.
- The Policy Subcommittee will review UGC members' comments and decide on one or more of the policy suggestions in order to support academic recovery.
- The proposal will be further discussed at a future UGC meeting.

VI. Principles for University of California Online Degree Programs - Chair Moyes and Member Yarra – 1:45pm – 2:00pm

Last year, the Academic Council formed an Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force to examine the implications of possibly creating full-time, online, undergraduate degree programs at UC. The Task Force report and background on principles can be found [here](#).

Lead Reviewers: Chair Holley Moyes, Siddaiah Yarra

Lead Reviewers' comments can be found [here](#).

Requested Action: Members to engage in discussion.

Last year, the University Committee on Educational Policy formed an Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force. Chair Moyes has been asked by UCEP to review the Principles for University of California Online Degree Programs. The document, available [here](#), is a preliminary draft that contains the Principles for a fully UC online degree. Member Yarra and Chair Moyes met to discuss the draft and circulated comments to UGC voting members. Chair Moyes noted that the adoption of entirely remote degree programs would require substantial re-envisioning of how campus services are provided in the online arena, ranging from online counseling and career support services to developing effective mechanisms for maintaining academic integrity.

Chair Moyes posed the following questions to UGC members:

1. Are we prepared to do this across campuses?
2. Do we have the funding?
3. Would it be better to offer UC wide online programs, rather than having each UC compete for online programs?

A member raised a question regarding who the intended audience is and if there will be overlap with UC Merced's current in-person audience. It was also suggested to have an in-person component to these online programs to help prevent cheating.

VCSA Nies explained that less than a third of UC Merced's students originate from the Central Valley, which means that those students who stopped out are returning to other regions of the state of California and do not have the ability to relocate back to Merced to complete their degree. Offering students the opportunity to complete their degree online would greatly benefit them. Chair Moyes added that it is difficult to hire instructors who are willing to come to campus to teach their courses, so offering online degree programs would be beneficial for that reason as well.

A member shared their concerns with online programs overlapping with in-person programs and does not feel it appropriate for a student to switch from completing their degree in-person to completing it online. Chair Moyes reiterated that UCEP is not asking whether UC Merced would like to offer online degree programs, but rather if online degree programs are offered, what should they consist of?

Chair Moyes asked UGC voting members to review the document, along with her and member Yarra's comments and provide additional comments.

Action:

- UGC Analyst will add Chair Moyes' and member Yarra's document to Google Docs and share the link with UGC members to add their comments by Tuesday, January 25, 2022 (completed 1/31).

VII. Systemwide Review Items – 2:00pm – 2:10pm

A. [Recommendations for Departments Political Statements](#)

The University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) has prepared a letter and two recommendations addressing the freedom of campus academic departments to issue or endorse statements on political issues in the name of the department.

Requested Action: Members to discuss and provide comments.

Deadline: January 14, 2022.

Chair Moyes invited members to comment. One member replied with the following:

“Departmental statements on political issues should take into account student interests, whether graduate or undergraduate. Such statements are likely to impact a student's sense of belonging

in the program”.

UGC members agreed that this statement should be included in UGC’s response to the Senate Chair.

Action:

- UGC Analyst will prepare a memo and circulate to UGC members for review (completed 1/14).

B. [UCM Community and Labor Center ORU Proposal](#)

At their November 30 meeting, CoR endorsed the revised proposal submitted by the UC Merced Community and Labor Center to establish an ORU at UC Merced.

The policy for the establishment and review of ORU proposals is available [here](#).

Requested Action: Assign lead reviewer. The lead reviewer’s comments will be sent to Chair Moyes, Melanie Snyder, and Fatima Paul. This item will be discussed at the next UGC meeting.

Deadline: February 4, 2022.

Chair Moyes requested a lead reviewer. In the absence of volunteers, Chair Moyes would like all voting members to review the proposal and provide comments.

Action:

- UGC Analyst will circulate the proposal for comments (completed 1/20).
- UGC members are to read the proposal and provide comments before the January 28 UGC meeting.
- Further discussion will take place at the January 28 UGC meeting.

VIII. Consultation with GC Chair Hestir – Erin Hestir and Naoko Kada – 2:10pm – 2:15pm

A. [Graduate Student Instructors](#) - Petition Forms

Per [systemwide regulation \(750 B\)](#), appointment of graduate students to teach upper division courses must be approved by the Committee on Courses or the Graduate Council. UGC has been reviewing the IoR petitions but no other UC campuses require this.

Requested Action: Members to vote to approve the proposed revision to remove UGC from the approval process.

Both UGC and GC currently review the petitions for a graduate student instructor to teach an upper division course. GC proposed that UGC be removed from the approval process to reduce workload and to follow other UC campus norms. GC Chair Hestir shared some background, noting that because UC Merced does not have a stand-alone Committee on Courses, GC has been reviewing these appointments. Systemwide Regulation 750.B requires the Committee on Courses or Graduate Council to review graduate student appointments to teach upper division courses. When the process was initially established at UC Merced, the UGC chair at the time requested that UGC also participate in the review and approval process. Chair Hestir also noted that Graduate Dean Kello reviews the petitions to ensure that the student has advanced to candidacy, is in good academic standing, and that they are only appointed after all conditions are met.

Chair Moyes noted that UGC has not denied any of these petitions in the past. Chair Hestir shared data from the Registrar regarding the number of upper division courses that have been taught by graduate students, dating back to 2015. The total number of courses taught by graduate instructors in any one semester is relatively low.

Chair Hestir asked Chair Moyes to let her know if UGC welcomes a proposal from GC.

Action:

- UGC members welcome a formal memo from GC Chair Hestir requesting the removal of UGC from the IoR petition approval process.
- UGC Analyst will notify GC Chair Hestir (completed 1/14).