

**DIVISIONAL COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 27, 2022**

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**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, Martin Hagger, Min Hwan Lee, Justin Yeakel, Jeff Butler

**I. Consultation with Interim VC/CFO Schnier**

**A. Oracle Data Integrity Project**

Interim VC/CFO Schnier informed Divisional Council that his division has issued several messages to the campus about the decreasing ticket backlog. The messaging has stated that CBS2 will input the required information for faculty. Interim VC/CFO Schnier also told Divisional Council that he is addressing staffing issues, as some CBS2 staff have moved on to other positions on campus. The broader issue that he is addressing now is inaccuracies surrounding grant accounting, start up balances, and incidentals. Schnier explained that the Oracle system was set up with the general ledger. However, faculty accounts exist on the project sub ledger. When faculty enter purchasing orders, their COA goes to the general ledger and the POET goes to the project sub ledger. Some faculty were not inputting the POET which explains why the orders were delayed and had to be approved down stream by research administrators or School financial staff. He acknowledged that it is a front end problem with the system. Schnier added that he developed a tableau tool that revealed that of the 512 projects that were out of balance, 415 belonged to faculty.

A Divisional Council member pointed out to Interim VC/CFO Schnier that out of balance grants are a significant risk to the institution and the faculty. Faculty cannot spend their grant money in a timely manner if they do not know the balance. On multi-year grants, the funds revert and faculty lose the money. However, faculty still have to pay their researchers which leads to future notifications from SPO that informs faculty that they overspent. Faculty have no way to come up with the money. It is critical for faculty to spend their grant money at the right cadence. Interim VC/CFO Schnier replied that due to problems with Oracle, research administrators have re-started the process of using “shadow books” which they used prior to the Oracle roll out, which gives them some idea of faculty account balances.

Interim VC/CFO Schnier suggested that a “draconian solution” would be to cancel orders if users submit incomplete information thereby forcing them to start over rather than allowing the incomplete order to go through and get delayed. This “solution” would only apply to self-service orders, not orders through Service Now which are entered by purchasing staff. Divisional Council members mentioned that while UC San Diego is also experiencing problems with Oracle, that campus has many more staff they can assign to handle the issues. A Divisional Council member stated that the challenges caused by Oracle is one of the many reasons for faculty’s low morale. The aforementioned suggested “solution” to cancel orders outright if information is missing is punitive against faculty. Interim VC/CFO Schnier clarified that this solution has never been used and will not be used now but was just raised as a suggestion. He is testing other protocols under the system enhancements; for example, faculty could enter the COA, then 70% of the POET will auto-populate and faculty will have to fill in the remaining 30%.

**II. Consultation with AFAC – AFAC Chair Ghassemi and Member Eaton****A. Academic Activity Proposal**

AFAC member Eaton presented a series of slides to Divisional Council for the proposed Senate review of the academic activity policy.

Professor Eaton explained the rationale for Senate review. The policy impacts the welfare of over 100 students annual; involves grading and evaluation; and the flux in federal requirements. Under the policy, instructors are asked to document academic activity in Cat Courses by the add/drop deadline or use a new online certification tool; and report the last day of attendance when submitting a non-passing final grade. If a student withdraws, the Department of Education requires that UC Merced returns funds for Pell Grants and federal student loans. Auditors from the former De Vos Department of Education told UC Merced in 2020 to use new standards for documenting academic activity. Students are immediately sent a bill to pay back their Pell Grants and their student loans. If students can't pay this outstanding balance, they cannot re-enroll and their debt is ultimately sold to a debt collector. These are low-income students who owed 92% of outstanding balances prior to the new policy. A review of this policy can study and advise on possible federal policy shifts, what peer institutions are doing, interventions to prevent withdrawal, and how to minimize administrative burden for students and faculty.

**Action:** Divisional Council endorsed the proposed Senate review of AFAC's proposal.

**III. Chair's Report – LeRoy Westerling****A. Academic Council Meetings (Dec 15 and Jan 26)****B. C19 Updates****C. Campus Cyber Infrastructure**

Senate Chair Westerling informed Divisional Council members that the new payment procedure for the UC Merced cluster was published with no lead time so faculty were unable to account for it in their budgets. Effective January 1, those faculty who purchased their own equipment are being retroactively charged for connecting to the campus server. Faculty believe that the campus should cover these costs. Another issue is the systemwide requirement that certain campus machines must install a particular software. This software has hindered the performance of the machines and faculty cannot do their work. Also, faculty are being asked to sign a waiver in which they assume personal liability if their machines are hacked. Other UC campuses found solutions that took the onus off faculty while still mitigating cybersecurity risks. Senate Chair Westerling asked CoR to explore this issue.

**Action:** Chair Westerling will send Divisional Council updates on the remaining items under his chair's report.

**IV. Consent Calendar****A. The Agenda****B. November 18 Meeting Minutes**

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

**V. Allocation of Funds from the McKenzie Gift – CoR Chair Sexton**

The proposal from the Divisional Council subcommittee (Chair Westerling, CoR Chair Sexton, CAPRA Chair Mitchell, GC Chair Hestir, and UGC Chair Moyes) was hyperlinked on today's agenda.

CoR Chair Sexton summarized the subcommittee's priorities for spending the funds that are being allocated to the Academic Senate by the Chancellor from the MacKenzie Scott gift to UC Merced.

The plan would allocate \$250,000 in January – July 2022 in the following manner: 1) \$175,000 in annual base funding to the Senate faculty grants program (plus an augmentation of \$100,000) and 2) \$75,000 to professional and student support initiatives. \$250,000 would then be allocated in each of the next three fiscal years in the following manner: \$100,000 to the Senate faculty grants program, \$100,000 to instrumentation grants, and \$50,000 to professional and student support initiatives.

Divisional Council members supported the plan to fund all proposals submitted under this year's Senate faculty grants program. Some members pointed out that faculty who did not submit proposals this year may react negatively upon learning that all proposals would be funded this year, even though the Senate was not aware in fall 2021 (when the Call for Proposals was issued) that it would be able to do this. A Divisional Council member suggested issuing a second Call for Proposals.

Divisional Council members discussed how to implement the various funding competitions, including a suggestion to submit one general call that lists the various areas to which faculty can apply. More than one Senate committee will be responsible for reviewing the proposals. GC Chair Hestir stated that the Graduate Division has offered to manage the graduate student travel grants and make those awards on behalf of the Senate. The Graduate Division already manages the graduate student fellowship application and review process. However, the Graduate Division would need to fold this new process into their current review cycle which is right now. Senate Chair Westerling suggested that Interim VCORED Zatz be asked to work with the Senate on these new grants.

Another suggestion from a Divisional Council member was to top up each of this year's CoR grants with extra funding to be used for the PIs' undergraduate student researchers.

**Action:** Divisional Council endorsed the proposed MacKenzie Scott gift allocation plan and endorsed the funding of all spring 2022 Senate faculty grant proposals.

**VI. Updates from UGC Chair Moyes and GC Chair Hestir**

UGC Chair Moyes and GC Chair Hestir are working with the VPDGE and VPDUE on messaging to students returning to campus next week and other COVID-related instructional planning and contingencies. FWAFF Chair Jennings stated that he has heard from many faculty members who have concerns about returning to in-person instruction as many of them have children who are too young to be vaccinated or other vulnerable family members in their homes. Another problem is the classroom closures in K-12 schools; when children are sent home as a precautionary measure, their parents (faculty members) are unable to go to campus to teach. Chair Jennings stated that he contacted VPDUE Frey with a request to allow faculty an extension to online teaching. GC Chair Hestir replied that she and others are sympathetic to faculty parents. If faculty need accommodation for family-related duties, they should work with their department chairs. The campus does not need a sweeping policy for that. There are options; for example, the School of Natural Sciences instituted a "buddy-system"/back up teaching

arrangement. GC Chair Hestir added that it is beyond the purview of GC and UGC to evaluate classroom activity and learning outcomes. These types of concerns should be directed to PROC. UGC Chair Moyes stated that undergraduate students can take 20% of a course online and still have it be considered an in-person course. However, this arrangement may not exist in the future. UGC is holding discussions about how online courses will be tracked.

#### **VII. Campus Honors Program – UGC Chair Moyes**

**Action:** Due to time constraints, UGC Chair Moyes will discuss this item at the next Divisional Council meeting.

#### **VIII. Other Business**

FWAF Chair Jennings stated that he will follow up after this meeting with Senate Chair Westerling, GC Chair Hestir, and UGC Chair Moyes on the messaging to faculty regarding flexibility of accommodations for COVID-related absences. UGC Chair Moyes stated that she will contact VPDUE Frey on messaging to department chairs and will include FWAF Chair Jennings in that conversation.

#### **IX. Consultation with EVC/Provost Camfield**

- EVC/Provost Camfield informed Divisional Council members that student application numbers are flat compared to this time last year, which means the campus needs to double its efforts on yield events. Last year, the UC system lost many freshmen, but Merced's freshmen retention rate was down more than twice the amount of the next highest campus. Before the pandemic, some UC campuses over-enrolled; while we assume they will be less aggressive this year, their plans are uncertain.
- EVC/Provost Camfield also raised the concerning issue of learning loss which is reflected in the lower grades UC Merced students received in the fall semester. He wants UGC Chair Moyes to take the lead with VPDUE Frey to rectify this problem in the short term.
- EVC/Provost Camfield is working on an analysis of Unit 18 lecturers and discovered heterogeneity across the campus. In some programs, it would be fairly easy to move Unit 18 lecturer lines to Senate faculty lines; however, in other programs where Unit 18 lecturers teach many more student credit hours than Senate faculty, it would be very challenging to replace the lecturer lines with Senate faculty lines. While Unit 18 lecturers cost the campus less for instruction, the opportunity cost is very high.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am.

Attest: LeRoy Westerling, Senate Chair