

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)**Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 5, 2022
2:00pm – 3:00pm****I. Chair's Report – Abbas Ghassemi – 2:00pm – 2:15pm****A. March 10 and 31 DivCo Meetings**

Chair Ghassemi shared the following updates from the March 10 DivCo meeting:

- Chair Westerling stated that the future of the mask mandate is unclear. The mask mandate for inside the classroom may be lifted, and faculty cannot force their students to wear a mask. GC Chair Hestir reported that there has been reluctance from several students regarding the removal of masks in the classroom.
- There are two proposals for online undergraduate degree programs – one from UC Irvine and one from UC Santa Cruz. UC Merced's position on online education appears unfavorable.
- In Fall 2021, the Senate approved the extension of the policy to allow remote instruction as a reasonable accommodation for instructors who are immuno-compromised or have an immuno-compromised individual in their household, but the extension is set to expire. Remote instruction is not a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). During the pandemic, however, the campus granted the accommodation requests. Senate Chair Westerling suggested the chairs of GC and UGC draft a memo about accommodations for remote instruction.
- The specific dollar amount for faculty and staff professional development will be removed from the MacKenzie Scott gift spending plan. Divisional Council members will review the plan and provide their feedback.
- The Proposed UCM Policy on Use of the UC and UCM Names, Network, Electronic and Online Sites, Accounts, and Responses to Media Inquiries was also discussed. Chair Westerling recommended that DivCo transmit a memo to the administration stating that the Senate finds the proposed policy to be unworkable, disadvantageous to the campus, infringes on the civil rights of faculty, and that Divisional Council does not support the policy.

Chair Ghassemi noted that the March 31 DivCo meeting focused on the review of the Gallo School of Management Pre-proposal which will be discussed later in today's meeting.

B. March 4 and April 1 BOARS Meeting

Both BOARS meetings focused primarily on the limited number of students that have been admitted for the Fall 2022 semester. UC Berkeley reported a reduction of approximately 3,000

students. During the March 4 meeting, the discussion focused on how those who were not admitted to UC Berkeley may end up matriculating to the other UC campuses. At the April 1 meeting, UC Berkeley reported that they were able to admit those students after all. Members also discussed offering courses online for one or two semesters and giving students the opportunity to visit other UC campuses once or twice during the semester.

There were also discussions regarding how sister campuses will handle Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC). It was suggested to give every student that applies, a local guarantee to attend UC Merced. Chair Ghassemi noted that he cannot make such a commitment, and that the conversation must take place between UCOP Executive Director of Undergraduate Education, Han Mi Yoon-Wu and Director Noji and Associate Vice Chancellor Orcutt.

II. Consent Calendar – 2:15pm – 2:20pm

- A. The Agenda
- B. [March 1 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The consent calendar was approved as presented.

III. Campus Review Items – Chair Ghassemi – 2:20pm – 2:25pm

- A. [Ernest & Julio Gallo School of Management Pre-proposal](#)

The proposal was distributed to all Senate Committees and School Executive Committees on April 1, 2022. The policy for the Establishment of New School and Colleges can be found [here](#).

Requested Action: AFAC to determine if committee will opine. If AFAC decides to opine, identify a lead reviewer. Lead reviewer will provide comments by Monday, April 18, 2022.

Deadline: April 27, 2022.

Chair Ghassemi reported on the discussion that took place during the March 31 DivCo meeting. The Gallo School of Management Pre-proposal has been circulated for campus review multiple times. The last time the pre-proposal was circulated for review, there was significant debate. There will be a poll transmitted to the Schools asking for a vote to proceed or not to proceed with the Gallo School of Management.

Action:

- Members are to send their comments, if they have any, to AFAC Analyst by Monday, April 18, 2022.

IV. Update on the [Academic Activity Policy](#) – Charlie Eaton – 2:25pm – 2:50pm

All Senate Committees and School Executive Committees were invited to review the proposal on February 10, 2022. Committees' comments are available at the links below, and member Eaton provided a summary of the comments, available [here](#). The accompanying study regarding institutional student debts owed by withdrawn California students referenced in member Eaton's memo is available [here](#).

Comments:

[SSHA Executive Committee](#)
[SoE Executive Committee](#)
[UGC](#)

Requested Action: Members to discuss Senate Committee and School Executive Committees' comments and determine next steps.

The SSHA Executive Committee, the SoE Executive Committee, and the Undergraduate Council (UGC) offered comments on the new Academic Activity Policy. Member Eaton drafted a memo summarizing the comments, which is available in the AY 21-22 AFAC box folder [here](#). The three committees provided five key recommendations:

1. Use additional automated indicators of student activity both within and outside of CatCourses to document academic activity and correct misalignments between CatCourses and Academic Activity tracking.
2. Use UC Merced's remaining Higher Education Emergency Relief Act funds to pay off balances of all students who have institutional student debts from spring 2020 and fall 2020—a policy adopted by CSU Stanislaus and 6 other CSU campuses.
3. Support state legislation to appropriate funds to UC Merced and other public institutions to pay off institutional debts incurred by students during pandemic disruptions from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022.
4. End UC Merced's current debt collection policies including a) barring re-enrollment by students with outstanding balances, b) placement of debts with third party debt collectors, and c) collection of institutional debts by seizure of students' future tax refunds, including refunds from the anti-poverty California Earned Income Tax Credit and Young Child Tax Credit.
5. Collect and publish data to assess racial and economic inequalities in Academic Activity withdrawals and institutional student debts at UC Merced and peer institutions.

A member suggested adding a sixth recommendation noting that UC Merced has asked for debt forgiveness at the federal level. Member Eaton welcomed the idea of drafting a subsequent memo specific to federal loans. Associate Vice Chancellor Orcutt wondered whether redirecting HEERF funds to Spring 2020 would result in insufficient remaining HEERF funds to support students in Summer 2022 and Fall 2022. Chair Ghassemi recommended inviting Chief Financial Officer, Kurt Schnier, to the May 3 AFAC meeting to discuss the allocation of HEERF funds.

Director Radney clarified the different allocations of funding at UC Merced – student emergency funds, in which a methodology is used for awarding all students; institutional funds, which are used for offsetting lost revenue and help with COVID-related expenses; and minority serving institution funds, which are similar to institution funds and are not required to be used as emergency student aid. Director Radney recommended that member Eaton specify in his memo that the institutional portion of the HEERF funds are being referenced. Member Eaton recommended advancing the memo to Divisional Council with the clarification regarding institutional funds that Director Radney noted, as well as an additional note that AFAC will consult CFO Schnier and a note regarding federal aid.

V. Any Other Business – 2:50pm – 3:00pm

1. Member Eaton reported that he has been in conversations with Associate Vice Chancellor Orcutt and her team regarding the Degree Completion Program, and they are trying to persuade students who have withdrawn to reenroll at UC Merced. One student in particular had an unintended debt of \$1,000 for health insurance because he enrolled in the Fall and later decided not to return. Member Eaton reiterated the importance of assisting students who are affected by unintentional debts, and he extended his gratitude to the committee and financial aid staff for their hard work.
2. Chair Ghassemi raised a question regarding the most recent A by E report, noting that several students appeared to have a GPA lower than 3.0. Chair Ghassemi wondered how students' GPA's are calculated. Director Noji clarified that a student's GPA is calculated based on their A - G coursework that they completed in their 10th and 11th grade year. The minimum GPA for a resident student is a 3.0 and the minimum GPA for a non-resident student is a 3.4. The A by E policy allows for a 2.8 GPA. The decisions made by the Admissions Office are made regardless of the student's intended major. Director Noji noted that the second A by E report will be circulated to AFAC voting members within the next week.

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