

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 3, 2022**  
**2:00pm – 3:30pm**

**I. Chair's Report – Abbas Ghassemi – 2:00pm – 2:10pm****A. April 7 and 21 DivCo Meetings**

Chair Ghassemi shared the following updates from the April 7 DivCo meeting:

- The Chancellor plans to create an opportunity hire for a senior faculty member with a background in education who will be tasked with spearheading a certificate program or graduate program in education at UC Merced.
- The Chancellor urges the campus to make more rapid progress in diversifying the faculty. Chair Westerling told the Chancellor that he would draft a proposal for a process to increase faculty diversity. Divisional Council members pointed out that UC Merced has hired very few new faculty members the past two academic years due to budget issues.
- The Chancellor is continuing his efforts to obtain more funding for UC Merced. Chair Westerling reminded Divisional Council members of previous discussions about Assembly Bill 2046 entitled “University of California: Inland Rising Fund” that proposes the allocation of about \$1.5 billion to be divided between UC Merced and UC Riverside for a variety of initiatives. The Chancellor will update Council on his efforts to acquire additional external funding for the campus. Senate Chair Westerling also wants to consult with the Chancellor on the medical education program.
- CoR Chair Sexton discussed the revised memo on research infrastructure, noting the research obstacles and what the administration plans to do to ensure that research is facilitated.
- A proposed memorial to the Regents was voted on at Academic Council on April 13. Assuming the vote was favorable, a ballot will be initiated. Chair Westerling suggested that given the large state budget surplus, the UC should leverage this moment and get some one-time funding that will not take away from other UC budget priorities.
- LASC Chair DePrano joined the meeting to further discuss the Library's budget. Approximately one third of UC Merced's journals and e-books have not been funded. This is because the Library was receiving one-time funding but it is not in the system's budget to continue providing these funds. This is problematic for faculty who conduct Library research. The Library is still not open on Saturdays because there isn't enough funding to hire staff to work on the weekends.

Chair Ghassemi shared the following updates from the April 21 DivCo meeting:

- Chair Westerling reported concerns from UCOP regarding a budget meeting and that UC Merced is expected to admit 6,000 additional students next year. UC Berkeley has had issues with increasing their enrollment numbers, and other campuses have been asked to admit additional students that were not admitted to UC Berkeley. The state is also not providing additional funding for this issue.
- EVC/Provost Camfield recently issued a letter to the School deans regarding increased allocations for new faculty hires. Allocations are increased for household moving expenses, professional office moves, house hunting trips, and Mortgage Origination Program (MOP) Loans.
- Academic Council recently endorsed UCOLASC's statement that asked UCOP to permanently reinstate funding for the California Digital Library Collections budget.
- VPDUE Frey attended the meeting to report on the impact on students attending classes remotely. She collected data on Fall 2021 undergraduate attendance/engagement by viewing students' activity and GPA. She found that those who were engaged had a higher GPA. She also shared student feedback on modality.
- FWAFF Chair Jennings noted that the MAPP is being revised to conform to the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with non-Senate lecturers.

## **II. Consent Calendar – 2:10pm – 2:15pm**

- A. The Agenda
- B. [April 5 Meeting Minutes](#)

### **Action:**

- The consent calendar was approved as presented.

## **III. Consultation with Chief Financial Officer, Kurt Schnier; Director of Student Business Services, Chris Robinson; and Director of Degree Completion Program, Michael Pierick – 2:15pm – 2:45pm**

- A. Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF)

AFAC's recommendations regarding academic activity and institutional student debt are available [here](#). CFO Schnier and Director Robinson are joining today's meeting to discuss the amount of remaining institutional HEERF funds that might still be available, and the extent to which these funds can be used to pay off outstanding balances in a revenue neutral way. Director Pierick is joining today's meeting to further discuss [UC Merced's Degree Completion Program](#).

**Requested Action:** Members discuss and determine next steps.

Director of Degree Completion Program, Michael Pierick, shared a [PowerPoint](#), which included the stories of three students who have experienced unintentional debts. One student had completed their degree, and the other two were near completion of their degree.

1. Monica acquired her outstanding debt of \$1,981.18 in 2017 from Summer tuition that she had never paid. She has met all graduation requirements.
2. Arlette acquired her outstanding debt in 2009, so it was difficult for Director Pierick to track where the fees accrued from. She was eight units away from completing her degree and has an outstanding balance of \$1,959.31.
3. Jesus had registered for Fall 2021 courses during Spring 2021; however, shortly after registering for his Fall 2021 classes, he withdrew from his Spring 2021 courses but not from his Fall 2021 courses. In Fall 2021, he was withdrawn from his courses due to non-payment, and was billed for health insurance, totaling \$914.75.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Kurt Schnier, and Director of Student Business Services, Chris Robinson, joined the meeting to discuss several questions and concerns posed by AFAC members during their April 5 meeting. The following four questions were circulated to members prior to today's meeting.

1. How much is left in institutional HEERF funds or MSI HEERF funds?
2. Payment of institutional debts with HEERF funds is a payment to ourselves with HEERF funds on the student's behalf. If this is done for Spring 2020 and possibly Fall 2020, this would be for debts that have not been paid after 2 years. So, it is very unlikely that they will ever be paid. Berkeley only collects 18% of such dollars when placing in collections. It is likely lower at UC Merced. Is AFAC correct then that after paying ourselves these funds for students, UC Merced can use the funds for other proposed programs for students?
3. AFAC proposed ending the use of registration holds, placement of debts with 3rd party collections agencies, and placement of debts with the Franchise Tax Board Tax Refund Seizure Program. It is suspected that the registration hold issue requires a longer conversation that AFAC would like to have at another time. For now, are the latter two practices still in use? If not, can Kurt please request their removal from the website and communications such as those reported by students to Michael and his team? See [https://bfs.ucmerced.edu/sites/bfs.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/statement\\_of\\_financial\\_responsibility.pdf](https://bfs.ucmerced.edu/sites/bfs.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/statement_of_financial_responsibility.pdf).
4. Are there any further steps AFAC representatives should take other than discussing this directly with the Chancellor?

In response to question 2, CFO Schnier explained that using HEERF funds to pay a student's outstanding balance would be a source of revenue for the university; and therefore, could be used for other proposed programs. He raised ethical and equity concerns about the funds being used for students who have accepted their student loans, and he wondered about students who did not accept loans that also have outstanding debt.

Member Eaton explained that he believes the university has an institutional obligation to resolve the outstanding debt of the student if the university effectively enrolled them without first resolving their payment. He believes it is the university's responsibility to resolve the billing prior to enrolling the student. He also noted that add/drop policies need to be effectively aligned with billing policies.

CFO Schnier agreed with member Eaton and noted that the Regental Policy should be evaluated.

He also mentioned that it is unfair to the students that the university assigns them debt before the add/drop date.

Member Eaton noted that the main concern is how the university aligns its institutional policies to protect the institution and to recover lost revenue due to the return of Title IV funds, while also protecting students and not subjecting them to counterproductive debt collection practices. CFO Schnier and Director Robinson were in agreement and recommended scheduling a meeting with Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (VCSA) Nies for further discussion.

Chair Ghassemi inquired about the ratio of students who accepted the loan versus those who did not accept the loan in prior years. CFO Schnier and Director Robinson stated that they are uncertain of the exact numbers, but that the number is higher for students who did not accept the loan. Chair Ghassemi recommended a tiered approach – a tier for students who do not accept the loan and encounter a financial hardship, and another tier for students who accept the loan but who are unable to pay the debt. He and member Eaton also expressed that receiving exact data would be helpful. Furthermore, member Eaton advocated for an automatic approach to return to Title IV aid because it is expected that these debts were acquired because of COVID-related disruptions. He believes this is what is best for the students, and it lays the groundwork for UC Merced to recruit them to come back rather than placing them in debt collection agencies.

Director Radney noted that prior to the pandemic, approximately 50% of UC Merced students were accepting loans. During the pandemic, this rate dropped to 27% in 2020-2021 and 32% in 2021-2022. The rates dropped because majority of students were living at home rather than on-campus housing during the pandemic, so the amount of aid they needed to borrow was lower. Emergency funds were also being distributed at the time, so the borrowing rate drastically decreased.

Member Eaton welcomed further discussion with CFO Schnier and Director Robinson offline, in which he would keep AFAC members apprised of via email.

**Action:**

- Member Eaton will follow up with CFO Schnier and Director Robinson for further discussion on possible next steps regarding the AFAC recommendations on institutional student debts incurred during the pandemic.
- Director Pierick provided additional materials regarding outstanding balances, available [here](#).

**IV. Consultation with Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management, Jill Orcutt; Director of Degree Completion Program, Michael Pierick; Director of Summer Session and Extension, Tammy Johnson; and Director of Education Programs, Mari Harris – 2:45pm – 3:00pm**

**A. [Teacher Preparation Program \(TPP\) Addition to Admissions Viewbook & Transfer Guide](#)**

**Requested Action:** AFAC to approve the addition of the Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) to the Undergraduate Admissions Viewbook and other related recruitment materials, effective AY 2022-2023.

AVC Orcutt introduced a proposal to include a pathway to the Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) in the admissions recruitment publications. A student who achieves their bachelor's degree in any bachelor's degree program at UC Merced would become eligible for the TPP. AVC Orcutt encountered several students at Bobcat Day who are interested in becoming a teacher; however,

UC Merced does not currently have a Bachelor of Education Program. AVC Orcutt asked for the support of AFAC to include in the Admissions Viewbook and Transfer guide that a student can achieve their bachelor's degree and pursue a TPP at UC Merced. Students would be recommended to pursue the TPP at UC Merced through the Natural Sciences Education (NSED) minor because this pathway would eliminate 12-unit requirements, reducing their cost and time to the program. The program is authorized through UC Merced Extension, is offered in-person and online, part time or full time, and is financial aid eligible. According to the [Commission on Teacher Credentialing](#), a student could complete nine credits at UC Merced and become eligible for an intern teaching credential, which would allow them to continue working while navigating the program. Additionally, there are scholarships for teachers who would like to receive their bilingual authorization. All in all, this pathway would allow a student to achieve their bachelor's degree, and then complete one additional year to obtain their certification in teaching.

A member expressed the importance of explicitly advertising that the program is being offered through UC Merced Extension and clearly outlining the requirements and time to certification. Overall, AFAC supported the addition of the TPP to the Undergraduate Admissions Viewbook and Transfer Guide.

**Action:**

- Members did not have any concerns with the addition of the TPP to the Admissions Viewbook & Transfer Guide.
- AFAC Analyst will transmit AFAC's endorsement to Associate Vice Chancellor Orcutt.

**V. Consultation with Critical Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) Chair, Sapana Doshi - 3:00pm – 3:15pm**

A. [Senate Regulation 424 – A-G Ethnic Studies](#)

Please do not share any of the linked correspondence with others outside of AFAC.

All Senate Committees were invited to comment on the proposed revision to [Senate Regulation 424](#) on December 2, 2021. AFAC's comments are available [here](#).

Academic Senate Chair Horwitz provided a systemwide review summary and Academic Senate Committees' comments, available [here](#). UCM comments appear on page 33. Several Divisions commented negatively that the course criteria are more narrowly defined than the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education. Chair Horwitz's [transmittal](#) is asking for each division to compare the current 424 language and Ethnic Studies course criteria with what the State adopted in the ESMC after much debate, and to provide additional comments. HCRES Chair Doshi is joining today's meeting to discuss the item and answer any questions that members may have.

**Requested Action:** Members to engage in discussion and provide additional comments on the proposed revision to Senate Regulation 424 – A-G Ethnic Studies. Chair Ghassemi will report back to BOARS.

Several different stakeholders had shared concerns about the recent memo circulated by Academic Senate Chair Horwitz regarding SR 424, stating that the content of the curriculum appears to create or recommend political activism, as well as potentially alienate a group of stakeholders. A petition was recently circulated by members from UC San Diego, UCLA, and UCSF, which urged the rejection of the Ethnic Studies "H" requirement because they believe the proposal to be highly controversial and political. Chair Ghassemi is scheduled to attend a BOARS

meeting on Friday, May 6, 2022, where the proposal and petition will be further discussed. He would like to share feedback from AFAC members and the UC Merced History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies (HCRES) faculty at the meeting.

**Action:**

- AFAC Analyst will circulate a follow-up email to members which includes all relevant materials for review (completed 5/3).
- Members are to send their comments to AFAC Analyst **by 10:00am, Thursday, May 5, 2022**. CRES Chair Doshi will send any comments solicited from the HCRES Department faculty to the AFAC Analyst.
- Chair Ghassemi will report back to BOARS on Friday, May 6, 2022.

**VI. Systemwide Review Items – Chair Ghassemi – 3:15pm – 3:25pm**

A. [Negotiated Salary Trial Program Phase 2](#)

**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, May 16, 2022. Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair is May 27, 2022.

**Action:**

- AFAC decided to decline to comment.
- AFAC Analyst will notify the Senate Chair.

B. [APM - 715 and APM – 760](#)

Materials are available in our shared AFAC AY 21-22 Box folder [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, May 23, 2022. Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair is June 3, 2022.

**Action:**

- AFAC decided to decline to comment.
- AFAC Analyst will notify the Senate Chair.

**VII. Any Other Business – 3:25pm – 3:30pm**

Member Eaton shared that the Biden Administration is planning to place a broad cancellation on federal student loans. Given the amount of aid that UC students borrow, many UC Merced current and former students will receive a substantial relief. However, it is important to also address institutional debts because such debts are not eligible for these forms of federal student loan relief.

Chair Ghassemi wondered if this would impact the Pell Grant. Member Eaton clarified that, unfortunately, changes in Pell Grant awards and eligibility cannot be done by executive order and requires congressional action. Therefore, it is unlikely that action will be taken in that regard.

Member Eaton also noted that he released an analysis for Senator Elizabeth Warren, which is

available [here](#).

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