

**GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)****Meeting Minutes****Wednesday, September 21, 2022****12:00pm-1:20pm****COB 1 - 320**

Documents available in [box](#)  
[Graduate Council Duties](#)

**I. Chair's Report – Michael Scheibner - 12:00pm – 12:10pm****A. September 9 Regular Check-in Meeting with UGC Chair Moyes, VPDUE Frey, and VPDGE Hrachian**

During the September 9 Regular Check-in meeting, VPDUE Frey reported on the steady increase in the number of COVID cases; however, the increase in severe cases was not severe enough to cause concern.

Discussions were held regarding what policies and procedures are currently in place for guidance during a heat wave. Chair Scheibner reported that this is an administrative decision and that faculty are strongly encouraged to refrain from moving their class to Zoom without consultation. Other measures are being considered to assist those who are on campus during a heat wave, such as misters, umbrellas, transportation via campus golf carts, etc.

The current CRF Policy states that a traditional face-to-face course allows up to 29% of the course to be delivered remotely. This does not indicate that instructors are automatically allowed to deliver 29% of their course online. If the instructor needs to make arrangements for a limited number of sessions, due to illness, business travel, emergencies, etc., they are to consult with their Department Chair or, if applicable, their School Dean. If the instructor plans to deliver any part of their course online or via other distance education technologies for an extended and/or permanent number of sessions, they are to submit a new course proposal, or modify an existing course proposal, in Curriculog and indicate that the course employs a web-based instructional method. These steps are necessary for the campus to meet standards expected in potential future audits. Many instructors believe the definition for traditional face-to-face modality allows them the flexibility to conduct the remainder of their class remotely following Thanksgiving; however, this is not current policy. An email has been transmitted to all Department Chairs to provide clarity.

**B. September 20 Divisional Council meeting**

Chair Scheibner shared the following updates from the September 20 Divisional Council meeting:

- EVC/Provost Camfield was unable to attend the September 20 DivCo meeting.
- UGC Chair Moyes agreed to serve as the liaison for The Faculty Advisory Committee on Sustainability (FACS).
- There are ongoing discussions regarding LASC representation on DivCo.
- An Oracle Townhall will take place on October 10, 2022 at 3:00pm.
- A recommendation was made to distribute the Senate Weekly Digest to all Senate faculty.
- A recommendation was made to upload the draft DivCo agendas onto the Senate website a

few days prior to each DivCo meeting. Chair Scheibner asked members their thoughts on conducting the same practice for GC agendas, and members did not have any concerns.

- DivCo members held a lengthy discussion about the several issues associated with conflicts of interest, and CRE Chair and Parliamentarian Viney is working on next steps regarding revisions to the DivCo Conflict of Interest policy.
- A discussion was held regarding funding and compensation for departments. The main concern is that a large number of course releases are granted to faculty, and departments are not given funds to cover them, which makes it difficult to hire additional lectures.

## II. Vice Chair’s Report – John Abatzoglou – 12:10pm – 12:15pm

### A. September 6 Graduate Group Chairs training

A training was held on September 6 for Graduate Group Chairs to review various standard processes.

### B. September 13 PROC meeting

An Interdisciplinary Humanities program review will be conducted this year. A member was concerned with the one-hour-long scheduled meetings and felt that because program reviews are conducted once every seven years, the meetings should be scheduled for at least two hours each. VPDGE Hratchian clarified that the reviewers have several scheduled meetings with different groups of faculty throughout their visit, so it would be difficult to schedule two-hour meetings for everyone. He suggested consulting with the Department Chair to ask for additional time. He also recommended that members review a previous program review report for better understanding of the structure and to potentially suggest additional items to include in future program reviews.

Vice Chair Abatzoglou also reported on current discussions regarding vertically integrated program reviews, which would include the concurrent review of both undergraduate and graduate programs.

#### Action:

- GC Analyst will locate a review report from a previous program review to share with GC members.

## III. Consent Calendar – Chair Scheibner – 12:15pm – 12:20pm

### A. Agenda

### B. [September 7 meeting minutes](#)

#### Action:

- GC Analyst will revise the agenda and meeting minutes to remove the topic listed for the Executive Session item (completed 9/21).
- The agenda was approved with the revision noted above.
- The September 7 meeting minutes were approved with the revision noted above.
- GC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.

**IV. Postdoctoral Scholar Support and Development – Chair Scheibner – 12:20pm – 12:35pm**

- A. Train UC Merced's diverse student population and ready them for competitive careers, while boosting scholarly output
- B. Develop strategic task force workgroups to assist with planning strategic initiatives
- C. Obtain more funding for hiring
- D. Enhance UC Merced's capacity to perform R1-level research
- E. Partner with Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED)

This item was discussed during the September 7, 2022 meeting. Chair Scheibner asked members to review the linked initiative and provide comments. The linked initiative has been updated to include comments from Vice Chair Abatzoglou.

**Requested Action:** Members are to engage in conversation and determine which guests to invite to a future GC meeting for further discussion.

Chair Scheibner invited members to provide additional comments on the draft initiative, linked above. A member wondered why there are centralized departments at UC Merced who manage classroom scheduling, rather than a staff member to support individual departments. Having staff support for each department would provide focus on the department's needs and create a more sense of community, which would provide a nurturing environment for postdocs. VPDGE Hratchian noted that some departments, such as Chemistry, have faculty located in several different buildings, so this would be difficult to implement, but he recommended speaking with the School Deans, as they manage their respective School staff and department distribution.

VPDGE Hratchian is currently consulting with the Academic Personnel Office (APO) regarding the postdoc hiring process and funding. He also reported on postdoc teaching experience and fundraising. The Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) and Teaching Postdoc hiring lines are both used; however, the VAP line can be disadvantageous for many reasons. Postdocs cannot teach, so they are currently being hired under a partial Unit 18 Lecturer appointment; however, they receive significantly less pay under this title. VPDGE Hratchian is currently collaborating with SNS Dean Dumont to identify a position for individuals seeking a career in the professoriate field and who can obtain exposure to teaching, mentoring, and research components as part of their experience.

VPDGE Hratchian also reported that there are several fundraising opportunities to raise money for postdocs. From a leadership standpoint, VPDGE Hratchian would like to see more effort in facilitating fundraising. Fellowship money cannot be used to support postdocs because most fellowship money is return-to-aid. None of the funds used for trainees can be used for postdocs because they are not students.

A member wondered why Graduate Council is spending so much time and effort on the hiring of postdocs rather than graduate students. Chair Scheibner responded that the [Graduate Council Bylaws](#) state that the Council, "makes policy for post-baccalaureate education, including graduate and postdoctoral appointments at UC Merced...".

Chair Scheibner invited members to provide suggestions on who they would like to join a future GC meeting to further discuss the initiative. VPDGE Hratchian recommended inviting Sayantani Ghosh, Associate Dean for Graduate Education; Gillian Wilson, Vice Chancellor for Research; Kelly Anders, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Personnel; and Joshua Viers, Assistant Dean, School of Engineering.

**Action:**

- GC Analyst will share the initiative with Associate Dean for Graduate Education Ghosh, and she will be invited to the October 5 GC meeting for further discussion.
- GC Analyst will share the initiative with Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) Wilson, and she will be invited to the October 5 GC meeting for further discussion.

- V. **Seminar Remote Speakers Policy – Chair Scheibner and VPDGE Hratchian – 12:35pm – 12:50pm**  
Chair Scheibner and VPDGE Hratchian propose a policy that allows for individual seminar sessions to be held remotely when the guest speaker presents remotely, in the case that the seminar room is not equipped with adequate video conferencing technology.

**Requested Action:** GC vote to endorse the proposed policy.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that many speakers have been able to join seminar sessions remotely from Europe, Asia, and many other countries, which has been a great opportunity and would like this option to remain available.

A member noted unclarity regarding what meetings are referenced in the *Seminars Featuring Guest Speakers* section of the draft memo. A recommendation was made to revise the current language to “specific seminar meetings”.

**Action:**

- GC Analyst will hyperlink the [gradservices@ucmerced.edu](mailto:gradservices@ucmerced.edu) email address and revise “individual meetings” to “specific seminar meetings” (completed 9/21).
- GC voting members voted to approve the memo with the two revisions noted above (6 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 2 members were not present during voting).
- GC Analyst will transmit the final memo to Graduate Group Chairs.

- VI. **Review of Continuing Graduate Fellowships – Chair Scheibner and VPDGE Hratchian – 12:50pm – 1:00pm**

This item was discussed at the September 7, 2022 GC meeting where VPDGE Hratchian agreed to provide the Council with an update at a future meeting. The goal is to shift review of continuing graduate fellowships to earlier in the AY (e.g. to end of Fall), so submission & review will not coincide with recruitment fellowships. This revision will help balance committee workload.

**Requested Action:** VPDGE Hratchian will provide an update to Council members, and members will determine if review of continuing graduate fellowships should be moved up to the end of the Fall semester. If so, GC is to determine a date.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that a deadline of October or November for reviewing the Continuing Graduate Fellowship applications does not provide first-year students with sufficient time to meet application requirements. He recommended that faculty reviewers conduct the review of Continuing Graduate Fellowships sometime in January. Once faculty reviewers are identified, a review session could be scheduled in January, where reviewers could meet for a couple of hours and have lunch and conduct the reviews.

**Action:**

- Due to time constraints, Chair Scheibner invited members to send him an email with their comments regarding this recommendation.

**VII. Consultation with VPDGE Hratchian – 1:00pm – 1:15pm****A. Postdoc Appreciation Week**

VPDGE Hratchian reported that this week is Postdoc Appreciation Week and recommended thanking a postdoc. He also announced that graduate applications open today.

**B. Grad student recruitment initiatives****Action:**

- This item was tabled for the October 5 GC meeting.

**C. Grad Group funding****Action:**

- This item was tabled for the October 5 GC meeting.

**VIII. New Business? – 1:15pm – 1:20pm**

Chair Scheibner informed VPDGE Hratchian of two upcoming business items – GC’s written endorsement of the CCB name change, and that the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook will need to be updated to include the modified Conflict Resolution Infrastructure document and flowchart.

**Action:**

- Registrar Webb provided GC’s endorsement of the CCB name change. GC Analyst will transmit GC’s endorsement to the Senate Executive Director (completed 9/21).
- VPDGE Hratchian will work with Assistant Dean Cisneros to implement the newly approved Conflict Resolution Infrastructure document and flowchart into the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook.
- Member Ryavec’s discussion item regarding a faculty to graduate student ratio will be included in the October 5 GC meeting agenda.

**IX. Executive Session – 1:20pm – 1:30pm****Action:**

- The executive session was tabled for the beginning of the October 5 GC meeting.