

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**Meeting Minutes****Wednesday, October 5, 2022****12:15pm-1:30pm****COB 1 - 320**

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

I. Executive Session - 12:00pm – 12:15pm

No minutes were recorded during Executive Session. The action items were shared with GC voting members.

II. Chair’s Report – Michael Scheibner - 12:15pm – 12:20pm**A. October 4 Divisional Council meeting**

Chair Scheibner shared the following updates from the October 4 Divisional Council meeting:

- Further discussions were held regarding department funding relative to teaching releases. In some cases, funding for a given leave (sabbaticals, family leave, and course reductions for administrative work) does not exist in the budget, and due to existing Regulations, it is often difficult to hire temporary lecturers to cover these leaves.
- Further discussions were held regarding the Gallo School of Management pre-proposal, and the formation of a Senate-Administration working group to address the issues around the current campus policy and procedure for creating new Schools.
- The Gallo School of Management pre-proposal is currently undergoing an informal review at Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA).
- The administration is concerned about meeting enrollment targets, as the enrollment numbers are currently lower than anticipated. There are also concerns with the recruitment of students using fellowships, essentially making it appear like students are being paid to attend UC Merced.
- The funding from the “Inland Rising” Assembly Bill will be allocated to UC Merced, UC Riverside, and UC Santa Cruz.
- There are current concerns regarding the tone of messaging between the faculty and administration.
- CoR Chair Sexton provided an update on the MacKenzie gift funds with the recommendation that GC, FWAf, and UGC each decide how to utilize the funds under their purview (e.g. travel grants, professional development, student research scholarships, etc.).
- Discussions were held about what oversight role the Senate should have when the campus receives external funding (e.g. climate research funds and potential funds resulting from UC Merced’s future ANR/AES status).
- AFAC Chair Eaton provided an update on President Biden’s Loan Forgiveness Program noting that the US Department of Education will accept applications after the October 31, 2022 deadline if employees have completed the PSLF help tool.

Action:

- Chair Scheibner invited voting members to share their ideas via email regarding how GC would like to utilize the additional funds allocated from the MacKenzie gift funds (e.g. travel grants, etc.).

III. Vice Chair’s Report – John Abatzoglou – 12:20pm – 12:25pm

A. October 4 Graduate Group Chairs Meeting

Discussions were held regarding a separate commencement for graduate students, and an announcement will be made soon. There were concerns from the graduate chairs that the separation would further dilute faculty participation in undergraduate ceremonies. It may also be awkward to have a very small number of graduate students at the Winter commencement. A member noted that this may be beneficial because it could allow for a shorter ceremony in June when it is hot.

B. October 5 PROC meeting

PROC members discussed what constitutes diversity in terms of reviewing program proposals.

IV. Consent Calendar – Chair Scheibner – 12:25pm – 12:30pm

A. Agenda

B. [September 21 meeting minutes](#)

C. Course Proposals

(New)

[EECS - 230 - Deep Learning](#)

(Revised)

[MBSE - 214 - Tissue Engineering Design](#)**Action:**

- The October 5 agenda and the September 21 meeting minutes were approved as presented. GC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.
- EECS – 230 and MBSE – 214 were approved. GC Analyst will update Curriculog accordingly.

V. Ratio of Faculty to Graduate Students - Member Ryavec – 12:30pm – 12:40pm

The Interdisciplinary Humanities (IH) Department has approximately 50 faculty members; however, their funding allows for the support of about 4 graduate students per year. This number appears small given the number of faculty. Member Ryavec would like to have a discussion regarding an official UC formula for faculty to graduate students, as well as what can be done practically to improve this situation.

Member Ryavec explained that the IH Department has significantly expanded over the past couple of years, and it has become difficult to manage a graduate program due to funding issues. He wonders if there is an official ratio of faculty to students in a graduate program, and VPDGE Hratchian clarified that there is no such formula.

VPDGE Hratchian reported that at UC Merced, the goal is for faculty to be able to provide a five-year funding guarantee to any PhD admit. The IH graduate group chair and any coordinating department chairs need to develop a plan to demonstrate to SSHA Dean Gilger that if UC Merced were to receive an incoming class of several students, the faculty would have the bandwidth and capacity to provide a five-year funding guarantee for those students. He also clarified that if a department can provide such support, they should not do so at the maximum capacity in the first year. Departments should be able to show that they have a

community with years of experience and skillset that will continue its success, also known as support capacity. VPDGE Hratchian believes that the IH Department is currently under capacity.

A member shared their concerns about current communications between the IH Department faculty and the Graduate Division regarding resource allocation for graduate students. The member noted that they have received funding to bring African American students to UC Merced from HBCUs, but it is unclear whether those students would be provided resources similar to what they were provided at their HBCUs. The member clarified that their concerns do not only resonate with funding and fellowships, but also with the infrastructure and vision, etc.; how IH is perceived as a community on campus, particularly at the graduate level. VPDGE Hratchian welcomed a meeting with SSHA Dean Gilger, SSHA Executive Committee Chair Amussen, and Professors Hatton and Ryavec to further discuss the member's concerns. VPDGE Hratchian also suggested inviting Financial Services Director Eric Cannon to a future GC meeting to discuss the allocation of graduate funding.

Action:

- GC Analyst will work with VPDGE Hratchian's Executive Assistant to schedule a meeting for VPDUE Hratchian, SSHA Executive Committee Chair Amussen, SSHA Dean Gilger, and Professors Hatton and Ryavec for a discussion regarding the Administration's involvement in the allocation of resources for the Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities.
- GC Analyst will invite Financial Services Director Eric Cannon to a future GC meeting to discuss the allocation of graduate funding.

VI. Consultation with VPDGE Hratchian – 12:40pm – 12:55pm

A. Graduate student recruitment initiatives

VPDGE Hratchian reported that faculty who have written a letter of recommendation for a student last year will receive a fee waiver to give to three or four of their students this year. Fee waiver codes will be tracked in order to identify which ones worked well and which ones didn't. VPDGE Hratchian also shared interesting data regarding graduate-level admissions. UC Merced admits approximately 25% of applicants each year; however, UC Merced has the highest yield rate out of all the UC campuses for SIRs (Statement of Intent to Register). VPDGE Hratchian will share this data with GC members via email.

Action:

- GC Analyst will share via email with voting members, the graduate-level admissions data once received from VPDGE Hratchian.

B. Graduate Group funding

Each graduate group receives two primary funding sources per year – an operations budget and University Student Aid Program (USAP) funds, both of which are distributed from Graduate Division. The overspending or underspending of graduate groups has an impact on the Graduate Division budget. VPDGE Hratchian has asked graduate group chairs to prepare their budgets, and he had created a spreadsheet to track their funds. This allows his staff to assist graduate group chairs with the monitoring of their funds. At the end of the academic year, VPDGE Hratchian will be able to assess the spending of each graduate group and allocate funds accordingly the following year.

VII. New Business? – 12:55pm – 1:00pm

A. “Academic, Personal, and Career Preparation” Strategic Planning Team

The administration is requesting two representatives to serve on the “Academic, Personal, and Career Preparation” Strategic Planning Team – one from GC and one from UGC. The relevant section is highlighted in the linked document above.

Requested Action: Identify one GC representative to serve on the “Academic, Personal, and Career Preparation” Strategic Planning Team.

Action:

- GC Analyst will acquire additional information regarding what this Strategic Planning Team entails and report back to voting members (completed 10/6, additional information is available here).
- Please let Melanie know **by 10:00am, Monday, October 10, 2022** if you are interested in serving as the GC representative on the “Academic, Personal, and Career Preparation” Strategic Planning Team

B. Impacts of the pandemic on graduate students

Action:

- GC student representative Albert DiBenedetto and a few of his colleagues will join the November 9 GC meeting to present on the impacts that the pandemic, the implementation of the Oracle System, building closures (e.g., BSP), etc. had on their progress to degree and the overall graduate experience at UC Merced.

VIII. Postdoctoral Scholar Support and Development - 1:00pm – 1:30pm

During the September 7 and September 21, 2022 meetings, members discussed Chair Scheibner’s initiative for postdoctoral scholar support and development, along with Vice Chair Abatzoglou’s comments.

Associate Dean for Graduate Education Sayantani Ghosh are joining us today to further discuss the initiative.

A. 1:00pm - 1:15pm: Open session with GC members

B. 1:15pm – 1:30pm: Consultation with Associate Dean for Graduate Education Sayantani Ghosh

Chair Scheibner welcomed Associate Dean Ghosh and provided an overview of his initiative for more support and development for postdoctoral scholars. He asked Associate Dean Ghosh for her feedback and ideas on the initiative. Associate Dean Ghosh reported that she is currently providing a series of workshops for postdocs. She agrees that there should be more opportunities for professional development, especially for postdocs who are preparing to enter the job market. She wondered what Graduate Division could provide in terms of professional development, and Chair Scheibner asked for more support on the grantsmanship process.

Chair Scheibner also discussed the current issue regarding funding for teaching releases and recommended providing postdocs with teaching experience. Associate Dean Ghosh stated that there are a series of workshops that the Center of Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) currently offer in that regard.

Associate Dean Ghosh noted that the Graduate Division has a list of opportunities for postdocs (activities, trainings, experience-gaining options, etc.) that she will share with GC. She also discussed the current communication between graduate programs and their postdocs noting that some communicate effectively while others could improve. There is a need for more effective communication, especially to inform postdocs about all the opportunities available to them.

Action:

- Associate Dean for Graduate Education Ghosh will compile a list of opportunities for postdocs – activities, trainings, experience-gaining options, etc. – to share with members at the October 19 GC meeting.