

[Admissions and Financial Aid Committee \(AFAC\)](#)

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Friday, October 28, 2022**  
**9:00am – 10:15am**

**Zoom Information:**  
<https://ucmerced.zoom.us/j/81652393224>  
Meeting ID: 816 5239 3224  
One tap mobile: +16694449171, 81652393224# US

**I. Chair’s Report – Chair Eaton – 9:00am – 9:05am**

A. October 4 and 18 Divisional Council Meetings

- Chair Eaton and member Spencer provided an update on institutional student debt. CFO Schnier agreed with the several ongoing issues that need to be addressed.
- CFO Schnier and Associate VC and Controller Nelson provided an update on the Oracle System stating that they have been working diligently on improving the system but that it will continue to take time before running well.
- Members advocated for more faculty participation in the development of the annual shared governance retreat agendas. EVC/Provost Camfield will ensure that the faculty and staff are involved next year.
- The Gallo School of Management pre-proposal is currently undergoing an informal review at Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA).
- Institutional Research & Decision Support (IRDS) shared a report regarding the creation of new majors, which will be further discussed during today’s discussion of the new major and minor proposals.

B. October 7 BOARS meeting

The first AY 22-23 Board of Admissions in Relation to Schools (BOARS) meeting took place on October 7, 2022 where members introduced themselves, and discussions were held regarding the new Ethnic Studies requirement for UC admissions.

C. Email voting

The AFAC analyst has circulated several email voting items, and although quorum is usually met, Chair Eaton would like to ensure that all voting members respond to the requests in a timely manner. If any members have concerns with voting via email, they are welcome to send Chair Eaton an email.

**II. Consent Calendar – Chair Eaton - 9:05am – 9:10am**

A. The Agenda

**This agenda may contain confidential and privileged material for the sole use of AFAC Members.**

B. [September 23 meeting minutes](#)**Action:**

- The agenda was approved as presented.
- The September 23 meeting minutes were approved as presented.
- AFAC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly (completed 10/28).

**III. Report from the Office of Admissions – Dustin Noji and Ruben Lubers – 9:10am – 9:20am**A. [Approval of admissions selection process and scoring for Fall 2023](#)

The Office of Admissions is requesting AFAC's endorsement to continue using the same first-year selection scoring criteria from Fall 2022.

Each year, AFAC is invited by the Office of Admissions to review the admissions selection criteria for the following academic year. The proposed admissions selection criteria for Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 are linked above. This year, Admissions is not proposing any changes to the admission selection process that was approved and used for Fall 2022. Part C scoring, which involves reviewing applicants with leadership, extracurricular activities, etc., was not used for AY 21-22, and Admissions is asking for AFAC's endorsement to continue admitting students that meet UC admissions eligibility requirements without including part C scoring. Part C scoring will, however, continue to be used when reviewing Admission by Exception reports.

**Action:**

- Voting members endorsed the admissions selection process and scoring for Fall 2023 (6 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 member not present during voting).
- AFAC Analyst will notify Director Noji.

B. [Review of the UC Merced Guidelines for Admission by Exception](#)

This update includes minor modifications to clarify when requirements should be completed, as well as some revisions to the lower division A by E requirements institute last year. Proposed revisions are available [here](#).

The Office of Admissions reviews and revises the Admission by Exception guidelines every year. Director Noji reported that Admissions is not proposing any revisions to the first year or freshman Admissions by Exception guidelines; however, last year, requirements for lower division or sophomore level students were added. For AY 22-23, Admissions is asking for AFAC's endorsement of the following three revisions to the Admissions by Exception guidelines:

- The expansion of units from 14 to 20 that are used to consider sophomore-level transfer students.
- Additional language regarding the English Language Proficiency Requirement because several international students may need to complete coursework to fulfill this requirement.
- Additional clarifying language that states that at the time of review, a student

must have completed 45 transferable units to be considered for admissions by exception as a junior-level transfer student.

**Action:**

- Voting members endorsed the revised guidelines for Admissions by Exception (6 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 member not present during voting).
- AFAC Analyst will notify Director Noji.

**IV. AFAC AY 22-23 Priorities – Chair Eaton – 9:20am – 9:30am**

Chair Eaton would like to solicit volunteers to begin leading the work on one of AFAC's prioritized issues, listed below.

1. Help UCM employees and students use expanded public service loan forgiveness and executive action – **Charlie Eaton and Ailyn Palancares.**
2. Secure ongoing funds from UC system and the state to continue debt-free enrollment growth – **Siddaiah Yara.**
3. Assure UC Merced implementation and UC-wide Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) implementation of a new ethnic studies A-H admissions requirement for high school and transfer students – **Sapana Doshi.**
4. Cancel institutional student debts owed to UCM by students and not covered by Biden executive action – **Joel Spencer (in collaboration with Yang Lor).**
5. Partner with the Degree Completion Program on financial aid solutions for re-enrolling stop-out students, including those previously barred from enrollment by institutional debts – **Yang Lor (in collaboration with Joel Spencer).**
6. BS/MA major program admissions policy development – **Mariaelena Gonzalez**

Members discussed which items they are most interested in, and their names are noted in bold next to the respective items above. A member expressed concern about the BS/MA major program admissions policy development, and Chair Eaton recommended adding it as a sixth item to the list of priorities.

**Action:**

- Chair Eaton and student representative Palancares volunteered to co-lead the work on item one.
- Member Yarra volunteered to lead the work on item two.
- Member Sapana will lead the work on item three.
- Member Spencer will lead the work on item four (collaboratively with the lead of item five, member Lor).
- Member Lor will lead the work on item five (collaboratively with the lead of item four, member Spencer). Chair Eaton will connect member Lor with SNS Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Director of Degree Completion Program Pierick.
- BS/MA major program admissions policy development has been added to the list of priorities with member Gonzalez as the lead.

**V. Campus Review Items – Chair Eaton – 9:30am – 9:40am**

The Administration is concerned about meeting enrollment targets and would like to offer more majors at UC Merced. Chair Eaton is concerned about the push for simply increasing the number of majors rather than focusing on which majors would attract more students and best benefit the campus.

Chair Eaton noted that there are resource implications for each proposal. For new major and minor proposals, it appears that proposers are encouraged to minimize the resources they believe will be needed. Chair Eaton would like to support the need for adequate resources and for proposers to clearly state their needs.

The three lead reviewers provided a summary of their respective assessment, available below.

**A. [Proposal for a Minor in Aerospace](#)**

Undergraduate Council's Policy for the establishment of Minors is available [here](#).

**Lead Reviewer:** Yang Lor

Lead Reviewer's comments are available [here](#).

**Requested Action:** AFAC to discuss lead reviewer's comments. If members do not have any additional comments, voting members vote to endorse the memo.

**Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair:** Friday, November 4, 2022.

Member Lor provided a summary of his review of the proposal for a new Aerospace Engineering (AE) Minor, which will be based out of the Mechanical Engineering (ME) Department. The ME Department has identified two tenure track faculty to teach the four new AE courses. Member Lor reported that there are not many students minoring in the current Engineering minors and believes the creation of the new AE minor will have minimal impact on admissions.

**Action:**

- Voting members endorsed the draft memo (6 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 member not present during voting).
- AFAC Analyst will transmit the final memo to the Senate Chair.

**B. [Proposal for a B.S. in Biochemical and Biomolecular Engineering](#)**

Undergraduate Council's Policy for the Review and Approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#).

**Lead Reviewer:** Mike Cleary

Lead Reviewer's comments are available [here](#).

**Requested Action:** AFAC to discuss lead reviewer's comments. If members do not have any additional comments, voting members vote to endorse the memo.

**Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair:** Tuesday, November 1, 2022.

Member Cleary provided a summary of his review of the proposal for a B.S. in Biochemical and Biomolecular Engineering (BCME), noting his primary focus on how the new major aims to increase enrollment numbers. He recommended seeking clarification from the proposers on the difference between the new BCME major compared to the existing bioengineering major, as it appears that the BCME major would only offer one additional course. It is unclear whether the creation of the BCME major would attract a different cohort of students, and thus, increase enrollments.

Member Cleary also recommended seeking clarification on the lab courses that could satisfy the transfer requirement. The proposal states that transfer students are required to complete courses equivalent to BCME/BIOE 002 and 002Lab. Member Cleary recommended that the proposers provide specific examples of courses currently available at community colleges that would fulfill the requirement.

An AFAC member, also a Bioengineering faculty, mentioned that the idea for the creation of this proposal is to provide another major that would attract additional students and does not require a significant amount of resources. The member also agreed with member Cleary in that the proposal should explicitly state whether non-engineering “general biology 02 and biology 02 labs” will fulfill the transfer requirement.

**Action:**

- Voting members endorsed the draft memo with the amendment to include TAG criteria and clarify the lab courses that can satisfy the transfer requirement (5 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention, 1 member not present during voting).
- AFAC Analyst will work with the lead reviewer to implement recommended revisions and send the final memo to the Senate Chair by Tuesday, November 1, 2022.

C. [Proposal for a B.S. in Chemical Engineering](#)

Undergraduate Council’s Policy for the Review and Approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#).

**Lead Reviewer:** Chair Eaton

Lead Reviewer’s comments are available [here](#).

**Requested Action:** AFAC to discuss lead reviewer’s comments. If members do not have any additional comments, voting members vote to endorse the memo.

**Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair:** Tuesday, November 1, 2022.

Chair Eaton provided a summary of his review of the proposal for a B.S. in Chemical Engineering (ChE), noting similar concerns as member Cleary regarding how the new major will aim to increase enrollment numbers. Chair Eaton would like the proposers to provide an analysis of how this new major will contribute to enrollment growth overall, as well as how it relates to the BCME major.

Chair Eaton would also like the proposers to provide analysis on how the offering of a BCME major might either increase the number of total applicants to UC Merced, or increase yields from admissions offers. The current methods in the analysis are not robust and seem to conform to the standard analyses IRDS has conducted for new majors in the past. Chair Eaton would like for IRDS to help this proposal and future proposals show if past predictions using these methods have been predictive of actual enrollment shifts.

Director of Admissions Noji wondered whether AFAC could include in the two major proposals, a recommendation for the proposers to include Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) criteria, in which Chair Eaton agreed. The AFAC analyst reviewed the two major proposals and confirmed that TAG criteria is already included.

**Action:**

- Voting members endorsed the draft memo with the amendment to include TAG criteria (5 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention, 1 member not present during voting).
- AFAC Analyst will work with the lead reviewer to implement recommended revisions and send the final memo to the Senate Chair by Tuesday, November 1, 2022.

**VI. Any Other Business – 9:40am – 9:45am**

No other business was discussed.

**VII. Update on Institutional Student Debt – Chair Eaton, Member Spencer, and UC Irvine Professor Dalié Jiminez – 9:45am – 10:15am**

Chair Eaton will provide an update on institutional student debts and discuss potential recommendations to transmit to DivCo. UC Irvine Professor Dalié Jiminez will join the meeting at 10:00am to provide additional information.

**Requested Action:** Members engage in discussion and suggest recommendations to DivCo.

Chair Eaton and member Spencer shared an update on institutional student debt at UC Merced. The PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).

The main points presented are summarized below.

- Institutional debts are debts owed to UC Merced that are not federal student loans repaid to the U.S. Department of Education.
- The debts are incurred from housing, health, etc. that a student still owes when dropped for non-payment.
- Pell Grant and federal funds must be returned to the U.S. Department of Education.

- There has been a dramatic increase of over \$2 million in institutional student debt at UC Merced over the past three years.
- Students are unable to enroll in courses if they have outstanding debt, and their debts are placed in collections with a third-party for-profit debt collector.
- UC Merced implemented a change to the Drop for Non-payment (DFNP) policy. Originally, students were dropped after their first week of classes for non-payment and did not owe anything to the university. Beginning Fall 2021, students were allowed to remain enrolled in their classes to meet enrollment targets but incurred debt that they were later unable to pay.
- UC Merced suffers a financial loss when Pell Grants and federal aid are returned to the U.S. Department of Education because of drop for non-payment or early withdrawal.
- Last academic year, the UC Merced Academic Senate provided recommendations to Divisional Council for reducing adverse student impacts and administrative burdens, available [here](#).

UC Irvine Professor Dalié Jiminez joined the meeting and reported on the negative consequences resulting from collecting students' institutional debts, including the inability for students to reenroll in courses or the negative impact it has on their credit, etc. Even small dollar amounts that are issued to third-party debt collectors can negatively impact one's credit making it difficult to rent an apartment, find a job, increase or deny purchases, etc.

The UC system currently has a contract with twelve debt collection agencies. These agencies are allowed to sue students in State Court, which causes additional hardships for the students and their families. Many students also feel they do not owe any of the money or the total amount that the agency claims. Less than 60% of individuals in the counties that Professor Jiminez investigated responded to the lawsuits, and their fees continue to grow. The state also intercepts tax credits or young child tax credits to cover unpaid costs.

A member noted that many students enroll at UC Merced who do not attend their classes and still get charged for health insurance, housing, etc. The member wondered whether these students/families feel they are being justly charged or if they generally believe they do not owe these fees because they did not attend any classes. The member also noted that the institution makes commitments for classroom seats, housing, etc. that cannot be recovered. Professor Jiminez stated that these are questionable legitimate debts from a legal standpoint and believes that most students/families do not feel lawfully charged. Chair Eaton also noted that the new DFNP policy was revised to meet enrollment targets, and therefore, the university was not holding seats or beds for students, but rather the opposite, attempting to fill spots. Chair Eaton believes that students who incurred or could have incurred debt because of the change in DFNP policy should not be indebted.

Another member inquired about an appeal process for students who have incurred debt, and Associate Vice Chancellor Orcutt responded that there is an appeal process for all policies. Chair Eaton also wondered whether students receive a notification or advising regarding the debt they have incurred from withdrawing. Deputy Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships Heather Nardello reported that for students who withdraw from the university early will have their financial aid prorated because each student tends to do so at

a different time in the semester depending on their personal situation. The remaining balance then becomes the debt the student owes to the university.

Chair Eaton concluded the discussion noting two main issues that AFAC should focus on: why institutional debt has increased so drastically and why the amount of debt remains high even after COVID disruptions have diminished. AVC Orcutt recommended including the issue of health insurance in AFAC's memo to Divisional Council. Students are charged with health insurance on the first day of classes, and if they withdraw on the second day of class, that fee is not automatically removed. Chair Eaton and member Spencer will draft a memo response to Divisional Council and include these aspects, among many others.

**Action:**

- Chair Eaton and member Spencer will draft a memo in addition to AFAC's initial [April 2022 memo](#) transmitted to DivCo in April 2022.
- Chair Eaton and member Spencer will connect with student representative Palancares to include her feedback in the draft memo.
- Voting members will be invited to review the draft member prior to transmittal to DivCo.

**VIII. Informational Items** will be regularly uploaded on the “Informational Items” AFAC Box Folder [here](#).