

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

Minutes

Monday, February 14, 2022

1:30 – 2:50 PM

COB 2 Room 392

Zoom URL: <https://ucmerced.zoom.us/j/8312699469>

Zoom Phone: 1 669 900 6833, Meeting ID: 8312699469

Documents available in box

Graduate Council Duties

I. Chair's Report (1:30-1:35)—Chair Hestir

A. CCGA (2/2)

Concerns regarding enrollment capacity remain, and a Working Group will be formed to determine how enrollment targets will be met through expanded summer sessions, satellite campuses, and online degrees. The systemwide Senate also shared their concerns about online education and cheating. The University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) has encouraged faculty to label all online education materials as copyrighted by the instructor. The Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA), in collaboration with the Council of Graduate Deans, is issuing a joint letter on COVID impacts to the Provost, specifically in regard to graduate students and postdocs.

B. Joint GC Chair/UGC Chair/VPDUE/VPDGE Meeting (2/8)

This item was not reported on during the meeting.

C. Divisional Council (1/27 and 2/10)

At the January 27, 2022 DivCo meeting, AFAC member Charlie Eaton shared his proposal for full Senate review of the Academic Activity Policy. The review of the Academic Activity Policy may help to benefit student welfare, minimize administrative burdens, and ensure a faculty voice. At the February 10, 2022 DivCo meeting, there were discussions regarding the University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF)'s Recommendations for Departments Political Statements review item.

II. Consent Calendar (1:35-1:35)—Chair Hestir

A. The agenda (2/14/22)

B. Minutes from the 1/24/22 meeting

C. Course Proposals

(NEW)

EECS 240_ Computer Architecture and Design

EECS 258_ Multimedia Systems

PH 218_ Psychiatric Epidemiology

PHYS 202_ Foundations of Physics

QSB 284_ Biomolecular Modeling and Simulations

QSB 225_ Microbial Genetics

ECON 294_ Research Paper

POLI 214_ Advanced Causal Inference

(REVISED)

SOC 299_ Directed Independent Study

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. Discussion Item (1:35-1:40) Modifications to the course proposal review – *Chair Hestir*

The GC has collaborated with UGC on the formulation of a new course proposal questionnaire that better indicates best practices and state of the science for online course delivery. The group has also created a new evaluation rubric for reviewers of course proposals, and a course modification guide for proposers. Of note is modifications to the thresholds defining in-person, hybrid and online modalities. Previous GC questionnaires had a small deviation relative to UGC questionnaires. New forms assume one threshold across graduate and undergraduate courses.

1. In UGC's Course Approval Policy, face-to-face is defined as 0-29% online, hybrid as 30-79% online, fully online as 80-100% online. This document is what informs the section of the Curriculog form
2. UGC's *old* Supplemental Questionnaire suggests hybrid is defined as 25-67% online
3. GC's Supplemental Questionnaire suggests hybrid is defined as a course that meets at least 1/3 in person and at least 1/3 by distance learning, which would mean that hybrid ranges approximately from 33-66% online. GC has no explicit policy with definitions.

Action: Members approved the revised supplemental form with a minor modification to the title to include that the form can be used for new courses that have an online component, not just when modifying an existing course. Members also approved the evaluation rubric and course modification guide. Analyst will notify UGC Chair Moyes.

IV. Campus Review Items (1:40-1:50)—*Chair Hestir***A. Electrical Engineering Program Proposal**

On January 11, 2022, the School of Engineering Executive Committee reviewed and unanimously approved a proposal for an Electrical Engineering (EE) program. This is now being transmitted to the Senate for formal review (it was previously submitted for an informal review by UGC and CAPRA). While faculty are concerned that resources have not always been adequate to support UC Merced growth, the School of Engineering Executive Committee found strong faculty support for the creation of an EE program and, with assurances from the Dean that the Administration will provide the requested resources, the School of Engineering Executive Committee encourages the Senate to approve the proposal.

Lead Reviewer: Fred Wolf

Members discussed the proposal and Member Wolf's comments, which are available in the shared GC AY 21-22 box folder, here.

In addition to member Wolf's comments, another member noted that the Chemistry, Physics, and Math Department would all be impacted by the Electrical Engineering program. Currently, the pre-college Chemistry and Math classes (CHEM 01 and MATH 05) are required by the vast majority of Engineering majors at UC Merced. Math is the only major whose majority of first-year students do not have to complete the pre-college level Math course. UC Merced currently has a shortage in Teaching Assistants for both Math and Chemistry classes, and so it is unclear how additional Teaching Assistants would be acquired if the Electrical Engineering Program were to achieve the 200 new majors in the short term, which would also impact graduate students.

Action: Draft memo and circulate to GC voting members for review. Transmit GC's comments to Senate Chair by February 18, 2022.

V. Discussion Item: Conflict Resolution Infrastructure (1:50-2:00)—*Chair Hestir and Maria Nishanian, Graduate Division*

GC has received comments from all three School Deans, as well as some department chairs and graduate group chairs, FWAF, and CoR, synthesized here. Original comments are here.

Academic Counselor Nishanian agreed that the comments provided on the Conflict Resolution Infrastructure were very reasonable. A comment was included to ask for clarity on students' resources, such as guidance on who to consult when seeking help through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) or Title IX. Another comment emphasized the importance of informing the faculty when there is a conflict. Although some students prefer to keep matters confidential, the faculty should be informed when students are leaving the labs or if there is a change in advisor. Academic Counselor Nishanian agreed to work with VPDGE Kello on incorporating the feedback.

Action: Two members will share their comments with Academic Counselor Nishanian and VPDGE Kello via email. Academic Counselor Nishanian and VPDGE Kello will review members' comments and modify the draft accordingly. Further discussion will take place at a future GC meeting.

VI. Consultation on Fellowship Review Process (2:00-2:15)—*Eric Cannon, Graduate Division*

Due to the GC meeting schedule this Spring, the Recruitment Fellowship review will be conducted by email. Eric Cannon will provide the overview of the review process and answer questions from GC members.

Financial Services Director Cannon shared the expectations on the recruitment fellowships with GC members. Nominations are submitted through the graduate groups and are randomly assigned to faculty. Every nomination is reviewed by three faculty members and the scores are averaged. Based on the average score, a ranking is determined. This year's results will be reviewed via email. The subcommittee is scheduled to meet with Financial Services Director Cannon on February 22, 2022 to discuss any concerns or questions.

VII. Graduate Division Updates (2:15-2:30) —*Interim VPDGE Chris Kello*

A. Admissions

Applications have decreased by 10% this year compared to last year. VPDGE Kello reported that there is a significant increase in the number of graduates over the past several terms compared to the years prior to COVID.

B. Mentor training

VPDGE Kello reported that there is a limited number of seats available for the training workshops. Beginning next year, facilitators will be trained to run these workshops on campus. VPDGE Kello hopes that this training can be offered twice a year for those who cannot attend the first session. Chair Hestir advocated for the prioritization of post docs and early-career faculty.

C. Funding model for all campus fellowships

This item was tabled for the February 28 GC meeting.

VIII. Consultation with LASC Chair DePrano on UC Merced Library Staffing (2:30-2:40)

A. UC Merced Library Staffing memo

LASC Chair DePrano joined the meeting to provide an overview on her memo re: UC Merced Library Staffing. LASC Chair DePrano transmitted a memo to Divisional Council alerting the level of staffing at the Library. The Library is currently closed on Saturdays as a result of under-staffing. LASC Chair DePrano shared a PowerPoint with GC members, available in our shared box folder here, addressing the ongoing issue of UC Merced Library's chronic understaffing. The Library has been, and is currently, inadequately funded. There has been no status change, and no new staffing has been awarded to the Library. LASC Chair DePrano shared an organizational chart that shows the vacant positions. Chair Hestir asked if there was any status change since this memo was circulated, and LASC Chair DePrano confirmed that there were no changes.

IX. Consultation with VCSA Nies (2:40-2:50)

VCSA Nies discussed the resources that Student Affairs provides for graduate students. Chair Hestir had asked VCSA Nies to provide an update on specific topics such as housing, transportation and parking, and graduate student mental health services. VCSA Nies shared the Success Anywhere webpage that was created as a one-stop page for resources. These resources include financial security, food security, housing security, mental wellness, and transportation security.

A. Housing

VCSA Nies shared that housing security has been challenging this year. Several spaces that are usually used for housing are now being used as quarantine and isolation spaces. There is funding available called “housing assistance money” to help cover rent payments. A proposal has been submitted through the Office of the President (UCOP) to set aside funding to build low-income affordable housing units on college campuses. This proposal aims to help build graduate student housing at UC Merced.

B. Transportation and parking

VCSA Nies is working closely with Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS) to ensure that there are bus routes that support UC Merced students. Due to the increasing cost of gas prices, Student Affairs has purchased gas gift cards for students who struggle to commute to campus.

C. Graduate student mental health services – particularly given the national mental health crisis in graduate student mental health and exacerbations from COVID-19

VCSA Nies reported that over 20% of appointments at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are graduate students, who only make up 8% of UC Merced’s student population. This shows that the Counseling center is frequently being used by graduate students. VCSA Nies emphasized the importance of mental wellness, and that the solution should not be focused on hiring more psychologists, but rather on how to create a mentally healthy campus environment and community. Student Affairs has contracted with a national organization called the Jed Foundation, which conducts mental health related strategic planning for campuses. Group therapy sessions are currently being offered for graduate students on Tuesday afternoons at 3’oclock.

X. Executive Session: Chemistry and Biochemistry P&Ps (2:50-3:00)

GC entered EXECUTIVE SESSION at 2:50PM. Att. by Chair Hestir.