[Admissions and Financial Aid Committee](#) (AFAC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 19, 2023
10:30am – 12:00pm

Documents available in [box](#)
[AFAC Duties](#)

I.   **Introductions – Name, Affiliation and Pronouns – All - 10:30am – 10:35am**

Chair Eaton welcomed new and returning members, guests, and consultants. Members, guests, and consultants introduced themselves.

II.   **Chair's Report – Chair Eaton – 10:35am – 10:45am**
A.   August 31 Area C Work Group Meeting

Chair Eaton reported that there has been contention on the Statewide Board of Admissions regarding the Area C math requirement and the changes to UC Policy to allow Data Science courses to indirectly substitute for Algebra 2 courses as a UC admissions requirement.

Algebra 2 has shown to be a major obstacle for many students in achieving UC eligibility; however, the allowance of the Data Science courses as an indirect alternative was creating a path for students to enter UC but to not be successful at UC.

A systemwide working group has been established to study the issue. Chair Eaton would like to invite UC Merced Computer Science & Engineering faculty to represent UC Merced on the matter, as several of the faculty have contacted him regarding the removal of the Data Science option.

B.   September 7 Divisional Council Meeting

Discussions were held regarding financial management concerns, which will be discussed at the September 29 Shared Governance Retreat. The faculty survey results revealed that many faculty across campus feel they are not supported by the Provost and that the Chancellor is not collaborative. Chair Eaton invited members to share any concerns with him that they would like reported at the retreat.

C.   July 5 Student Academic Activity Tracking Work Group Meeting with Chief Information Officer (CIO) Nick Dugan, Office of Information Technology (OIT) Director Avi Badwal, Financial Aid Director Ron Radney, and Financial Aid Deputy Director Heather Nardello.

Chair Eaton reported that CatCourses can be revised to automate the tracking of students' academic activity in a way that both reduces faculty workload and ensures students are not incurring unwarranted debt. One way this can be done is by entering non-zero grades (even poor grades) into CatCourses for assignments that are submitted offline (i.e. participation).

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Director Radney noted that a quote from a vendor has been received and that it would take approximately six weeks to develop, test, and deploy this mechanism in CatCourses. A member noted the importance of communicating with faculty any changes that are implemented.

D. AY 22-23 Annual Report

Chair Eaton summarized the work that AFAC conducted last academic year:

Ethnic Studies Requirement – Chair Eaton expressed his appreciation for the committee's work on the Ethnic Studies requirement. Approval is still required at BOARS, Academic Council, and the Regents, which will hopefully take place this year.

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) - 11,000 UC employees enrolled as part of the campaign that UC Merced helped design and lead across the UC system. A policy change was implemented to extend the deadline by which employees must provide employment verification.

Institutional debt – Approximately $1 million in debt that was incurred during the pandemic was forgiven at UC Merced. The Chancellor approved a two-year extension to the pause on the use of for-profit debt collectors.

Majors/Minors – AFAC reviewed seven majors and minors, along with several other campus and systemwide review items.

III. **Consent Calendar – Chair Eaton – 10:45am – 10:50am**
A. The Agenda

Action:
  ➢ The agenda was approved as presented.

IV. **Discussion of AFAC Priorities – Chair Eaton – 10:50am – 11:05am**
Chair Eaton asks committee members the following questions:
A. Would committee members like to continue prioritizing any of our goals from last year?
B. Should we add any new goals?
C. How should the committee work on UCM management's desire to increase enrollment and the new major proposal hunger games?
D. Would anyone like to serve as a point person for these goals?

AY 22-23 priorities:
1. Cancel institutional student debts owed to UCM by students and not covered by Biden executive action.
2. Help UCM employees and students use expanded public service loan forgiveness and executive action.
3. Secure ongoing funds from UC system and the state to continue debt-free enrollment growth.
4. 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.

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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.

Requested Action: Members discuss and determine which priorities to prioritize and recommend additional priorities.

Chair Eaton summarized the goals and priorities from AY 22-23, all of which are ongoing and members agreed to continue addressing.

A member recommended including the following items on this year's list of AFAC goals and priorities:
1. Enrollment growth and enrollment management - acquire data on how new majors are impacting resources and enrollment numbers. Also, obtain guiding principles for creating new majors that will increase enrollment.

2. Medical Education will have a huge impact on the success of UC Merced. AFAC should continue to receive updates on the progress.

3. Graduate student challenges following the strike, as well as faculty/student relations.

Chair Eaton would also like to add to the list workload management. It is important to manage members' time effectively in regard to review items. Chair Eaton asked members to share whether they agree that one memo a semester is feasible.

Action:
➢ Members agreed to continue addressing the five priorities from last year for AY 23-24 and include the additional four aforementioned items (enrollment management, medical education updates, involvement in contract negotiations and the processes for recruiting graduate students, and committee workload management).
➢ AFAC Analyst will email members to inquire about whether one memo a semester is feasible.

V. **Proposed Amendment to AFAC Bylaws – Chair Eaton – 11:05am – 11:15am**
Given that AFAC has been asked to review master's degree proposals and undergraduate/graduate hybrid degree programs from a financial aid perspective, Chair Eaton would like to propose an amendment to AFAC's Bylaws to include in the committee's membership a student representative appointed by the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

The proposed amendment is shown in tracked changes, here.
A clean version of the proposed amendment is available here.

Requested Action: Voting members vote to endorse the proposed amendment to the AFAC Bylaws to include in its membership a student member appointed by GSA.

This item was tabled to the October 19, 2023 AFAC meeting.

VI. Institutional Student Debts – Chair Eaton and Guests Interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Schnier, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (VCSA) Nies, and Registrar Webb – 11:15am – 11:45am

On January 24, 2023, AFAC transmitted a memo to the Senate Chair with a request that Divisional Council endorse recommendations to UC Merced leadership for reducing adverse student impacts and administrative burdens associated with the new Academic Activity Policy.

On September 6, 2023, Chair Eaton received an enrollment update and consulted with Registrar Webb regarding the drop in Dropped for Non-payment (DFNP) from the estimated 170 to 102 students. Registrar Webb confirmed that a policy change was made to lock student registration on day 2 of instruction instead of dropping the student. Page 6 of the memo linked above includes AFAC's concerns regarding DNFP prior to the policy change.

Today, Chair Eaton, along with CFO Schnier, VCSA Nies, and Registrar Webb will further discuss the policy and institutional student debts.

No Requested Action.

CFO Schnier was unable to attend the meeting due to other conflicting business.

Chair Eaton reported on an email correspondence between him and Registrar Webb regarding a policy change for Dropped for Non-Payment (DFNP), and Chair Eaton had concerns about how this affected students' institutional debt.

VCSA Nies reported that the process for DFNP was pivoted over the summer. Historically, students were given a warning of a balance due on their accounts and dropped before the start of instruction if their balance was over $2,000. On August 17, 2023, over 1,400 students had a balance of over $2,000, which is more than double than AY 22-23. In the past, an automated waitlist feature was enacted, and the moment a student was dropped for non-payment, the seat was automatically filled through the automatic waitlist process. Having 1,400 students in this situation was overwhelming, so this year, the Registrar waited until the waitlist activity period ended and students had to present a request form to faculty to add/drop courses. In waiting until this point to drop students from courses who had an outstanding balance of $2,000 or more (rather than automatically dropping them), the original 1,400 students decreased to 102 students. Of the 102 students, 38 were able to work with the Registrar to reenroll in their courses.

Chair Eaton wondered why the number of students was so much higher this year compared to last year. VCSA Nies believes it to be that students were given a lot more grace during the pandemic. Registrar Webb noted that it may be because students paid more attention to their email during the pandemic when classes were remote.

Chair Eaton also wondered how the new change to the DFNP policy this year is different from DFNP policy changes made during the pandemic. Registrar Webb noted that during the pandemic, she was observing student engagement more heavily before the DFNP took place, and this year, student engagement is not evaluated at all. The DFNP change this year was different, as it gave students, staff, and advisors more time to resolve outstanding balances before the students were dropped from their courses.

VCSA Nies also reported that Assembly Bill 540 was passed. Undocumented students apply

for California student aid through the California Dream Act application; however, when they arrive to their campus, they must submit documentation to verify that they would meet Assembly Bill 540 criteria, which allows the student to pay California-based tuition and not out-of-state tuition. The two separate processes would cause delays for some students. Assembly Bill 540 combines both processes into one helping to streamline how UC Merced's undocumented scholars receive access to financial aid.

Chair Eaton inquired about new patterns or tools to help the large number of students who were flagged for DFNP. Registrar Webb noted that those who were flagged with a balance above $2,000 were required to sign up for Deferred Payment Plan (DPP) or to complete all their financial aid requirements and a Master Promissory Note, etc. in order to not get dropped. She noted that it would be interesting to see if the number of students who signed up for DPP has increased since last year, and she can acquire this information from Student Business Services.

VCSA Nies concluded his report by noting that a new FASFA will be used next year, and students' financial profiles will need to be reviewed to identify any shifts in their financial needs.

VII. **Transfer Requirements for the Data Science Majors – Chair Eaton – 11:45am – 11:55am**
In AY 22-23, Management of Complex Systems Professor Alexander Petersen proposed a new B.A. in Data Science and Analytics, and Applied Mathematics Professor Suzanne Sindi proposed a new B.S. and Minor in Data Science and Computing.

Professor Petersen's memo regarding transfer requirements for the B.A. in Data Science and Analytics is available here. DivCo's May 19, 2023 comments on the proposed major are available here (AFAC's comments are available on page 7).

Professor Sindi's memo regarding   transfer requirements for the B.S. and Minor in Data Science and Computing is available here. DivCo's May 19, 2023 comments on the proposed major and minor are available here (AFAC's comments are available on page 8).

Requested Action: Members review the transfer requirements for the B.A. in Data Science and Analytics and the B.S. and Minor in Data Science and Computing. If there are no comments, voting members vote to approve the transfer requirements for both proposed majors.

Chair Eaton summarized the two memos linked above. He asked Director of Admissions Noji if he had any feedback or if the requests were missing anything important in terms of transfer admissions. Director Noji recommended asking for the inclusion of Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) criteria.

Action:
➤ Members voted and approved the transfer requirements for the B.A. in Data Science and Analytics with the addition of Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) criteria.
➤ Members voted and approved the transfer requirements for the B.S. and Minor in Data Science and Computing with the addition of Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) criteria.

> ➤ AFAC Analyst will work with Director of Admissions Noji and Chair Eaton on the language to include in the memo to Professors Petersen and Sindi.

VIII. **Any Other Business – 11:55am – 12:00pm**

No other business was discussed.

IX. **Informational Items** will be regularly uploaded on the "Informational Items" AFAC Box Folder here.