

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**Meeting Minutes****Wednesday, September 20, 2023****1:15pm – 2:30pm****ADMIN 345**

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

I. Chair's Report – Michael Scheibner – 1:15pm – 1:25pm**A. September 7 and 14 DivCo Meetings**

Chair Scheibner provided the following updates from the September 7 DivCo meeting:

- Discussions were held regarding the systemwide Academic Council subcommittees for the Future of Graduate Education.
- Several faculty members and students did not receive their pay over the summer due to UC Path and APO backlog issues. VPAP Hansford is working to put processes in place in APO to ensure this problem does not occur again.
- Members discussed enrollment numbers noting the importance of creating new undergraduate programs on campus. Unfortunately, UC Merced did not meet undergraduate enrollment targets this year. Because of this, Interim EVC/Provost Zatz has had to be conservative with new faculty hires.
- Personnel costs have increased due to higher pay for graduate students and postdocs. The graduate budget is low, and additional staff are being hired to assist faculty with purchasing and grant management.
- Discussions were held regarding faculty and instructor losses, including the lines lost to administrative appointments.

Chair Scheibner provided the following updates from the September 14 DivCo meeting:

- Members discussed grading of research units following the strike. Several students were graded unsatisfactorily. VPDGE Hratchian will provide additional details in the executive session.
- Two candidates have been interviewed for the VC/CFO position. Another interview is scheduled to take place on Friday, September 22, 2023.
- DivCo Members reviewed the Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Program Proposal. The proposal will be shared with other Senate Committees, Interim EVC/Provost Zatz, and the School Executive Committees for review.

B. September 13 meeting with Dean of Extension Annette Roberts Webb, Director of Extension and Degree Completion, and VPDGE Hratchian

Chair Scheibner and VPDGE Hratchian discussed ideas for the Extension Program with the Director and new Dean of Extension, as well as what policies are needed. Dean of Extension Roberts Webb will provide GC with a draft policy regarding an expedited timeline for GC's approval of Extension courses, which the GC Policy Subcommittee will be tasked with reviewing.

II. Consent Calendar – Chair Scheibner – 1:25pm – 1:30pm

- A. Agenda
- B. [September 6 meeting minutes](#)

Action:

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. Systemwide Review Items – All – 1:30pm – 1:40pm

- A. [Amendments to Senate Bylaw 55-Departmental Voting Rights](#)

The proposed amendments to Senate Bylaw 55 seek to address the variability in Lectures with Security of Employment (LSOE) voting privileges by granting all LSOEs full departmental voting rights.

Chair Scheibner poses the following questions:

1. Do Teaching Professors generally teach at the graduate level and contribute to graduate research training?
2. How would it impact graduate education and graduate research training, especially if they do not cater to the graduate education and graduate research training? It seems there is a bit of an imbalance because there is not a research professor series that is equivalent to the teaching professor series, and that would represent primarily the research and graduate research training side of the UC mission.
3. Should those in the teaching professor series have the responsibility to engage in graduate training and research (e.g., discipline specific education research)?

Requested Action: Members review the proposed amendment to Bylaw 55 and determine which comments to submit to the Senate Chair.

Chair Scheibner summarized the proposed amendments to Senate Bylaw 55. VPDGE Hratchian pointed out that Teaching Professors are allowed to serve as members of graduate groups and that many are great mentors to graduate students. Currently, all regular rank faculty are responsible for making decisions for the teaching faculty, including their promotion and tenure. Teaching Professors do not have the right to vote on promotions and tenure cases for regular rank faculty by default, and the proposed amendment would provide teaching faculty with this voting right by default. A member wondered whether Unit 18 lecturers who have been employed for a certain number of years would also be given voting rights if this amendment passes. After 6 years, Unit 18 lectures undergo a review process for consideration of continued employment; however, they would not be included in those who would receive voting rights; only Teaching Professors.

Action:

- Members are to send Chair Scheibner and GC Analyst Snyder any comments on the proposed amendments to Senate Bylaw 55 via email **by Friday, October 13, 2023.**

IV. Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholar Survey Results – Rebeca Arevalo and Min Hwan Lee – 1:40pm – 1:55pm

In Spring 2023, a systemwide survey was distributed to all 10 campuses. Several of the questions were

tailored to UC Merced’s situation to ask UC Merced students to identify the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic, BSP building shutdown, the Oracle Ordering System, and/or other situations have had on their research and progress to degree. GC also distributed a survey to all postdoctoral scholars to identify similar impacts.

Graduate student survey questions and results are available [here](#).

Postdoctoral scholar survey questions and results are available [here](#).

Requested Action: Members Arevalo and Lee will provide the committee with an overview of the results. Members discuss results and determine what findings to elevate to DivCo’s attention and what suggestions (if any) to transmit along with these findings.

Member Lee shared his PowerPoint slides, available [here](#), summarizing the results of both surveys. Several impacts that students and postdocs identified include issues with the Oracle Financial System, transportation, advisor/student relations, the Covid-19 pandemic, and many more.

VPDGE Hrachian suggested that members Lee and Arevalo consult with Associate Dean of Graduate Education Sayantani Ghosh for additional data and determine 3-4 areas that impacted the students and postdocs the most that GC should seek to be addressed first.

Action:

- Members Lee and Arevalo will connect with Associate Dean of Graduate Education Sayantani Ghosh to identify 3-4 areas of impact that are most important to address and draft a memo with recommendations to DivCo.
- Further discussion will take place at the October 2 GC meeting.

V. Future of Graduate Education – Chair Scheibner – 1:55pm – 2:10pm

In AY 22-23, The Future of Graduate Education Work Groups were established to discuss the challenges and opportunities that higher education will be working through with respect to graduate education in the months and years ahead. The systemwide committee is comprised of seven administrators and seven Senate members, with one administrative co-chair and one Senate co-chair, totaling 14 members.

There are plans for the establishment of a local UC Merced subgroup, comprised of GC, CoR, CAPRA, and UGC members to collaborate and develop models for UC Merced’s plan of action during future strikes and to evaluate strategies that will support the university mission while remaining fiscally sustainable.

Today, GC will continue to discuss and identify particular situations, needs, and opportunities at UC Merced that pertain to the impacts from the new contracts.

Requested Action: Members engage in discussion and determine next steps.

Chair Scheibner posed the following questions to GC members:

1. What influences faculty’s ability to run and deliver graduate research training?
2. Does the current model allow for an economy of scale?
 - a. How can faculty currently grow/scale up their research groups?
 - b. What enables it or what are barriers?
3. Where is there more need for flexibility?

4. Where is the need for more guidance or standardized processes? (e.g., vacation policies, on-/off boarding, etc.)
5. Do we tailor to just academia or are we providing training that prepares them for any career?

A member pointed out that many non-academia jobs in today's market do not require a PhD; however, acquiring such a degree should not be viewed as a waste of time. VPDGE Hratchian reported that 20% of all PhDs in the United States derive from the California universities.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that three of the Future of Graduate Education Working Group meeting agendas did not include UC Merced and UC San Francisco. Additionally, many of the other UC campuses have many students that major in humanities and their students are having difficulties finding employment outside of academia. VPDGE Hratchian reported that UC Merced graduates have not reported difficulties in finding employment outside of academia, and in fact, find jobs relatively quickly upon graduation.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that UC Merced should notice an increase in GSR capacity in Engineering and Natural Science in the coming years, and he is determining how to allocate the increased return to aid monies. Lastly, VPDGE Hratchian reported that even with the contract increases, UC Merced will not fall deficit with GSRs; however, he is concerned about the TA budget.

Action:

- Members are to provide their ideas, if any, to Chair Scheibner **by Friday, September 29, 2023** regarding how to shape UC Merced's graduate education and research, and be prepared for further discussion at the October 2, 2023 GC meeting.

VI. Consultation with VPDGE Hratchian – 2:10pm – 2:25pm

A. Start of admissions cycle

The admissions cycle for AY 24-25 has begun. VPDGE Hratchian has begun working with the School Deans for estimates on their TA budgets for Fall 2024. In terms of timeline, the administration and graduate group chairs should review their budgets in September/October, administrative processing should be conducted by mid-November, and Graduate Division can begin the admittance process in early December. This year, VPDGE Hratchian received 1,100 applications and hopes to receive all estimated budgets by Thanksgiving, so that the admissions process can begin the first week of December.

B. Continuing fellowship application and review schedule planning

VPDGE Hratchian proposed shifting the submission deadline for continuing fellowship applications to the first or second week of November, so that GC can conduct their reviews before the end of the semester. At the start of the Spring semester, Graduate Division can then notify the students who will receive fellowships for next year. This would also provide department chairs sufficient time when deciding on TA appointments for the Fall term. First-year students would be at a disadvantage with this timeline; however, they are generally at a disadvantage regardless because they do not have many accomplishments to show on their application.

VPDGE Hratchian also reported on a new event. Regrow is scheduled for Saturday, November, 4, 2023. It is a mandatory event for all 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students to meet with the Graduate Dean and Associate Graduate Dean. If some are unable to attend due to childcare obligations or other conflicts,

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there will be a make-up session. The goal is to discuss with students the milestones they should be considering and hopefully they report this information back to their graduate group chairs.

VII. Any Other Business – 2:25pm – 2:30pm

No other business was discussed.

VIII. Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 2:30pm – 2:45pm

No meeting minutes were recorded during the executive session. The action items were shared with GC voting members.