

Undergraduate Council (UGC)**Meeting Minutes****Thursday, October 26, 2023****1:00pm – 2:30pm****I. Chair's Report – Heather Bortfeld – 1:00pm – 1:10pm****A. October 16 UCEP Meeting**

Members continued to discuss UC Online, particularly revisions to Senate Bylaw 170 regarding the review and approval of systemwide “courses” and “programs”, as well as the interchangeability and use of the two terms. Members also reviewed the 2011 report on UC educational quality and how to adapt to online/hybrid/hyflex modalities.

B. October 19 UCOPE Meeting

Members discussed the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) and the use of several different terms including “remedial”, “incoming classes”, “qualifying classes”, etc. Discussions were held regarding English placement. UC San Diego Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project (MDTP) Director Kimberly Samaniego reported on the Math placement exam, which will continue to be discussed at future UCOPE meetings.

C. October 26 DivCo Meeting

- Members discussed the proposed amendments to Senate Bylaw 55 - Departmental Voting Rights and the Presidential Policy on Vaccination Programs.
- Members discussed a memo from SSHA Department Chairs re: Faculty and Instructors Losses. The memo includes a request for information from the administration on Senate faculty FTEs (across the three schools), Senate faculty who are teaching, Senate faculty with administrative teaching relief, Senate faculty with Senate teaching relief, Senate faculty departures and new hires, and Unit-18 lecturers who are teaching.
- Members discussed DivCo's COI policy to include a process for addressing DivCo COI. This process was proposed by CRE and approved by DivCo.

II. Consent Calendar – 1:10pm – 1:15pm**A. The Agenda****B. [October 12 Meeting Minutes](#)****Action:**

- The agenda and October 12 meeting minutes were approved as presented.
- UGC Analyst will update the Senate Website accordingly.

III. October 20 UCIE Meeting Update – Greg Wright – 1:15pm – 1:20pm

Member Wright reported on the following three main points from the October 20 UCIE meeting:

1. Study abroad programs continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Many students studied abroad in Israel and have all returned home safely.
3. UCIE is responsible for reviewing programs at regular intervals, as well as reviewing new programs. The committee is currently reviewing

IV. Catalog Review Subcommittee – All - 1:20pm – 1:25pm

Substantive revisions are available at the links below. Catalog updates are effective Fall 2024.

SNS: <https://ucmerced.box.com/s/mccy62b51aalqblktmrdmtl158ipyc>

SSHA: <https://ucmerced.box.com/s/sguvcu1tvjp3bx2lmwghxo1mnq1b05ew>

SOE: forthcoming.

HONORS: forthcoming.

GE: No substantial revisions.

Requested Action: Establish a UGC Catalog Review Committee (representation from each school). Once all Catalog sections are received, the Catalog Subcommittee will provide its recommendations on the AY 24-25 Catalog Updates. UGC will review and approve the Catalog Updates at the November 9 UGC meeting.

Action:

- Members Bin Liu (SNS), Alejandro Gutierrez (SoE), and Elaine Denny (SSHA) volunteered to review the AY 24-25 Catalog revisions.
- Chair Bortfeld and member Eileen Camfield will discuss the potential perceived COI with the review of the Honors Catalog.
- The Catalog revisions will be approved at the November 9 UGC meeting.

V. First-year Flex Proposal – All - 1:25pm – 1:35pm

On January 10, 2022, VPDUE Frey proposed to UGC several academic policy modifications to allow for first-year student exploration and academic recovery. The proposal is available [here](#).

On April 22, 2022, UGC approved three options to implement, available [here](#). To address these options, UGC recommended revisions to the Catalog and Senate Regulations PI.S2.B (Dropping a Course) and PI.S1.E (Passed/Not Passed), shown in tracked changes [here](#).

On November 9, 2022, the School Executive Committees were invited to review the proposal and UGC's recommendations. Their comments are available [here](#).

On March 15, 2023, former EVC/Provost Camfield transmitted a memo to Registrar Webb

conveying his authorization of a modification to the University of California, Merced *Change of Major policy*, which addresses number 4 in UGC's options to implement. His memo is available [here](#).

On April 24, 2023, Chair Bortfeld met with VPDUE Frey, Registrar Web, School Curriculum Managers, and School Advising Directors. Minor revisions were made to the Regulations, available in tracked changes at the links below.

[Senate Regulation: Part I, Section 2, B. – Dropping a Course](#)

[Senate Regulation: Part I, Section 1, E - Passed/Not Passed \(P/NP\)](#)

Requested Action: Voting members vote in executive session to approve the proposed revisions to Senate Regulations P.I.S.2.B (Dropping a Course) and P.I.S.1.E (Passed/Not Passed). CRE, DivCo and other Senate committees will be invited to review and approve the revisions to the Senate Regulations prior to implementation.

VPDUE Frey summarized her proposal for several policy modifications to offer opportunities to students who may be struggling in their first semester at UC Merced as they adapt to college life.

The first policy modification option for UGC to consider would allow first-year students to drop a course without penalty and enroll in a second part-of-term class, also called a parachute course. VPDUE Frey clarified that parachute courses currently exist on campus where a class runs for the second half of the semester. This policy revision would simply allow students to register for such a class later in the semester, and drop a class, without penalty.

The second policy modification option is to allow first-year students to switch from a letter grade to Pass/Not Passed up until the last day of instruction. This practice was adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and worked well. Many faculty had feared that students would abuse the option and not take their classes seriously; however, VPDUE Frey clarified that students would not be able to use this option for courses that are required for their major. Many first-year students discover that the major they began pursuing when they first arrived at UC Merced is not the correct fit for them, so they switch majors and do not need certain classes after all. Instead of continuously failing and having to repeat a class that does not count toward their new major, this amendment would allow them to switch to Pass/Not Passed without negatively impacting their GPA.

A member inquired about the number of Pass/Not Passed courses a student is limited to throughout their entire time to degree. Registrar Webb responded that it is limited to one-third of all their classes, but students do not come close to reaching this threshold. The relevant policy is available here:

<https://catalog.ucmerced.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=2100#GradeOptions>

VCSA Nies noted that he is in full support of these policy changes because he has seen students lose hope when their GPA begins to decline in their first year. Providing them with

alternative ways to enter their second year without feeling burdened with a low GPA would provide a better pathway for success.

Action:

- Voting members voted in executive session to approve the proposed revisions to the Senate Regulations PI.S.2.B (Dropping a Course) and PI.S1.E (Passed/Not Passed).
- UGC Analyst will draft a memo to CRE Chair Viney.

VI. Summer Remote Instruction Policy – All – 1:35pm – 1:55pm

On April 17, 2023, UGC approved an interim Summer Remote Instruction Policy, available [here](#). Schools were notified on May 1, 2023 and provided an extended deadline to October 31, 2023 to request Summer 2024 remote instruction.

Today, members will discuss whether to extend the interim policy (and the October 31, 2023 deadline for faculty to request Summer 2024 remote instruction) or develop a permanent policy.

Requested Action: Members determine whether to extend the interim policy or develop a permanent policy.

Chair Bortfeld explained that remote instruction is becoming more popular across campuses, so it is important for UGC to develop a policy. VPDUE Frey recommended that UGC view Summer remote instruction the same as regular academics with the same rigor and expectations. She agrees that more classes should be offered online in the summer; however, she notes the importance of ensuring those courses are taught in a pedagogically effective manner.

A member strongly recommended not extending the current interim policy to Summer 2025 and beyond. Members agreed to extend the current October 31, 2023 deadline for faculty to request Summer 2024 remote instruction; however, it is important for the policy subcommittee to begin developing a permanent policy for future Summer remote instruction. VPDUE Frey also noted the importance of faculty not changing the modality of their courses after the schedule has gone live because it presents issues for students who have already committed to certain living arrangements.

VPDUE Frey noted that a default policy currently exists that would apply if UGC decides not to extend the current interim policy or develop their own permanent policy. The rationale for having a separate policy for Summer remote instruction was to make it less onerous on the faculty to request online modality and to have a mechanism for approving courses to be taught online only in the summer and not during the academic year. The concern for having courses taught both during the summer and academic year is having them taught too much in an online modality. Members agreed that allowing courses to be taught online during the summer helps students who have moved back home and cannot attend classes in person.

Action:

- Members agreed to develop a permanent policy for Summer remote instruction for Summer 2025 and beyond rather than extending the current interim policy.

- The Policy Subcommittee will draft a permanent policy, which UGC will be invited to review at a future meeting.
- Members agreed to extend the current deadline to November 30, 2023 for faculty to request Summer 2024 remote instruction.
- UGC Analyst will draft a memo to Department Chairs, which voting members will be invited to review prior to transmittal.

VII. Campus Review Item – All – 1:55pm - 2:00pm

A. [SNS Proposal for Biology B.A. Degree Program](#)

The proposal was distributed to the Chairs of Senate Committees, the SSHA Executive Committee, and the SoE Executive Committee. The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#).

AFAC, CAPRA, UGC, and SSHA and SoE Executive Committees are lead reviewers.

Requested Action: Identify one or two lead reviewers. All Senate and School Executive Committee comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, November 17, 2023, and will be shared with the lead reviewer(s). Lead reviewer(s) will review all associated comments and send their assessment to UGC Analyst **by Thursday, November 30, 2023**. All comments and lead reviewer’s assessment will be discussed at the December 7, 2023 UGC meeting.

Action:

- Members Alexander Petersen and Francois Blanchette volunteered to serve as lead reviewers.
- All Senate and School Executive Committee comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, November 17, 2023, and will be shared with the lead reviewers.
- Lead reviewers will review all associated comments and send their assessment to UGC Analyst by Thursday, November 30, 2023.
- All comments and lead reviewer’s assessment will be discussed at the December 7, 2023 UGC meeting.

VIII. Approval of Courses¹ – CRF Subcommittee Members Francois Blanchette, Felicia Lopez, and Alexander Petersen – 2:00pm – 2:10pm

Courses are available at the links below. The CRF Subcommittee’s recommendations are available [here](#).

Action:

¹ Recusals:

CHE 195 – Valerie Leppert

MATH 005A – Francois Blanchette

POLI 156, 157, 174 – Elaine Denny

- The following courses were approved, and Curriculog will be updated accordingly (completed 10/27):
 1. [ENVE - 010 - Environment in Crisis](#)
 2. [CHE - 195 - Chemical Engineering Undergraduate Research](#)
 3. [MATH - 005A - Preparatory Calculus Workshop](#)
 4. [POLI - 156 - International Security](#)
 5. [POLI - 157 - Civil War, Insurgency, and Other Forms of Sub-State Conflict and Social Unrest](#)
 6. [POLI - 174 - Data Science and Government Affairs](#)

- The following courses were approved contingent upon minor revisions, and Curriculog will be updated accordingly (completed 10/27):
 1. [CSE - 130 - Introduction to Cryptography](#) – Recommend considering dropping the upper-level restrictions or adding some pre-requisites to imply upper-level.
 2. [CRES - 142 - Black Feminist Theories](#) - Recommend considering dropping the upper-level restrictions or adding some pre-requisites to imply upper-level.

IX. Any Other Business – 2:10pm – 2:15pm

No other business was discussed.

X. Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 2:15pm – 2:30pm

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