GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 30, 2023
1:15pm – 2:25pm
ZOOM ONLY

Documents available in box
Graduate Council Duties

I.   **Consent Calendar – Vice Chair Abatzoglou – 1:15pm – 1:20pm**
   A. Agenda
   B. October 18 Meeting Minutes

   Action:
   ➢ The agenda and October 18 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

   C. Request from SSHA for a one-time modality exception to offer ECON 201B online in Spring 2024

   Action:
   ➢ SSHA's request was approved, and GC Analyst will notify the SSHA Curriculum Manager.

II.   **Vice Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou – 1:20pm – 1:25pm**
   A. October 26 DivCo Meeting

   • Discussions were held at the Academic Council regarding online degrees. The systemwide Senate previously created a residency requirement policy for students, and there are discussions about where the authority lies for developing and delivering degree programs.
   • Discussions were held at Academic Council about a plan to add 33,000 students by 2030 across the broader UC system. UC Merced should focus on bringing many of those potential students to our campus; however, there is a perception that UC Merced is not a desirable choice for many prospective students. A DivCo member shared their concerns that UCM enrollment will decline if online degrees and satellite campuses evolve.
   • Discussions were held regarding the administration wanting to increase the size of writing classes from 20 students to 22. The general issue revolves around whether the faculty or the administration has the authority to determine class size. It was noted that faculty design pedagogies based on class size.

III. **Systemwide Review Items – All – 1:25pm – 1:40pm**
   A. Proposed New APM 672-Negotiated Salary Program
      At the October 18, 2023 GC meeting, members discussed the new Negotiated Salary Program and Chair Scheibner offered comments, available in GC's draft memo, here. Members were invited to review the proposal via email, and no additional comments were received.

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Requested Action: Members review and approve the draft memo linked above. GC Analyst will transmit the final memo to the Senate Chair. Comments are due to the Senate Chair by November 3, 2023.

Members had no additional comments. Vice Chair Abatzoglou recommended providing members with another day to provide any comments, otherwise the draft memo linked above will be considered approved and transmitted to the Senate Chair.

Action:
➢ Members can send GC Analyst any comments they have **by 5:00pm, Tuesday, October 31, 2023.** Otherwise, the memo will be considered approved and transmitted to the Senate Chair.
➢ Comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, November 3, 2023.

IV.   **Catalog Review Subcommittee – All – 1:40pm – 1:45pm**
Substantive revisions are available at the links below. Catalog updates are effective Fall 2024.

SNS: https://ucmerced.box.com/s/f3gcm1b3cakdybnhptqmsvfdnopmvoa3
SOE: https://ucmerced.box.com/s/hlyisytru0zmbx3eovzsx70ejusp8nqd
SSHA: https://ucmerced.box.com/s/nz61cgola9lg6tp4bp9zvppzbzhyci34

Requested Action: Establish a GC Catalog Review Committee (One member from each School). The Catalog Subcommittee will review and provide its recommendations on the AY 24-25 Catalog Updates. GC will review and approve the Catalog Updates at the November 15 GC meeting.

Registrar Webb clarified that a GC review committee is not required. The revisions linked above are editorial, not substantive. In 2016, GC decided to only review substantial revisions (PLOs) through Policy and Procedure updates. Therefore, GC's full review is not required. Each year, the revisions are typically linked to the consent calendar. GC members did not have any objections, so GC Analyst will forward the revised AY 24-25 Catalog updates to Registrar Webb.

Action:
➢ GC approved the AY 24-25 Catalog revisions.
➢ GC Analyst will notify the Registrar.

V.   **Graduate Group Funding Model – VPDGE Hratchian – 1:45pm – 2:20pm**

VPDGE Hratchian seeks consultation with Graduate Council regarding graduate group funding. This includes alterations to the University Student Aid Program (USAP) model used in previous years and the development of new funding strategies for incentivizing student success.

No Requested Action.

VPDGE Hratchian's PowerPoint presentation is available here, and his Block Grant memo is available here.

VPDGE Hratchian summarized how the Graduate Division currently utilizes funding and shared his ideas

for a new funding model. The Graduate Division allocates funds to graduate groups every year for operations support, including student success programs and seminars. The funding should reward positive outcomes and incentivize best practices. He also discussed the funds that carry forward. Operations funds for student success programs and seminars currently do not carry forward.

The new plan is to transfer to a more solid and sustainable funding model. The Block Grant is based on the number of students in a graduate group. Because of this, the Graduate Division must wait until the census date to allocate the funds.

Around May of every year, graduate group chairs will receive a notification to utilize their remaining funds, otherwise the monies will be lost at the end of the fiscal year. Last year, $220k was lost. Of the funds that were not lost, VPDGE Hratchian determined $200k - $300k in ineffective expenditures; graduate groups aimed to spend their remaining funds as quickly as possible before it was lost. VPDGE Hratchian would like graduate groups to think about how to better allocate the remaining funds at the end of each fiscal year (i.e., additional fellowships).

The Graduate Division is proposing four primary sources of funding to begin FY 2025:
1. Operations allocation (continuous)
2. Application fee revenue sharing (offer the chairs the ability to give back some of their application fees; carry forward monies)
3. Student Support Block Grant allocation (also called Primary Block Grant; renaming of USAP; must wait until the census date to allocate)
4. Outcomes and Support Block Grant Supplement allocation(s)

VPDGE Hratchian explained the importance of honoring programmatic differences. He also believes that the Graduate Division should provide operations funds at the beginning of every fiscal year, and Student Support Block Grant allocations should be made as close to census date as possible. Lastly, the Supplemental Block Grant allocations are determined in the same fiscal year as the underlying metrics and should only enhance student support and avoid any potential for limiting potential student support (a block of money allocated to graduate groups based on the completion rate of annual reviews by their committees).

VPDGE Hratchian concluded his presentation by sharing the following main ideas:
- Move dissertation fellowship funds into block grant allocations.
- Move one-time and engagement-related incentive funds to block grant allocations.
- Relieve some restrictions on block grant allocations.
- Add block grant funds for GSRs on grants.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that he would like to move several funding sources in to block grant allocations and require the graduate groups to award at least one or two dissertation fellowships. He also noted that many other universities use Block Grant funding to hire staff, and he envisions two or three UC Merced graduate groups coming together to hire a staff member to assist with an ongoing project.

VPDGE Hratchian asked the membership their thoughts on two complex ideas:
1. Change the tuition reduction incentive.

The Graduate Division receives a bill for indirect costs at the end of May for the Fall term, so they must estimate the amount of the bill and set aside funds. If they overestimate, they save money; however, by

then it is too late to spend the funds (they don't carry forward). If the Graduate Division underestimates, they run a deficit. The Graduate Division cannot accurately predict or budget. To address this, VPDGE Hratchian proposes removing the tuition reduction incentive (on incoming external grants with full F&A), and instead, asking graduate groups how many GSRs their program had last year on grants. Based on this number, funds are given back to the graduate group as a Block Grant. The faculty would then determine whether to allocate that funding back to students in the graduate group.

2. Develop funding for departments to cover graduate group chair teaching releases.

Most graduate group chairs at UC Merced receive a $5,000 - $15,000 stipend in addition to teaching release. VPDGE Hratchian would like to remove the teaching release from graduate groups (except for interdisciplinary graduate groups that are not in vertically aligned programs e.g., the Interdisciplinary Humanities groups) and provide them with a budget and let them determine how they would like to utilize their funds.

Several members expressed their full support of VPDGE Hratchian's ideas. One member noted that they matriculated from a university where one faculty member served as both the department chair and the graduate group chair. They feel that they are being overcompensated as a graduate group chair here at UC Merced, so an alternative method for the use of funding would be beneficial. A consultant noted that UC Merced has been heavily understaffed for many years, and not offering course releases to graduate group chairs may not be feasible. Another member noted that the 25% tuition reduction is helpful because graduate students are expensive, and it may also incentivize groups to hire additional postdocs.

VI.   Any Other Business – 2:20pm – 2:25pm

VPDGE Hratchian announced that the call for Continuing fellowships will open on Monday, November 6, 2023.

VII.   Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 2:25pm – 2:45pm

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