

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 15, 2024
11:30am – 12:20pm
COB 2 - 392

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

I. Consent Calendar – Chair Scheibner – 11:30am – 11:35am

- A. Agenda
- B. [February 1 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The agenda and January 18 meeting minutes were approved as presented, and GC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.

- C. [Request from SSHA for an exception to the October 16, 2023 and February 5, 2024 deadlines for submitting a large batch of IH course proposals effective Fall 2024 and Spring 2025.](#)

Action:

- SSHA's request was approved, and the SSHA Curriculum Manager will be notified.

- D. Courses

Action:

- The following courses were approved, and Curriculog will be updated accordingly:
 1. [ME - X408 - Introduction to Industrial Additive Manufacturing](#)
 2. [QSB - 209 - Molecular Cell Biology Seminar](#)
 3. [QSB - 279 - Principles of Data Visualization in R for Biologists](#) – This course has been revised to remove “not the previously stated 9 in the proposal” and the word "around" before “6”, as hours should be accurate.

II. Chair's Report – Michael Scheibner – 11:35am – 11:45am

- A. February 7 CCGA Meeting

- A Congress on AI is forthcoming, which will focus on AI usage within the UC system. Chair Scheibner forwarded GC's comments on the email request that was circulated on February 14, 2024. CCGA members also discussed issues related to AI with respect to equity, built-in bias, intellectual property, etc.
- Members discussed the amendment of AB 810. If this Bill passes, graduate group faculty and prior employees will be contacted to provide information on undo conduct. This would create a lot of paperwork, so the hope is that the Bill does not pass.
- Discussions were held regarding career preparation and whether there should be separate doctoral tracks for students who would like to pursue industry-related careers instead of academia.

- Vice President for Research & Innovation Theresa Maldonado and her team reported on the frustration from the Council of Graduate Deans regarding outcomes from the recent Congress meeting, and members are preparing for the forthcoming labor negotiations.
- Academic Council Vice Chair Steven Cheung discussed issues with “U” grades, in which a resolution was delayed due to a case of alleged vandalism at UCSD during the strike.
- The Math Fellow title change remains in progress.
- During the January Regents meeting, participants discussed Regents Policy 4407, which ensured equal opportunities for undocumented students for university employment. The UC President claimed there has been no immediate implementation.
- Members discussed the possible expansion of experiential learning programs. Governor Newman allocated \$7 million, but it is unclear whether it applies to both undergraduate and graduate programs.
- The UC signed a new 4-year contract with Anthem insurance company.

B. February 12 DivCo Meeting

- Interim EVC/Provost Zatz reported on the various searches:
 - SSHA Dean - 90 applications.
 - VPDUE – 85 applications.
 - CREATES Director – 65 applications.
 - SNS Interim Dean – 4 applications.
- Incoming EVC/Provost Dumont will work together with Interim EVC/Provost Zatz during the month of March and will begin her role as EVC/Provost on April 1, 2024.
- The state budget does not look positive for the UC system. The university expects to be in deficit next year. The state is proposing to not give the UC the initially scheduled amount of funding under the compact, but they will provide double the funding the following year. However, there is uncertainty about this plan.
- Senate Vice Chair Mitchell provided an update on the TAS work groups. The goal for both groups is to generate a fiscally sustainable TAS budget model that enables the achievement of the campus’s student success goals.
- GC’s recommendations for mitigating graduate students’ and postdocs delays on their research and time to degree was endorsed and will be forwarded to the administration. DivCo also requested addressing mental health and food security.
- GC’s recommendations and analysis for the SJV Prime+ B.S. to M.D. Pathway was endorsed and forwarded to SNS Dean Dumont and Director of Medical Education Vener. Dean Dumont, Director Vener, and Interim EVC/Provost Zatz will join the February 29 GC meeting to further discuss the memo and pathway.

III. Vice Chair’s Report – John Abatzoglou – 11:45am – 11:50am

A. February 12 PROC Meeting

Vice Chair Abatzoglou reported that assessment is difficult to conduct in smaller programs. Ideas arose in terms of how one can incorporate assessment outcomes directly in assignments. Vice Chair Abatzoglou explained that he has integrated assessment into one of the forms that faculty are required to sign off. The form is digital, so the faculty cannot submit the form without completing the assessment portion.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that since his time as Graduate Dean, he has been unable to determine an annual assessment process for students that works well for everyone. It seems that programs would rather conduct assessment in their own way, and then there is no way for the Graduate Division to collect data to determine common successes and challenges. The Graduate Division is currently working to build an assessment process into Slate.

IV. Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students – Chair Scheibner and VPDGE Hratchian – 11:50am – 12:00pm

Policy for Graduate Students Teaching Graduate Students is available [here](#).

During the February 1, 2024 GC meeting, members further discussed under which conditions to grant exceptions for qualified PhD students to teach graduate courses. Members considered amending the current policy to include that PhD students are allowed to teach master’s courses with approval by exception only. Members also discussed whether to explicitly state possession of a master’s degree as a requirement.

Vice Chair Abatzoglou proposed amendments to the policy, available [here](#).

Requested Action: Members discuss the current policy and Vice Chair Abatzoglou’s proposed amendments. If there is consensus, voting members vote to approve the proposed amendments.

Vice Chair Abatzoglou and VPDGE Hratchian summarized their proposed amendments noting the main revision is to include that graduate students can become Instructor of Records (IoRs) for graduate courses if they meet the listed criteria. Members shared their concerns with the Graduate Chair’s required approval of the exception noting that they could bend the rules. Chair Scheibner noted that this process is used for undergraduate courses where there is typically another Senate faculty member with oversight.

VPDGE Hratchian recommended mirroring the Teaching Fellow Policy. A member recommended stating that this policy is conducted in the same manner as the policy for appointing an IoR for undergraduate courses. Members agreed that “IoR” should be revised to “Teaching Fellow” throughout the policy. Teaching Fellows can be appointed if they have not advanced to candidacy as long as they have a master’s degree. A member also recommended removing the word “graduate” from point 2. “The course is primarily for graduate students in a non-doctoral granting degree program (e.g., professional Master’s, M.S./M.A. program)” so that it covers a joint undergraduate/graduate class.

Action:

- Members are to send any comments to Vice Chair Abatzoglou and VPDGE Hratchian **by 10:00am, Tuesday, February 20, 2024.**
- Assistant Graduate Dean Cisneros will be invited to review the proposed amendments.
- Voting members will be invited to review and approve the proposed amendments.

V. VPDGE Hratchian’s Report – 12:00pm - 12:15pm

A. Admissions

UC Merced has received 1,200 graduate applications, which is the highest campus has ever had.

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VPDGE Hratchian predicts that numbers will end in the 1,220 range. Admission offers are being distributed, but there have been challenges regarding interpretation of work experience versus professional experience and that international students' GPAs must be translated, which must be done manually one-by-one.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that the policy states that students with a GPA lower than 3.0 are not admissible unless by exception from the Graduate Dean. GC's policy says that the exception is granted by the Graduate Dean when the student has above a 3.0 GPA and graduate study from another institution. VPDGE Hratchian has delegated authority to the Admissions team.

B. Grad Visitation

Virtual Grad Visitation took place this morning and was not as successful as anticipated. There will be an in-person event on March 1, 2024, which VPDGE Hratchian believes will have a greater turnout. He is unsure whether a virtual option will be offered next year.

C. Graduate Student Housing

International students typically arrive without establishing housing. The Graduate Division then must quickly help them find a place. VPDGE Hratchian would like to develop a housing fellowship program to assist international students in finding affordable housing prior to their arrival. Landlords often request proof of employment, which these students do not have. He would like to send landlords a packet that shows them what the graduate student offer letter looks like and confirm that they have income. He would like to send a similar packet to Banks so that international students can apply for loans, if needed.

D. Summer Bridge

Summer Bridge is forthcoming, and nine programs will be participating. VPDGE Hratchian plans to send offer letters before Grad Visitation on March 1, 2024.

VI. Any Other Business – 12:15pm - 12:20pm

No other business was discussed.

VII. Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 12:20pm – 1:00pm

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