

**Undergraduate Council (UGC)****Meeting Minutes****Friday, September 13, 2024****2:00pm – 3:30pm**

Pursuant to call, the Undergraduate Council met at 2:00pm on September 13, 2024. Chair Sharping presiding.

**I. Welcome and Introductions – Chair Sharping – 2:00pm – 2:10pm**

Chair Sharping introduced himself and welcomed new and returning members. Members introduced themselves and noted their years of service at UC Merced and on UGC.

**II. VPDUE Bergerson's Report – 2:10pm – 2:20pm**

VPDUE Bergerson introduced herself and provided an overview of the Division of Undergraduate Education's current initiatives:

- Enhancing student success - assessment and refinement of the midterm grade intervention process, which will include the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center (UROC), student leadership, and study abroad.
- Access to college
  - Black Academic Success and Engagement (BASE) Program
  - There are 35 students this year who are involved in peer mentoring
  - Men of Color Conference – will be held in conjunction with several community colleges in the area.
  - Developing programming and outreach to engage more of our black students.
- Undergraduate Research Opportunities Center (UROC)
  - Summer Research Symposium was held over the summer with 179 students and 109 faculty involved.
  - Portal through which students and faculty will be able to post and locate research opportunities. The goal is to have this implemented by the end of the fall.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Symposium on Inclusive Excellence in November, which will include undergraduate and graduate student researchers. Co-sponsored by the Division of Equity, Justice, & Inclusive Excellence (EJIE).
- The Bobcat Advising Center is focused on supporting 1<sup>st</sup> year and undecided students. They will be the focus of several new initiatives including increasing retention and streamlining academic advising to help prevent advisor burnout moving forward.
- The Writing Center - last year there were 1,200 appointments with over 600 students. It is important to note that the Writing Center is not just for bad

writers. They work with students at every phase of the writing process. They will focus on outreach to faculty and students to work with them on how they can benefit from utilizing the center.

- The STEM Tutoring Center currently has approximately 35 tutors available to support students in the STEM fields.
- The Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) is focusing on ways to avoid burnout and improving course evaluations and evidence of teaching effectiveness.
  - The Faculty Fellows Program includes four fellows who will be working on projects that they will share with the campus in the spring.
- The English Language Institute will continue to conduct workshops and consultations for students, Teaching Assistants (TAs), and faculty who need support with the English language.
  - The Conversation Partner Program supports students and instructors who need language support.
- The Plus Program is a peer mentoring program for students in SSHA courses.
- Summer Session Program – over 500 students were served last summer.
  - Simplifying the budget process so that allocations can be sent to departments and schools more efficiently in the future.

VPDUE Bergerson discussed the following goals she plans to focus on moving forward:

- Improving retention rates by focusing on developing an academic advising culture of student success and through technology that increases communication across advising in the Bobcat Advising Center, Schools and divisions, as well as partners in Student Affairs.
- Developing predictive analytics that can be used to help advisors allocate their time better by focusing on the students who need their support in real time.
- Evaluating the onboarding process for new students, starting with prospective and 1<sup>st</sup> year students.
- Assessing and refining the midterm grade interventions and broadening participation across campus to include Student Affairs colleagues.
- Develop more effective ways to offer learning support through the Plus Program, STEM Tutoring Center, and the Writing Center, and building them together to create more of an overall learning center.
- Establishing a university-wide learning assistant program with training for both faculty and students.

### **III. Chair's Report – Chair Sharping – 2:20pm – 2:25pm**

#### **A. September 9 DivCo Meeting**

- EVC/Provost Dumont provided an update on the Temporary Academic Staffing (TAS) budget and enrollment flatness.
- Divisional Council members discussed their goals and priorities for AY 24-

25, with a main focus on the Medical Education Pathway/Program, which is a forthcoming review item for UGC.

- Senate Chair Mitchell discussed faculty hiring, and how to increase hiring in the context of flat enrollment numbers and its impact on student success.
- The Financial Management & Reporting Task Force reported on difficulties in keeping track of budgets in research groups.
- The Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF) proposes to split the committee into two: the Faculty Welfare Committee and the Academic Freedom Committee.

#### IV. Consent Calendar – 2:25pm – 2:30pm

- A. The Agenda
- B. [UGC's Conflict of Interest Policy<sup>1</sup>](#)
- C. [Request from SoE for a one-time exception to change the effective term for ENGR 156 from Fall 2025 to Spring 2025.](#)
- D. [Request from CEE to consolidate the CE and ENVE course prefixes into a unified CEE designation](#)

##### Action:

- The agenda was approved as presented, and the UGC Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.
- UGC's COI Policy was approved as presented. The UGC Analyst will notify Fatima and the Senate Chair that UGC did not have any concerns with its COI Policy, and the Senate website will be updated.
- The request from SoE to change the effective term for ENGR 156 to Spring 2025 was approved, and the UGC Analyst will notify the SoE Curriculum Manager.
- The request from CEE to consolidate CE and ENVE course prefixes to CEE designation was approved, and the UGC Analyst will notify the SoE Curriculum Manager.

#### V. UGC Resources – Chair Sharping – 2:30pm – 2:40pm

- A. [Senate website](#)
- B. [UGC's website](#) and [Box site](#)
- C. [Meeting Schedule](#)
- D. [Senate Policies and Procedures](#)
- E. [Divisional Bylaws and Regulations](#)
- F. [Systemwide Bylaws and Regulations](#)
- G. [Principles to Guide the Practice of Executive Session](#)
- H. [Consultation guidelines](#)
- I. [CoC's Guide to Populating Academic Senate Committees: Leadership and](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> All Senate Committees are encouraged to review their respective COI policy at their first meeting in the Fall. All Senate Committees COI policies are available on the Senate website: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/conflict-interest>.

Membership Commitments

J. Confidentiality

K. Distributing work on Undergraduate Council

All campus and systemwide review items will be posted on the Senate website, here: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/review-items>. Some review items may be assigned to one or more UGC reviewers before each scheduled meeting.

Chair Sharping discussed the Council's resources and emphasized the importance of confidentiality. Members are not to share the agenda with anyone outside of the committee, and members should refrain from using names. The agenda and minutes will be shared publicly on the Senate website following the committee's approval, with all links redacted.

Chair Sharping noted that even though members serve on a UGC subcommittee, they will still be asked to review campus and systemwide review items.

**VI. UGC AY 24-25 Goals and Priorities – Chair Sharping – 2:40pm – 2:50pm**

**Requested Action:** Members discuss the Council's goals for this academic year and propose additional goals.

Chair Sharping discussed each of the committee's goals and priorities for this academic year. Members held a discussion about a Reading/Review/Recitation (RRR) Week/End of Term Policy. Chair Sharping noted that this was discussed when he was UGC Chair a couple of years ago, but a policy was never implemented, and it was optional for faculty. He also mentioned that it may not be worth addressing unless there is strong faculty and student support.

Furthermore, it appears that many faculty misinterpret UGC's online/hybrid policy, which states that a class is considered in-person as long as less than 30% of their content is delivered online. Many faculty mistake this for meaning that they can convert their class to Zoom following Thanksgiving.

A member noted that the RRR week would need to be the week before the last week of instruction. Another member noted that in the past there was argument from the faculty that they would need the reading week to read through the essays that they assign as the "final project"; however, the true issue is that faculty would hold their final exams the week before finals week. Overall, UGC believes that students should be given an RRR week to study for their final exam.

Members agreed to further discuss this issue via Google Forms and at a future UGC meeting.

**Action:**

- A member recommended adding certificate programs as a priority goal for AY 24-25 (added as number 6 on the linked list).
- Members will further discuss the RRR/End of Term Policy and Academic Integrity via a Google Form and at a future UGC meeting.

## VII. UGC Representation on Subcommittees, Work Groups, and Systemwide Committees – All – 2:50pm – 3:00pm

### A. Campus Representation

- **Policy Subcommittee (2 UGC Senate faculty members; ideally representation from separate schools)**  
*Membership: Aurora Pribram-Jones (SNS) and Susan Varnot (SSHA)*  
This subcommittee reviews and makes recommendations to UGC members on policies related to undergraduate education.

**No Action Requested.**

- **Course Proposal Subcommittee (3 UGC Senate faculty members; one member to serve as the chair of the subcommittee; ideally representation from each school)**  
*Membership: Haiyan Liu (SSHA), Maria Zoghbi (SNS)*  
This subcommittee reviews and makes recommendations to UGC members on new/revised courses and on policies related to undergraduate education.

#### **Action:**

- Santosh Chandrasekhar (SoE) also agreed to serve on the Course Proposal Subcommittee.
- UGC Analyst will notify the Registrar who will add the CPS members as course approvers in Curriculog.
- UGC Analyst will share additional information/relevant policies with the subcommittee.

- **Support Services for Undocumented Students Work Group**  
*Representative: UGC Vice Chair Alejandro Gutierrez*  
This work group is charged to annually review efforts and report outcomes of services offered to support graduate and undergraduate undocumented students at UC Merced.

The charge is available [here](#).

**No Requested Action.**

- **Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC)**  
*Representative: UGC Member Catherine Keske*

The UGC representative on PROC attends each PROC meeting and reports back to UGC; takes turns acting as a lead reader for agenda items approximately once every two meetings (meeting materials are never more than 25 pages, and more typically less than 10, and the reader must read them in advance of the meeting and be prepared to weigh in on specific questions); and participates in agenda item discussions, representing UGC's perspective and deciding when UGC may need to weigh in on PROC business.

Fall 2024 PROC schedule:

Monday, September 16, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Monday, October 21, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Monday, November 18, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Monday, December 9, 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

**No Requested Action.**

B. Systemwide Representation

*If a representative is unable to attend a scheduled systemwide meeting, they are to contact Senate Executive Director Fatima Paul ([fpaul@ucmerced.edu](mailto:fpaul@ucmerced.edu)) in advance of the meeting.*

- **University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP)**

*Representative: UGC Chair Jay Sharping*

UCEP considers the establishment or disestablishment of curricula, colleges, schools, departments, institutes, bureaus, and the like, and on legislation or administrative policies involving questions of educational policy.

**No Requested Action.**

- **University Committee on International Education (UCIE)**

*Representative: UGC Member Greg Wright*

Oversees all academic aspects of the UC Education Abroad Program, which operates in conjunction with offices on the campuses and serves all UC students. The committee is responsible for approving new programs, changes in programs, and all program courses and credits. The committee also oversees the regular formal review of programs and advises the President on the appointment of study center directors.

**No Requested Action.**

- **University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE)**

*Representative: UGC Member Susan Varnot*

Monitors and conducts periodic reviews and evaluations of preparatory and remedial education. In addition, the committee supervises the Entry Level Writing Requirement with special emphasis on establishing appropriate and

uniform University-wide standards for the Analytical Writing Placement Examination. Each year the Committee selects the essay/prompt that is to be used in administration of the Analytical Writing Placement Examination and also sets the passing standard for the exam.

**No Requested Action.**

VIII. **[Revised Faculty Instructional Accommodations Policy Due to Disability](#)** – All – 3:00pm – 3:15pm

This is an administration document that tries to set some procedures for when a faculty member seeks accommodation, more specifically the numerous requests to teach remotely.

The [initial draft](#) was reviewed by the AY 23-24 UGC membership and former VPDUE Frey in August 2023 following a Deans' Council meeting. Their comments are available [here](#).

ALO Martin provided an updated version, in consultation with Senate Director Paul. Former UGC Chair Viney reviewed and provided comments on the updated draft, available [here](#).

**Requested Action:** Members are to review and provide any additional feedback on the updated draft.

Chair Sharping provided an overview of the proposed policy noting its value in providing a documented process for making reasonable instructional accommodations.

A member inquired about adding COVID-19 to the policy as a disability that faculty can seek accommodation for. UGC Analyst shared the campus policy for [Exceptions to In Person Instruction](#), which allows department chairs to utilize temporary, remote teaching as an option to accommodate instructors with a medical accommodation need without necessitating a modality change request for Senate review. COVID-19 is included as a medical accommodation in this policy, and members agreed to keep the two policies separate – one for disabilities and one for medical accommodations.

Members shared no concerns with former UGC Chair Viney's comments that are included in the revised policy, linked above.

**Action:**

- UGC Analyst will draft a memo based on today's discussion regarding the inclusion of Covid-19.
- Voting members will be invited to review the draft memo prior to transmittal to the administration.

IX. **Memo from PROC: Recommendation to Review Campus Policies for Minors and Double Majors** – All – 3:15pm – 3:25pm

UGC received a request from the Periodic Review and Oversight Committee (PROC) requesting that members review UC Merced's policies regarding minors and double majors because it is not very common at UCM.

On August 28, 2024, voting members were invited to complete a Google Form, and majority agreed to consider the recommendation by including it on the agenda for further discussion.

**Requested Action:** Members discuss PROC's memo and determine next steps.

Chair Sharping provided an overview of PROC's request for UGC to revisit policies for minors and double majors to ensure there are no obstacles that might make completing a minor or double major more difficult for UC Merced students than students at other institutions.

General Education Consultant Utter noted that this came up during the Spanish Program review where members were concerned with the number of credits UC Merced's majors entail, but that Spanish should be a popular double major, as it pairs well with many majors on campus. A member noted that it may be a good idea to consult with advising because in the past, advisors have been told to refrain from adding a minor or double major in order to keep the graduation timeline within the university's preferred success parameters. It was recommended that UGC look into data for those who double major or have a minor to see what their typical trajectory for graduation is in comparison, or in contrast, to those who do not.

A member noted their curiosity for such policies on our campus and volunteered to gather data. Registrar Webb also volunteered to gather current UC Merced policies on the topic. The UGC Analyst will draft a memo to PROC to let them know that UGC will consider their request.

**Action:**

- Vice Chair Gutierrez, Registrar Webb, and the UGC Analyst will gather information on existing policies and further discussion will take place at the September 27 meeting.
- UGC Analyst will draft a memo to PROC to let them know how UGC plans to proceed.

X. **Any Other Business** – 3:25pm – 3:30pm

A member inquired about the intersections between the Student Credit Hour (SCH) model and curriculum and pedagogy, and the push toward larger class sizes. A continuing member reported that this issue arose last year, and UGC determined that



course sizes are reviewed during UGC's review of course proposals in Curriculog. When UGC reviews new and modified course proposals, members determines then if there is pedagogical reasoning for increasing class size. A Curriculum Manager clarified that the maximum enrollment field is not required in Curriculog.

**XI. Informational Items**

- A. [UGC AY 23-24 Annual Report](#)
- B. [Memo from the Registrar: Upcoming Proposals for ROTC Program Courses](#)
- C. [Undergraduate Council Curricular Changes Worksheet](#)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32pm.

Attest: Jay Sharping, UGC Chair