

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**MINUTES OF MEETING
Tuesday, September 17, 2024
12:00pm – 1:30pm
ZOOM**

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

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 12:00pm on September 17, 2024. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

I. Chair's Report**A. Welcome New Members**

Chair Abatzoglou welcomed the three new members. The new members then introduced themselves and discussed their previous experience with Senate service.

B. September 9 Divisional Council Meeting

EVC/Provost Dumont informed Divisional Council members that she feels optimistic about the direction the campus is heading this academic year.

FWAF Chair Jayson Beaster-Jones informed Divisional Council members that FWAF will be working on a proposal to split FWAF into two committees: The Faculty Welfare Committee and the Academic Freedom Committee.

II. Consent Calendar**A. Today's Agenda****Actions:**

- Today's Agenda was approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.

B. [September 3 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)**Actions:**

- The September 3 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.

C. [GC's Draft Memo re: Renaming of University Extension](#)

Members reviewed the draft memo and provided contextual information for the new members. Vice Chair Beattie pointed out that the comments provided by GC in the memo concur with University Extension Dean Roberts Webb's recommendation.

Actions:

- The draft memo was approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst transmitted the finalized memo to the Senate Chair.

D. [One-time Modality Exception to offer ES 240 – Water Resources via Zoom in Spring 2025](#)

Chair Abatzoglou provided background information regarding the request and noted that ES 240 has

been offered to UC Berkeley and UC Merced students in the past. The current request would allow the course to be taught in person at UC Berkeley with a Zoom option for UC Merced students.

Members discussed the request and found it to be reasonable. It was noted that it is important to ensure that students, both in-person and via Zoom, have the same educational experience while taking the course. A member added that it might be useful to allow UC Merced students the option to attend the class in person if they would like. Members agreed and decided to add a note to GC's response about making the course available for UC Merced students to attend in person.

Actions:

- The one-time Modality Exception was approved with a note from members to allow the option for UC Merced students to attend in person.
- The GC Analyst notified the proposer.

E. Courses

[MBSE - 224 - Polymeric Materials](#) (Modify Existing; Spring 2025)

[ME - 205 - Design of Scientific and Engineering Experiments](#) (New; Spring 2025)

The Course Proposal Subcommittee informed members that they had no concerns with the courses and recommended approval of both courses.

Actions:

- The Council approved both courses as presented.
- The GC Analyst will update the Curriculog accordingly.

III. Vice Chair's Report

A. September 16 PROC Meeting

Vice Chair Beattie provided information to members regarding PROC's charge in relation to the Senate.

Vice Chair Beattie informed members that PROC is currently working to conclude the Political Science program review, which was the only graduate program action item from the meeting.

PROC is looking for ways to improve their assessment and program review process and is currently soliciting input from various campus partners. Vice Chair Beattie noted that one of her suggestions was to think about ways to use data to support equity, diversity, and inclusion and to make this more consistent across the review of programs. She also suggested making improvements to how graduate students are trained in teaching, more specifically, as Teaching Assistants.

A member noted that program reviews might be more comprehensive and efficient for all parties if vertically aligned programs had joint review of their undergraduate and graduate programs.

Action:

- Vice Chair Beattie will convey GC's ideas back to PROC.

IV. Representation on Subcommittees and Work Groups

A. Campus Representation

- **Policy Subcommittee (3 members; ideally representation from each school)**
This subcommittee reviews and makes recommendations to GC members on policies related to graduate education.

Membership: Chair Abatzoglou (SoE) and Vice Chair Beattie (SSHA).

Action:

- Member Frank (SNS) volunteered to serve on the Policy Subcommittee.

- **Support Services for Undocumented Students Work Group**

Representative: TBD

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 latest version of the charge is available [here](#).

Member Ha provided contextual information pertaining to the workload and duties associated with this role as she had previously served as a representative on this work group.

Actions:

- Member Cai (SNS) volunteered to serve on the Support Services for Undocumented Students Work Group.
- The GC Analyst notified the Office of Student Affairs.

V. COI on Graduate Student Committees

In Spring 2024, GC discussed conflicts of interest on graduate student committees. Graduate students have encountered the issue of COI on graduate student committees for their thesis, dissertation, qualifying exam, etc. when the student's advisor and advisor's spouse are on the same committee.

To address this issue, the AY 23-24 GC Policy Subcommittee suggested the following language be added to the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook:

To avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, such as when domestic partners or spouses are on a graduate student's committee, those potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed in writing to the student.

Chair Abatzoglou provided the committee with background on the request for a policy regarding COIs on Graduate Student Committees and GC's progress towards drafting the language in the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook (GPPH). Last year, the GC Policy Subcommittee drafted the above language; however, the Council did not have the opportunity to review it due to other pressing business. He added that GC had requested other UC campus' policies for COIs on graduate student committees last year, and while some campuses did have a similar COI policy in place, several campuses did not. Other UC campus policies are available [here](#).

Several members noted that they did not see a use for such a COI policy as there appears to be no personal or financial gain to serving on a graduate student committee. Members acknowledged that there may be issues with power dynamics when dealing with couples on graduate student committees; however, were unsure if a COI policy was the proper solution. Members emphasized the importance of recognizing not

only the possibility of married couples serving on a committee together, but also the various other relationships among faculty that could create potential power dynamics.

One recommended solution was to determine whether the student has the authority over their advisor to select the members of their committee. If the student has the power to select their own committee members, it could eliminate the potential power imbalances prior to the committee convening. Another suggestion was to strengthen the language of the proposed COI policy to include the optional addition of a fourth member to serve on the committee.

Members agreed that further discussion should take place with VPDGE Hratchian before moving forward.

Actions:

- Graduate Student Representative Casper will ask GSA members if they have any specific thoughts about this issue.
- This item will be added to a future GC agenda for further discussion.

VI. Systemwide Review Items

A. [Proposed New Senate Regulation 627 \(Posthumous Awarding of Degrees\)](#)

This new Regulation governs the awarding of undergraduate and graduate degrees to students who pass away before their completion of the degree.

GC is a lead reviewer.

Members reviewed the proposed Senate Regulation as well as the existing UC Merced policy regarding the awarding of posthumous degrees. Overall, members supported the implementation of the new Senate Regulation and believed the criteria to be straightforward and sound; however, members wondered whether the systemwide Senate Regulation would supersede or replace the current UC Merced policy if it were to be implemented.

Actions:

- The GC Analyst will draft a memo based on the committee's comments.
- GC voting members will be invited to review the draft memo at their October 15 meeting in order to be finalized and sent to the Senate Chair by **Friday, October 25**.

B. [Proposed Revisions to Senate Regulation 479 \(Cal-GETC\)](#)

The revisions address the California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) and are provided in tracked changes on page 7 of the linked document.

Actions:

- Members decided to decline to opine.
- The GC Analyst notified the Senate Chair that GC declined to opine.

VII. Discussion: Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB)/Extension Program

In AY 22-23, GC voting members discussed the restructuring of CAB and Senate oversight. Voting members voted to endorse keeping CAB and to develop a joint Senate-Administration Working Group comprised of CAB members, GC voting members, the Dean of Extension, and School Deans (or their delegates) to review Extension/post baccalaureate courses/TPP requests. The next steps are to send an update on the progress or direction to the Senate Chair.

Vice Chair Beattie informed members that CAB is a group of faculty who approve Extension courses, Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) requests, and post baccalaureate courses that are managed by University Extension. She noted that one concern with CAB is that it does not currently have any engagement with the Academic Senate. GC has been tasked with determining how to incorporate more Senate oversight over CAB. This could include having CoC appoint CAB members and/or the creation of a joint Senate-Administration working group.

Members discussed various components to consider and the best path forward. One suggestion was to develop a charge for CAB. Another recommendation was to invite University Extension Dean Roberts Webb and one-two faculty who sit on CAB to a future GC meeting for further discussion or to schedule a separate meeting with the GC Policy Subcommittee.

Actions:

- The GC Analyst will contact University Extension Dean Roberts Webb to see if she has any items to discuss with GC. If so, the GC Analyst will invite her to a future GC meeting. If she does not have any items, the GC Analyst will schedule a meeting for her and one-two faculty members on CAB to meet with the GC Policy Subcommittee to discuss a charge for CAB.
- The GC Analyst provided the Senate Chair and Executive Director Paul with an update.

VIII. Any Other Business

Chair Abatzoglou encouraged members to bring any issues forward that may be under GC's purview. He noted one item that was previously brought to his attention by other faculty members was graduate students not being paid on time during the summer. A member also recommended that GC should focus on shortening the time to Master's degrees, as UC Merced is looking for methods to increase the enrollment of Master's students. Another member recommended that GC advocate for joint departmental undergraduate and graduate program review. Members agreed that doing so would increase the efficiency of program reviews.

Actions:

- The following items will be added to GC's list of goals and priorities for AY 24-25 for further consideration:
 - Graduate student pay during the summer
 - 1-yr Master's Degrees
 - Joint departmental program review of undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Chair Abatzoglou will work with UGC Chair Sharping on a joint memo regarding vertically aligned programs having joint review of their undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Voting members will be invited to review the memo prior to transmittal to the Senate Chair/PROC.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm.

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair