

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)

Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 27, 2024
11:30am – 1:00pm
Library 362

Documents available in [box](#)
[AFAC Duties](#)

I. Welcome and Introductions – All - 11:30am – 11:40am

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

II. Chair’s Report – Chair Cleary – 11:40am – 11:50am

A. September 9 and 23 Divisional Council Meetings

Chair Cleary serves as the UC Merced representative on the [Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools](#) (BOARS), as well as the AFAC representative on the [UC Merced Divisional Council](#). He will provide the committee with updates from both committees throughout the academic year.

Chair Cleary provided the following updates from the September 9 Divisional Council meeting:

- Members discussed the committee’s goals and priorities, with a focus on student enrollment and retention.
- Senate Chair Mitchell emphasized UC Merced’s great administrative and staff support. Admissions Director Dustin Noji and the new Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Scott Hagg will work closely with AFAC on student enrollment and retention issues.
- EVC/Provost Dumont reported that enrollment numbers have remained flat compared to last year, which also affects the university’s budget. UC Merced is working at a slight deficit; however, this is not cause for serious concern yet.

Chair Cleary provided the following updates from the September 23 Divisional Council meeting:

- SSHA Dean Arriola reported that SSHA loses about 38% of its students by the end of year four. Dean Arriola would like student retention to be a school-wide initiative to bring in resources and additional programming outside the classroom to enhance the ability of students to gain the skills they need to stay and graduate. Admissions Director Noji confirmed that he

will obtain Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS) data to share with the committee.

- The Annual Governance Retreat is scheduled for October 29, 2024. DivCo members and the administration will be in attendance. Vice Chair Spencer will represent AFAC.

III. Consent Calendar – Chair Cleary – 11:50am – 11:55am

A. Today's Agenda

Action:

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented, and the Senate .

IV. AFAC Resources – Chair Cleary – 11:55am – 12:05pm

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

The AFAC COI Policy is forthcoming. In the meantime, please refer to [UC Merced's CRE memo regarding COI issues](#).

If members are unsure about a potential conflict of interest, they are to reach out to Fatima Paul (fpaul@ucmerced.edu) and Chair Cleary (mcleary4@ucmerced.edu).

- J. Distributing work on AFAC

All campus and systemwide review items will be posted on the Senate website, here: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/review-items>. Review items will be assigned to one AFAC reviewer before each scheduled meeting.

Chair Cleary discussed the committee's resources and noted members' duties listed in the [AFAC Bylaws](#). He also noted that a conflict-of-interest policy is forthcoming and encouraged members to review the CRE memo linked above (item I.). If members have any questions regarding a potential conflict of interest, they are to reach out to Chair Cleary and Senate Executive Director Paul.

The agenda and minutes will be shared publicly on the Senate website following the committee's approval, with all links redacted.

Chair Cleary noted that members will be asked to review at least one systemwide and/or campus review item each semester.

V. AFAC AY 24-25 Goals, Priorities – Chair Cleary – 12:05pm – 12:20pm

Requested Action: Members discuss the committee’s goals for this academic year and propose additional goals.

Chair Cleary discussed each of the committee’s goals and priorities for this academic year and asked members if they would like to add any additional items.

A member inquired about identifying strategies for effectively advertising new academic degree programs, to which Chair Cleary clarified that outreach is included on the list and will be a main goal for the committee this year.

Another member suggested adding admission standards for international students and data on how these students are retained. Chair Cleary mentioned that IRDS is a great resource, and Director Noji will share information regarding English proficiency standards. The Office of Admissions will also discuss with the committee at a future meeting the admission process for non-resident versus resident students, as well as retention and financial aid for these students, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Director Noji would also like to discuss AP 540, and the DACA student and undocumented student populations.

A member inquired about the status of cancelling student institutional debts. Chair Cleary stated that he will follow up with former AFAC Chair Eaton and report back to the committee.

Deputy Director Nardello provided information on FAFSA and grants noting that for a student who is not eligible to complete the FAFSA application, if they meet the criteria for AB 540, which then gives them California Residency, they can complete the California Dream Act application. This application is not the same financial aid from the Federal level because these students do not meet the criteria, but they are eligible for the State Grant Program (and many other smaller grant programs run through the State). They are then eligible for all the financial aid that UC Merced administers, one being the Institutional Grant Program, which is funded by “return to aid” (33% of all tuition and fees that students pay) that goes back into the financial aid programs. These students are eligible for funding out of that pot of money, and they can also bring in aid from outside scholarships. Deputy Director Nardello will provide additional information on financial aid at the November 22 AFAC meeting.

Action:

- The AFAC Analyst updated the list of priorities to include discussions with the Office of Admissions regarding non-resident vs. resident student admission process, retention, and financial aid (both undergraduate and graduate).

VI. Report from Office of Admissions Director Noji – 12:20pm – 12:30pm

A. A by E and Exceptional Case Review

Video Tutorial for Extreme and Unusual Cases

<https://ucmerced.box.com/s/0wkavwsgzl8tqkf8age5ftb3z5n6gqll>

A few additional important notes:

- If committee members find that they are reviewing a file where there may be a conflict of interest¹ or perceived conflict of interest, which includes, an applicant who is a family member, an acquaintance, or sibling or child of a faculty or staff member they know and interact with, they should refer that file to another member of the AFAC committee.
- Please note that it is prohibited to consider a student's familial or other personal relationships with university staff or faculty in an admissions decision.
- Committee members should not disclose an individual applicant's decision without permission from the Director of Admissions and report any attempt to influence an admissions decision regardless of source to the Director of Admissions or the Locally Designated Official via the whistleblower hotline.

Director Noji shared PowerPoint slides, available [here](#), highlighting that the Admissions by Exception (A by E) process provides each campus flexibility in admitting a small portion of their students that do not meet the minimum criteria for admissions, either at the first-year level or the transfer-level. Campuses must ensure that the students have a reasonable potential for success. Only 6% of newly enrolled first-year students and 6% of newly enrolled transfer students can be admitted through the A by E process. Of the 6% of those that enroll, 4% need to be from a disadvantaged category and 2% can be from a group of students called the “potential to contribute” because of a special talent or their involvement in community service. It is important to note that the A by E policy is only for California residents. Non-resident students are not part of the formal A by E process; however, the Office of Admissions follows the “compare favorably” process.

Director Noji further explained the minimum standards for A by E review noting that transfer student standards differ because they are admitted at both the lower division level (they have less than 60 units) and at the junior level (they have more than 60 units). Generally, the policy looks at how many units a student has attempted and completed and provides a different criterion based upon the number of units that that student has actually completed. Additional details are included in Director Noji's PowerPoint slides, linked above. The A by E policy is available [here](#).

Director Noji also explained exceptional review cases, which are for applicants who do not qualify for A by E. These students are those that are rare and demonstrate exceptional academic potential to contribute to the University of California. They have

¹ UC Merced's CRE memo regarding COI issues:

https://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/coi_memo_formatted.pdf

also been identified by the Office of Admissions and approved by Director Noji for review by AFAC.

Both A by E Reports and Exceptional Review Cases will be transmitted to AFAC for review throughout the academic year in batches for the Fall and Spring cycles. At the end of the academic year, the Office of Admissions will generate a final report that AFAC will be invited to review and ask questions before transmitting UCOP.

Director Noji will obtain information on the retention rate of A by E and Exception Review students.

B. [Exceptional Review Case](#)

The rationale for the student is available [here](#).

Action:

- Voting members unanimously approved the Exceptional Review Case.
- The AFAC Analyst notified Director Noji.

VII. Report from Office of Admission Director Noji and Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Hagg – 12:30pm – 12:40pm

- A. AY 24-25 Enrollment Report (specifically for incoming Freshmen the last year or several years)
- Geographic region (including areas of CA)
 - Major
 - Financial aid status/need – how FAFSA delays/problems affected enrollment.

Action:

- This item was tabled for the October 25 AFAC meeting when VCEM Hagg will be in attendance.

VIII. Campus Review Item – 12:40pm – 12:50pm

A. [Anthropology & Heritage Studies Graduate Program Proposal](#)

The proposal was distributed to the Chairs of Senate Committees. The policy governing the review and approval of Graduate Degree Programs is available [here](#).

Lead Reviewer: Mike Cleary

Lead reviewer's draft memo is available [here](#).

Requested Action: Members discuss the proposal and lead reviewer's assessment. If there are no additional comments, members vote to endorse the draft memo.

Deadline for comments to the Senate Chair: October 1, 2024.

Chair Cleary summarized his assessment highlighting his concern about how students are admitted into the program. The proposal states that the faculty in AHS

will identify two advisors. Chair Cleary wondered whether students will be skipped over if they do not match well with one advisor, let alone two. Chair Cleary included a suggestion for AHS to consider allowing exceptions where a student is admitted without assigned mentors (AHS graduate group chair could serve as an interim mentor) and is given a year to explore topics and potential mentors (allowing for interpersonal considerations, like personality fit) before the pair of mentors is agreed upon. Members were in general agreement but recommended providing this as more of a suggestion rather than a request.

Chair Cleary also discussed his concern about the proposal lacking any mention of the ability of the potential PhD advisor (the primary mentor) to financially support a graduate student. A member clarified that students in SSHA are funded through their TA appointments, which differs from how students are funded in other the other Schools. Because most students will not be funded through grants, the concern raised may not be valid, and members agreed to remove this point from the draft memo.

Action:

- Voting members unanimously approved the draft memo with the removal of the language regarding GSR appointments and clarifying AFAC's suggestion related to the co-advising model.
- The AFAC Analyst will transmit the final memo to the Senate Chair by October 1, 2024.

IX. Changes to Transfer Selection Criteria – 12:50pm – 12:55pm

A. [Applied Math Transfer Selection Criteria](#)

The Applied Math Department would like to update their Transfer Selection Criteria to change the course requirements from Math 21, Math 22, Phys 8/8L, and Phys 9/9L to Math 21, Math 22, Math 23, and Math 24, effective Fall 2026.

Action:

- Voting members unanimously approved the revisions to the Applied Math Transfer Selection Criteria.
- The AFAC Analyst notified the SNS Director of Student Services.

B. [Data Science & Computing Transfer Selection Criteria](#)

The Data Science & Computing Department would like to update their Transfer Selection Criteria to change the course requirements from Math 11 and Math 12 to (Math 11 and Math 12) or (Math 21 and Math 22), effective Fall 2025.

Action:

- Voting Members unanimously approved the revisions to the Data Science & Computing Transfer Selection Criteria.
- The AFAC Analyst notified the SNS Director of Student Services.

VIII. Any Other Business – 12:55pm – 1:00pm

No other business was discussed.

IX. Informational Items will be regularly uploaded on the “Informational Items” AFAC Box Folder [here](#).