

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)

MINUTES OF MEETING
Tuesday, October 1, 2024
12:00pm – 1:30pm
ZOOM

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

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 12:00pm on October 1, 2024. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

I. Consent Calendar

A. Today’s Agenda

Actions:

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

B. [September 17 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)

Actions:

- The September 17 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.

C. [GC’s Draft Memo Re: Proposed New Senate Regulation 627 \(Posthumous Awarding of Degrees\)](#)

Chair Abatzoglou reminded members that this systemwide review item was discussed at the September 17 GC meeting. In the September 17 discussion, members supported the implementation of the new Senate Regulation, however, requested clarification as there is currently a local UC Merced policy on the awarding of posthumous degrees.

Actions:

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

II. Chair’s Report

A. September 26 SNS & SOE Graduate Group Chairs’ Meeting

Chair Abatzoglou reported that the Graduate Division has been working to assist programs in effectively planning for the number of students that can be admitted. This involves the consideration of a number of variables including the capacity of programs, how many students are already enrolled in the program, how many students plan to defend, and estimates of TAs and GSRs for the upcoming academic year.

Chair Abatzoglou informed members that the Graduate Division issued their Block Grant distributions to the graduate chairs. He added that these are funds that graduate programs can use to support graduate students. Graduate programs have also been given one or two fellowships issued by the graduate group chairs. Individuals from the Graduate Division emphasized that the funding for the fellowships is coming from graduate funds rather than from GSR funding, however if the fellowships could be issued as GSRs it would be

considered a research expenditure for the university.

III. Vice Chair's Report – Irene Beattie

A. September 23 Divisional Council Meeting

EVC/Provost Dumont informed Divisional Council members that the TAS Work Group will convene soon. She also addressed the issue of graduate students not receiving their pay and noted that there were various reasons for the errors including miscommunications, missed deadlines, and incorrect COAs. EVC/Provost Dumont is also considering work arounds in case there are further delays in graduate student pay.

SSHA Dean Arriola informed Divisional Council members of his top three priorities:

1. Governance reform
2. Financial transparency
3. Undergraduate student retention

Vice Chair Beattie informed GC members that PROC is planning to reinstate administrative reviews. There is a committee being formed between PROC and the Senate to establish a process.

Actions:

- Vice Chair Beattie encouraged members to send her ideas to ensure productive administrative reviews.
- Vice Chair Beattie will convey any proposed ideas back to PROC.

IV. COI on Graduate Student Committees

In Spring 2024, GC discussed conflicts of interest on graduate student committees, and 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.

Current relevant language that is included in the Graduate Policies and Procedures is available [here](#).

At the September 17, 2024 GC meeting, members further discussed the topic noting that there is no personal or financial gain from serving on a graduate student committee, and therefore, a COI policy may not be the best solution. Members agreed to further discuss this item with VPDGE Hratchian and Graduate Studies Associate Dean Sayantani Ghosh.

Graduate Studies Associate Dean Ghosh explained to members that the use of the phrase “conflict of interest” was not her intention when initially coming to GC. She added that the issue has occurred in the past when students were faced with a problem with an advisor and were directed to their graduate group chair or PhD committee chair for a resolution, however one of those individuals happens to have some sort of collusion with the advisor that may create impartialities. Graduate Studies Associate Dean Ghosh requested a mitigation plan from GC for when and if this happens, not a conflict of interest policy.

Vice Chair Beattie requested clarification as there is already language relevant to these types of scenarios within the Graduate Policies and Procedures and Graduate Division should be able to intervene if

necessary. Graduate Studies Associate Dean Ghosh clarified that Graduate Division does not have any recourse to resolve the issue within the graduate program as the graduate program makes the ultimate decision to issue the PhD or not. She added that guidance from GC when impartialities occur on graduate student committees would be helpful when faced with these situations. After the discussion, members agreed that a broader definition, such as conflict resolution procedures, may be more appropriate than conflict of interest.

Graduate Student Representative Casper stated that she had consulted with GSA members, and they did not favor the idea of adding language that specifically restricts faculty from serving on the same committee, because it could limit the expertise that can be provided to the student. She also recommended the use of the Office of the Ombuds to assist with conflict resolution if necessary.

Actions:

- Member Frank drafted similar conflict resolution language with a different Senate committee and will share it with GC members.
- The GC Analyst will add this item to GC’s October 15 agenda for further discussion. GC will then provide their recommended guidance back to VPDGE Hratchian and Graduate Studies Associate Dean Sayantani Ghosh.

V. Consultation with Dean of University Extension Annette Roberts Webb and Director of Extension and Degree Completion Michael Pierick

A. University Extension Updates

University Extension Dean Roberts Webb presented a slide set with the following information:

- University Extension’s mission, as defined by UCOP, is to be the continuing education branch of the university that offers innovative programs in mostly non-degree spaces for adult learners. University Extension serves a broad community and acts as the bridge between the university and the community, working with faculty to help disseminate their research in practical and applied ways.
- University Extension created an [Academic Senate Handbook on University Extension Professional & Continuing Education](#), which provides descriptions of program offerings, processes for awarding credentials, and the various policies that are used as guidelines.
- University Extension conducts dual enrollment programs for pre-college students, offering XM courses to junior and senior high school students. An XM course proposal is a UC Extension administered course offering of the campus Catalog course.
- University Extension brought in over 600 enrollments and 28 new courses last year.
- The Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB) reviews Extension courses and Teacher Preparation Program (TPP) requests.

Following the presentation, members discussed who teaches University Extension courses and how the instructors are hired. Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb clarified that they hire Unit Instructors through AP Recruit to teach the courses.

Members noted how faculty would like to be linked to local stakeholders, and how University Extension could be a liaison between the faculty and the community. Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb agreed and added that they try to make connections between specific departments/faculty and the community.

A member inquired if Senate faculty could contribute to University Extension courses. Director of

Extension and Degree Completion Pierick stated that yes, Senate faculty can and have partnered on University Extension courses.

Members discussed the accreditation requirements and processes of University Extension courses and programs. Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb elaborated that there is a Senate review process if courses are for credit, noncredit courses go through Dean review and approval, and the credential program and professional certificates go through Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation.

B. Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB)

Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb stated that she previously held a position at UC Riverside, where they did not have a CAB, but instead used the School of Education to review courses. However, as UC Riverside does not have a law school, law courses would be sent to UC Davis to review and approve. She noted that she had not discussed this option with CAB members but could explore a partnership with the UC Davis School of Education if that is recommended by GC.

Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb informed members that she had one on one meetings with CAB members where she heard similar concerns of the charge being unclear, a lack of turnover in the positions, and a less than optimal process flow. She also observed that there are two individuals from SNS in the CalTeach Unit which seems redundant when expertise from another area could be utilized. Dean of University Extension Roberts Webb noted that her team is working on improving the process flow but requested guidance from GC on how to improve CAB especially in terms of the charge and turnover.

Actions:

- The GC Analyst provided the Senate Chair and Executive Director Paul with an update on today's discussion.
- The GC Analyst will add this item to GC's October 29 agenda for further discussion.

VI. Campus Wide Review Items

A. [Proposed Revisions to MAPP Sections 2013, 2014, 2053 and 2054](#)

The [Cover memo from VPAP Hansford](#) includes a brief summary of the proposed revisions.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, October 28, 2024**.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou encouraged members to review the proposed revisions and send him, Melanie, and Petra any comments by Thursday, October 10, 2024.
- The GC Analyst will add this item to GC's October 15 agenda for further discussion.

B. [SSHA Reorganization Proposal](#)

Overall, the revised Bylaws provide clearer role descriptions, emphasize the creation and function of Section Councils, and update quorum and voting requirements to ensure consistency.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Monday, November 4, 2024**.

Vice Chair Beattie noted that a previous iteration of the proposal diminished the graduate support for the social sciences, and there could be potential items related to graduate education within the proposal.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou encouraged members to review the proposal and send him, Melanie, and Petra any comments by Thursday, October 10, 2024.
- The GC Analyst will add this item to GC’s October 15 agenda for further discussion.

C. [UC Merced Interim Policy on Expressive Activities and Assembly: Protests, Demonstrations, Non-University Speakers and Signage on Campus and in University Facilities](#)

Updates align with mandatory directives issued by the UC Office of the President and include:

- Mandatory revisions required by [California State Senate Bill 108, SEC. 219, 34](#) implemented under [UC Merced’s Campus Climate Initiative](#).
- Technical updates to owner, contact information, and resources.
- Clarifications around disruptions of a university activity, proximity of activities, signage, unauthorized structures, and consequences.
- Moved Protest Oversight Group (POG) membership/roles & responsibilities to Appendix.

GC is a lead reviewer.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair **by November 18, 2024.**

Graduate Student Representative Casper noted that she has spoken with VPDGE Hratchian and GSA about commenting on this item. She added that GSA has concerns and needs to consider the implications of the policy on both graduate students and graduate student employees.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou, Vice Chair Beattie, and Member Frank agreed to serve as lead reviewers.
- The lead reviewers will share their comments with members and further discussion will take place at GC’s October 15 meeting.

VII. VPDGE Hratchian’s Report

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that the calls will go out soon for two important campus searches, the SNS Dean search and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement search. He noted that both of these positions are very important in relation to the graduate student experience.

Action:

- VPDGE Hratchian encouraged members to attend the faculty sessions of the SNS Dean search and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement search.

A. Fall 2025 Admissions

VPDGE Hratchian stated that Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training is not required for faculty but was required for graduate chairs and admissions chairs during the last admissions cycle. In addition to that, this year the Graduate Division staff participated in a set of kickoff meetings with graduate chairs and admissions chairs last week.

B. Recruiting and Continuing Fellowships

VPDGE Hratchian reported that deadlines have been set for recruiting and continuing fellowships and those deadlines will be published soon. VPDGE Hratchian added that there will be a change in the fellowship review process this year in order to complete the reviews in a timelier manner. The

reviews will be conducted with panels in hopes to adhere more strictly to the set timelines.

VPDGE Hratchian stated that the compensation for TAs and GSRs has gone up considerably over the last couple of years. The Graduate Division is working to uphold the value of fellowships so that students do not perceive fellowships as being less valuable than TAs or GSRs. Because the budget allocation has not changed, but the cost has increased, the outcome is not ideal. VPDGE Hratchian noted that his office is looking for creative ways to recruit fellowships to help counterbalance this.

VPDGE Hratchian brought an additional item to GC's attention regarding procedural requirements for students that are international relative to English proficiency exams. VPDGE Hratchian would like to revisit the condition that requires students to complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) even if the student has completed their primary or secondary education in English. In addition, VPDGE Hratchian stated that there have not been any noted concerns with using the at-home TOEFL since Covid, so he would like to explore the continued use of that.

Action:

- VPDGE Hratchian requested that members let him know if they have any objections to using the at-home TOEFL or Duolingo as English proficiency methods.

VIII. Any Other Business

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair