

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**MINUTES OF MEETING
Tuesday, October 15, 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 15, 2024. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

I. Executive Session – Voting Members Only

No minutes were recorded during the Executive Session. The action items were shared with GC voting members.

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

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

B. [October 1 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)**Actions:**

- The October 1 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.

C. [Request from University Extension for expedited review of several EDUC-X courses once they reach GC's step in Curriculog.](#)

Vice Chair Beattie requested clarification regarding the deadlines in their relation to when the courses are entered into Curriculog. Registrar Webb clarified that there is no set deadline for University Extension courses, as they will not be included the regular schedule. However, she recommended including University Extension courses under the same deadline structure. She added that University Extension courses are typically easier to grant extensions to, as the courses can be adjusted quickly.

Actions:

- The request from University Extension for expedited review of several EDUC-X courses once they reach GC's step in Curriculog was approved as presented.
- The GC Analyst notified University Extension.

D. [Request from SOE for an exception to the deadline to offer EECS 224 in Spring 2025](#)**Actions:**

- The request from SOE for an exception to the deadline to offer EECS 224 in Spring 2025

was approved as presented.

- The GC Analyst notified the SoE Curriculum Manager.

III. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou

A. October 2 CCGA Meeting

Chair Abatzoglou reported that the UCs that are on the quarter system are considering the possibility of changing to a common calendar, which is the same system UC Merced uses.

Chair Abatzoglou reported there are currently many open positions in the UC system, including Chancellor positions.

CCGA members discussed the Future of Doctoral Education Report, which should be released soon. Chair Abatzoglou noted that GC will need to pay attention to this Report and see if there is any action for GC to take in response to it.

CCGA members discussed budgetary issues and the potential for a significant reduction in the state budget of 8% next year.

CCGA members contemplated the idea of professional development within graduate education becoming more prevalent. UC Online was proposed as an option to deliver professional development offerings such as badges and certificates.

B. October 7 Divisional Council Meeting

EVC/Provost Dumont informed Divisional Council members that enrollment is flat. The current total is 9,100 students, which is about three hundred students less than what the financial model assumed was required in order to balance the budget. She added that the campus is optimistic that the new majors that were approved last year will help increase enrollment.

Divisional Council members expressed concern about the cost of supporting graduate students and the decreasing support from the campus, particularly with the removal of the Tuition Reduction Program.

Interim VCSA O'Bruba gave a presentation on phase one and future phases for outdoor space activation which includes more shade, more furniture options (comfortable, colorful, variety of configurations), and more nighttime lighting.

C. GC representative for PROC Administrative Review Meeting on November 21, 2024 from 3:00pm – 4:30pm

Vice Chair Beattie provided contextual information pertaining to this request. She added that it will be a good opportunity for GC to provide input, which could help improve the PROC administrative review processes.

Actions:

- Member Howell volunteered to serve as the GC representative for the PROC Administrative Review Meeting scheduled to take place on November 21, 2024 from 3:00pm – 4:30pm.
- The GC Analyst notified Senate ED Paul.

IV. Conflict Resolution for Graduate 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.

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.

At the October 1, 2024 GC meeting, members further discussed the topic with Graduate Studies Associate Dean Sayantani Ghosh and agreed that a broader definition, such as conflict resolution procedures, may be more appropriate than conflict of interest.

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

Members discussed how this topic has progressed from a conflict-of-interest issue to a conflict resolution issue. As there is already language in the Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook addressing conflict resolution, members noted that it was unclear where more detail was needed to address this issue.

VPDGE Hratchian provided more historical information pertaining to Graduate Division's original request. He noted that there is not only a need to protect students, but also a need to uphold faculty's welfare so that the conflict does not become a formal complaint. He added that he recently met with the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and got the sense that students feel as if in these types of situations, faculty are merely protecting themselves, and there is nobody advocating for the students. Graduate Student Representative Casper noted that GSA is considering creating a role, such as a Student Advocate, for this particular reason. Vice Chair Beattie inquired if there were similar positions at other UC campuses. VPDGE Hratchian noted that he is unaware of similar positions at other UC campuses but can reach out to other campus' graduate deans to ask.

Graduate Student Representative Casper stated that she had previously consulted with GSA members regarding conflict resolution on graduate committees. GSA members noted that this did not seem to be too much of an issue. They added that it may even limit the expertise on graduate committees, which could negatively affect graduate students.

Members discussed potential solutions to this request that would not only protect the faculty but would also support students. Some ideas included having an individual or committee within departments tasked with resolving these types of conflicts, having a conflict resolution procedure added to the department's Policies and Procedures (P&Ps), or creating best practices and recommendations for department chairs.

Actions:

- Chair Abatzoglou will draft a recommendation and circulate it to voting members for review and further comment.
- Upon approval, the GC Analyst will provide GC's recommendations to VPDGE Hratchian and Graduate Studies Associate Dean Ghosh.

V. Discussion: Graduate Funding

- A. How is normative time-to-degree defined?
- B. Align policies and procedures to reflect real time-to-degree.
- C. The impacts of time-to-degree on allocated funding and impact of being unable to financially support students late in their degree program. Currently an isolated problem, but what potential is there for more widespread issues on the horizon?

Chair Abatzoglou introduced the topic noting how normative time-to-degree can affect various aspects of graduate funding. He also acknowledged GC's previous concern that some graduate group's normative time-to-degree stated in their policies may not match the actual normative time-to-degree for their students.

VPDGE Hratchian stated that he does not find this to be a big concern, as only 4% of the entire graduate student population is more than one year beyond their normative time-to-degree for their program. He added that the normative time-to-degree that is being used to generate this percentage in the Graduate Division comes from the P&Ps, which were GC And CCGA approved. Some department chairs have asked how to change their normative time-to-degree within their department. VPDGE Hratchian noted that any changes would need to be approved by GC but was unsure if CCGA would also need to approve the change. The GC Analyst confirmed that she would look into this.

VPDGE Hratchian acknowledged that there has been a lot of emphasis from campus leadership regarding normative time-to-degree and its impact on enrollment and funding commitments. He added that funding commitments for graduate students will be provided regardless of their time-to-degree if they are making good academic progress. Projections are done each year to account for how many continuing students there will be in order to know how many students will need to be funded. VPDGE Hratchian added that the difference at other campuses is that the local departments never have to articulate out their plan because they own all of the deficits that occur if they over enroll, while at UC Merced this occurs at the School level.

VPDGE Hratchian informed GC members that the Block Grant Funding memo will be sent out soon. Included in the memo are three components that were part of this year's funding scheme:

- 1) Enrollment
- 2) Completion in the previous year
- 3) Dissertation fellowships

Action:

- The GC Analyst checked the policies and procedures to see if CCGA review is required for changes to normative time-to-degree and shared this information with Chair Abatzoglou and VPDGE Hratchian.

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.

At the October 1, 2024 GC meeting, Chair Abatzoglou asked members to review the proposed revisions and share any comments.

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

Actions:

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

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.

At the October 1, 2024 GC meeting, Chair Abatzoglou asked members to review the proposal and share any comments.

Vice Chair Beattie stated that she would like to review the documents to see how staff plan to be divided for graduate programs. VPDGE Hratchian requested that he be informed of GC's comments on this item so that he can advocate for potential concerns in the next Dean's Council meeting.

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

Actions:

- Vice Chair Beattie agreed to serve as lead reviewer. The other Policy Subcommittee members will also help lead the review.
- The lead reviewer(s) will share their comments with members and further discussion will take place at GC's October 29 meeting.

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.

Lead Reviewers: Policy Subcommittee Members Abatzoglou, Beattie, and Frank

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

Chair Abatzoglou reviewed the draft memo with members and informed them that he had since received additional comments from Vice Chair Beattie and Member Frank. One point that GC would like clarification on is in the difference between graduate students as employees versus as students for the context of this policy.

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

Actions:

- Members discussed the draft memo and proposed additional comments.
- The GC Analyst will update the memo based on the committee's comments and add this item to GC's October 29 Consent Calendar on the agenda.

VII. VPDGE Hratchian's Report

- A. [Degrees of Determination Program](#)
- B. 25% Tuition Reduction Program

VPDGE Hratchian was asked a pressing question from the Senate leadership: “Why are faculty responsible for 100% of graduate student fees and tuition even after advancement to candidacy, in contrast to many other UC campuses and peer institutions?”

VPDGE Hratchian stated that he is unsure, but there is no additional funding to cover the costs. He added that to his knowledge, Graduate Divisions at other UCs do not have similar tuition reduction programs. Members then reviewed a document containing information on how other UC campuses are offsetting these types of costs. VPDGE Hratchian noted that the information is not congruent with what he has heard from other campuses and inquired about sharing the information with other campus' school deans in an effort to gather more information.

VPDGE Hratchian added that this was addressed in the past when former EVC/Provost Camfield covered differentials for pre-tenured faculty who showed that they needed funds to support students. VPDGE Hratchian also filled funding gaps over the years, but there is currently no additional funding to support 100% of graduate student fees and tuition. One option VPDGE Hratchian suggested was to take \$1.5 million from Continuing and Recruitment Fellowships and put it into a Block Grant to offset the costs. Alternatively, endowment funds could be used, or the number of fellowships could be decreased.

Vice Chair Beattie noted that the rise in TA and GSR costs may lead to a shift in an increase in the hiring of Postdoctoral Scholars instead of GSRs. VPDGE Hratchian stated that he did not disagree; however, the cost of Postdoctoral Scholar hires is still much higher than GSR hires.

Actions:

- The GC Analyst provided an update to Senate ED Paul regarding VPDGE Hratchian's Report on the 25% Tuition Reduction Program.
- The GC Analyst asked Senate ED Paul if the summary of how other campuses are dealing with the increased costs of TAs and GSRs can be shared with other UC Graduate Divisions.

C. Externally Funded GSR Traineeships and GSR Fellowships

Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed.

VIII. Any Other Business

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair