

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

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

Pursuant to call, the Graduate Council met at 12:00pm on November 12, 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

**Action:**

- Today's Agenda was approved as presented.

B. [October 29 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)

**Action:**

- The October 29 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

C. Courses

[ES - 214 - Physical Hydrology](#) (Modify Existing; Spring 2026)

**Action:**

- ES – 214 was approved as presented and Curriculog was updated accordingly.

**III. Consultation with Dr. Margo Vener and Professor Joel Spencer**

A. Update on Medical Education

Dr. Vener presented her PowerPoint slides, available [here](#), highlighting the following Medical Education updates:

- Medical Education is important in the San Joaquin Valley, as there is a shortage of physicians in all specialties, and of the physicians that are active, a substantial percentage of them are at or above retirement age. Consequently, the physician shortage is slated to decline from a demographic standpoint, which has a direct impact on health outcomes in the San Joaquin Valley.
- UC Merced is working in partnership with UCSF School of Medicine and UCSF Fresno, which is a regional medical campus of UCSF.
- Students will attend UC Merced for 4 years and complete one of the approved majors, which will include the first year and a half of Medical School. Then, they will transition to UCSF Fresno for their clinical clerkship and sub-internship.
- Admissions criteria includes being a high school senior, applying to UC Merced as a first-year student, having deep ties to the San Juaquin Valley, maintaining a GPA of 3.6, etc.

- UC Merced received over 1,200 applications and admitted 15 students into the first cohort who have now completed their first year.
- The Department of Medical Education was approved in Spring 2024 and the first 6 faculty members have been hired.
- The pillars of the baccalaureate program are strong academics, mentorship, experiential learning, community engagement, research/scholarship, professionalism, and cohort building.
- The first cohort of BS/MD students began in Fall 2023 and will graduate with their MD in Spring 2031.
- The Medical Education Building at UC Merced is being built and will also house social sciences, public health, and psychology.
- After consulting with the Academic Senate, the plan is to submit a BS/MD Dual Degree Proposal.
- The state is providing funding for Medical Education each year, which is shared between the three-campus partnership. No UC Merced funding has or will be requested for faculty, staff, or department resources.
- The goal is to expand admittances over time so that UC Merced can eventually have its own independent Medical School.

Chair Abatzoglou sought clarification on the curriculum and whether it is administered through UCSF. Dr. Vener confirmed that the accreditation is through UCSF. UC Merced will not be able to deliver its own curriculum until it establishes its own Medical School.

Members wondered whether the anatomy labs are going to be held locally or at the UCSF Fresno campus. Dr. Vener stated that the new UC Merced Medical Education Building will include anatomy lab space.

Vice Chair Beattie inquired about the plan and timeline to increase enrollment in the program. Dr. Vener replied that it is dependent on the funding. She added that the tuition that students pay does not cover the amount of funding it takes to support the program. Another limitation is that clinical placements must also be identified for the students. The goal is to admit approximately 12-15 undergraduates per year with a full capacity of 50 students at the Medical School level.

**Action:**

- GC will invite Dr. Margo Vener and Professor Joel Spencer to a Spring 2025 GC meeting.

**IV. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou**

A. October 29 and 30 Shared Governance Retreat

Chair Abatzoglou and VPDGE Hratchian reported on GC and the Graduate Division's efforts related to the preparation and training of graduate students. Attendees discussed whether a collective means could be determined to offer programming, essentially training coursework, to some of the small graduate programs on campus. Attendees also discussed the potential for more Master's programs, 4+1 hybrid degree programs, and graduate students receiving their pay on time.

**Action:**

- Chair Abatzoglou will circulate the slide deck that he presented at the Shared Governance Retreat.

B. October 31 SNS & SOE Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting

Chair Abatzoglou stated that there is not adequate data for program chairs, which has created

challenges.

A discussion was held as to whether graduate groups should consider conducting Fall admissions for individuals who would begin their coursework in the Spring.

C. November 4 Divisional Council Meeting

Chair Abatzoglou did not report on the November 4 DivCo meeting.

D. November 6 CCGA Meeting

CCGA members discussed UC Online in relation to offering graduate courses. Specifically, some graduate programs that have a language requirement may be hard to capture in an online version of the degree.

Calbridge, which is a statewide network of CSU, UC, and community colleges that support underrepresented groups in STEM fields, may only have funding for one or two more years. CCGA members discussed possible solutions, such as the Summer Bridge Program. Such programs can also assist students in getting started earlier, allowing them to be more successful in their degree.

CCGA members discussed issues with graduate student funding, similar to those raised at UC Merced.

**V. Discussion: GSR vs Postdoctoral Scholar Funding**

At the October 15, 2024 GC meeting, members discussed the differences between the current costs associated with faculty support of a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) versus a Postdoctoral Scholar.

Members discussed their various perspectives and experiences with hiring GSRs versus Postdoctoral Scholars. It was noted that not only is funding considered when making the decision to hire a GSR or Postdoctoral Scholar, but also work output and trust. The expectation is that Postdoctoral Scholars are full-time and will have a higher work output than a GSR, which may incline faculty to choose Postdoctoral Scholars over GSRs. However, it is important to remember that the goal of faculty as educators is to mentor students. Some members added that they prefer GSRs to Postdoctoral Scholars because graduate students can be trained by their faculty mentors and have more time to devote to research. Members also discussed the challenges of recruiting qualified graduate students and Postdoctoral Scholars. Several members believe it is more challenging to hire high quality Postdoctoral Scholars while other members find it more challenging to recruit high quality graduate students. It was noted that Postdoctoral Scholars typically have more experience, which is valuable, but can be risky to hire, as they can leave unexpectedly. Members also discussed the tradeoffs in terms of budgeting for GSRs versus Postdoctoral Scholars, as the general belief is that Postdoctoral Scholars are less expensive than GSRs.

One member noted that another component to deciding which type of hire is best is the cap on the number of students that a faculty member can employ. The campus needs to be clear about whether the cap is on the number of TAs or on the number of students employed in total, including GSRs. GC believes that if this were clearer, there may be more of an incentive to recruit more students into one's program.

VPDGE Hratchian noted that one size does not fit all, and faculty have different views on what is more advantageous for their personal satisfaction. VPDGE Hratchian added that he has not seen evidence that GSR pay increases have dissuaded faculty from hiring GSRs, and in fact, there has still been an increase

in GSR hiring. Another consideration is the amount of funding it takes to hire and support a TA versus GSR. At UC Merced, GSRs tend to be paid at a lower rate compared to other UCs, especially in the STEM fields, partially due to the cost of living in the Central Valley. In addition, VPDGE Hratchian stated that it is important to keep in mind that strong Postdoctoral Scholar communities end up developing at campuses that already have strong research and scholarships.

Graduate Student Representative Casper stated that from a student's perspective, the hiring of a TA versus a GSR should not be determined solely by finances, but also taking into consideration the student experience. For example, many students prefer a TA appointment from a financial perspective; however, some students fall behind on their coursework because it requires a lot of their time. She added that she had a positive experience as a GSR because she was able to enjoy and immerse herself into her research.

## **VI. VPDGE Hratchian's Report**

### **A. Carnegie Community Engagement Reclass Planning**

UC Merced will be applying for a Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. Professor Marjorie Zatz is taking the lead on this initiative and is currently putting the application together. The proposal requires input from faculty and other campus stakeholders. One challenge is that the application is complex and large, with a limited timeframe to complete it.

#### **Action:**

- VPDGE Hratchian will circulate a slide deck containing information on the Carnegie Community Engagement Reclass Planning to committee members.

### **B. Supporting First-Year/Incoming International Students**

VPDGE Hratchian noted that he would like to see an increase in GSA's engagement in the broader student community and would also like to know how the Graduate Division can better support GSA. Discussions were held on how to productively support first-year and incoming international students. Specifically, the possibility of adding a few days to GROW to help accommodate international students.

VPDGE Hratchian informed members that he spoke to VPAP Hansford following his visit to the October 29 GC meeting regarding AB 810 and SB 791. VPAP Hansford and VPDGE Hratchian appreciated GC's comments and are looking into how to address the possible challenges with implementation.

## **VII. Any Other Business**

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair