

GRADUATE COUNCIL (GC)**MEETING MINUTES****Tuesday, November 26, 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 26, 2024. Chair John Abatzoglou presiding.

I. Consent Calendar**A. Today's Agenda****Action:**

- Today's Agenda was approved as presented.

B. [November 12 Draft Meeting Minutes](#)**Action:**

- The November 12 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

C. [SSHA Petition for a Graduate Student to Teach an Upper Division Course for Spring 2025](#)**Action:**

- The petition was approved as presented.
- Chair Abatzoglou signed the petition, and the GC Analyst notified VPDGE Hratchian.

D. Courses

[MBSE - 212 - Thermodynamics and Kinetics](#) (Modify Existing; Fall 2025)

Action:

- MBSE – 212 was approved as presented and Curriculog will be updated accordingly.

[QSB - 286 - Cooperative-Based Graduate Research Experience](#) (New; Spring 2025)

The Course Proposal Subcommittee noted that the number of contact hours appeared too high. Members suggested either lowering the number of contact hours or increasing the credit hours.

Action:

- GC agreed to return QSB – 286 to the proposer and ask for clarification regarding the non-contact hours. Curriculog was updated accordingly.

II. Chair's Report – John Abatzoglou**A. November 14 All Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting**

Graduate Group Chairs discussed how the Graduate Division was moving forward with waivers, vouchers, etc. this academic year.

The ReGROW Program was started last year in an effort to bring individuals together to

harmonize on the basic elements of degree requirements. This year, the Graduate Division recommended each graduate group provide their own ReGROW, which deemed successful. Not only does ReGROW provide a sense of community, but it also provides an opportunity to ensure that graduate students are not ignored after their first year. Furthermore, it serves as an opportunity to remind graduate students of the policies and procedures.

Within the next year, UC Merced will graduate its 1,000th PhD student. The Graduate Division is exploring options for a celebration or recognition of this accomplishment.

B. November 18 Divisional Council Meeting

Chair Mitchell encouraged committees to review the Shared Governance Retreat notes and identify areas in which committees may engage this year. Chair Abatzoglou noted that this is an opportunity to revisit GC's priorities for this academic year.

Divisional Council Members discussed providing an announcement to the broader community regarding reaffirmation of community values following the election. The election results may have induced concerns among some international or undocumented students including no longer feeling welcome at the university. GC members discussed various ways that a message could be communicated to graduate students. One option was for the Graduate Division to provide a message containing the various support services and resources to graduate students rather than merely a statement. A consultant noted that sending a message with links would still not address graduate students' concerns, as there are no policies in place that can offer them protection. Another member suggested taking an approach similar to what was done during the pandemic, which was to create a webpage that includes a statement, resources, and individuals to contact. GC members agreed this would be a good idea, as it could be fluid and continually updated with the appropriate information. Another suggestion was for the Office of International Affairs to provide workshops for both international and undocumented students.

III. Vice Chair's Report – Irene Beattie

A. November 18 PROC Meeting

The campus is engaging in preplanning for Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) reaccreditation. As UC Merced did very well in its previous accreditation, there are two possible pathways. There is a traditional pathway where a large report is written containing multiple sections, the document is reviewed, and then visitors come on site for the accreditation. The second option is a project-based pathway where the university chooses what projects it would like to work on. PROC is still discussing which pathway would be best for UC Merced.

B. November 19 PROC Meeting Re: Appeal for Departmental Program and Shared Program Review Structure

PROC is gathering information on how program review is conducted at other UC campuses. Some campuses conduct individual program reviews, while majority of campuses conduct departmental reviews, and one campus conducts school reviews.

PROC members discussed the pros and cons of each approach. Members believe that individual program reviews could potentially stifle the creation of new programs and make it more challenging

to have interdisciplinary programs. PROC members favored shared departmental review whereby departments are reviewed, and then interdisciplinary programs are reviewed somewhat separately under a different provision.

A member noted that faculty often feel overwhelmed when conducting individual program reviews due to the amount of review work that is required. Additionally, the interaction between undergraduate and graduate programs must be considered during the review process, as many elements of the department are interconnected. Furthermore, individuals are not hired into programs, but rather into departments. Members also suggested that, in a departmental review, PROC could be given clearer instructions to ensure that undergraduate programs are not overlooked in the process.

Action:

- Members are to send considerations pertaining to this item to Vice Chair Beattie by Friday, December 6 to present at the December 9 PROC meeting.

IV. Waivers for Disadvantaged Students – Jennifer Howell

Some departments are claiming to have a process for graduate application fee waivers in-house, including those based on financial need. This may be problematic as applicants are being asked to directly disclose their financial status to the individuals deciding on their admission and possibly their potential advisor. This could potentially create bias in the decision-making process.

Chair Abatzoglou noted that some of these concerns may be due to miscommunication and reminded members that this was discussed at the November 14 All Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting. The Graduate Division has changed the way in which they provide monies directly towards fee waivers, vouchers, etc. Chair Abatzoglou added that there are ways for students to receive waivers and shared the following resources:

- 1) [All 2023 Fee Waiver Eligible Programs](#)
- 2) [Graduate Application Fee Voucher Request](#)
- 3) Graduate groups' operating funds can be used for vouchers (Graduate Division is no longer matching)
- 4) PI's with flexible funds can create vouchers

One member questioned why the graduate group is required to pay the entire fee when the funding is internal. It was noted that this may serve as a source of income for the Graduate Division.

Actions:

- Members agreed to further discuss this item at a future GC meeting.
- Members are to send questions for VPDGE Hratchian to the GC Analyst by Friday, December 6.

V. Consultation with Associate Vice Chancellor of Equity, Justice, & Inclusive Excellence Zulema Valdez

A. UC Academic Congress on Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI)

AVC Valdez attended the UC Academic Congress on HSIs, where there was a notable push to make all UCs HSIs. She noted that there was also an emphasis on the research aspect of HSIs and what it means for a UC to be an HSRI. As of this year, seven of the nine UC campuses with undergraduate student populations qualify as Hispanic-Serving Institutions, while two have not yet achieved this status.

One topic discussed at the UC Academic Congress on HSRI was that some of the UCs are research universities first and emergent HSIs, while other UCs are HSIs looking to emerge as research universities or HSRI. AVC Valdez added that UC Merced is not an HSRI, as it does not have R1 status. Once UC Merced reaches R1 status, it will emerge as an HSRI.

AVC Valdez was proud to report that UC Merced was very well attended and represented at the UC Academic Congress on HSRI.

AVC Valdez informed GC members that in order to qualify as an HSI, 25% of the undergraduate population must be represented as Latinx. The HSI designation provides access to specific funding for the university and highlights the need to develop specialized programs aimed at supporting Latinx success. She added that at UC Merced, this could be extended to graduate students, as the current graduate student population is 19% Latinx.

AVC Valdez stated that UC Merced does not yet have a comprehensive approach to HSI, and as a result, the campus is working to assemble a task force dedicated to advancing HSI efforts.

GC members expressed enthusiasm for the university striving to obtain HSRI status. It was suggested that an HSI framework could be incorporated into the Summer Bridge Program for graduate students. Additionally, any efforts to explicitly inform students of UC Merced's identity as an HSI would be beneficial. One example of this could be incorporating it into the “hidden curriculum” for students. AVC Valdez noted that there is also a “hidden curriculum” for faculty who teach an HSI population.

VI. Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB)/Extension Program – Vice Chair Beattie

At the October 1, 2024 GC meeting, members met with Dean of University Extension Annette Roberts Webb and Director of Extension and Degree Completion Michael Pierick to discuss concerns with CAB. During the discussion, Dean of University Extension Annette Roberts Webb requested guidance from GC on how to improve CAB, especially in terms of the charge and turnover. At the October 29, 2024 GC meeting, members met with CAB members Mayya Tokman and Zenaida Aguirre-Munoz to discuss their experience serving on CAB.

Supporting Documentation:

- Senate Regulations regarding University Extension Credit Courses are available [here](#).
- UC Berkeley’s Regulation of the Academic Senate related to instructors of University Extension Courses is available [here](#).
- Additional information regarding CAB and the Teacher Practitioner Advisory Board (TPAB) is available [here](#).

Vice Chair Beattie stated that the original CAB charge essentially tasked CAB with approving CRFs only; however, when considering faculty oversight of programs, faculty are responsible for much more than just approving CRFs. Currently, educational effectiveness is not assessed by CAB, but rather the TPAB, which does not include Senate representation. This is concerning as the Senate Regulations regarding University Extension states that courses should be approved by Senate faculty.

Vice Chair Beattie summarized the current issues that need to be addressed, including the fact that the charge is too narrow and needs to be revised to align with policy, and that the composition of CAB must include the appropriate members and rotate over time. Chair Abatzoglou agreed that the composition of CAB should include members with the appropriate expertise, such as one or two individuals from another

UC, a GC voting member, a UGC voting member, and an individual from the Natural Sciences Education Minor Degree Program. Vice Chair Beattie agreed and added that it might be useful to meet with individuals from other UCs who interface with their University Extension to learn from their model; however, she noted that UC Merced's situation is unique because other campuses have a Department of Education or other body approving the curriculum, rather than a committee like CAB.

Another possible model would be similar to UC Berkely's where a Senate committee works directly with University Extension. In this model, the authority is delegated to approve who teaches the classes.

Action:

- The GC Analyst will consult with the Senate Executive Director and provide an update to Chair Abatzoglou and Vice Chair Beattie on next steps.

VII. October 30 Governance Retreat Priorities – Chair Abatzoglou

At the conclusion of the October 30 session, participants shared their top priorities and key takeaways, highlighting areas of focus for future action. In alignment with the request from Senate leadership, Senate Committees are encouraged to review these priorities and identify those they wish to address this academic year. Chair Abatzoglou invites GC to consider addressing the following priorities:

- 1) What are ways in which GC can help support the development of Master's programs at UCM?
 - Where is there place-based demand that can serve the valley/regional workforce needs?
 - Where is there an opportunity for novel MS programs?
 - Where is there faculty expertise to deliver curriculum?
 - Can we leverage 4+1 hybrid programs and other creative means (extension-Masters pathways)?
 - How do MS take away from or complement existing UG and PhD programs?
 - What incentives do faculty/programs have for building something new?
- 2) How do we better socialize/share common preparation and training for graduate students across graduate groups?
- 3) Are there pathways to ensure better degree completion and outcome for graduate students, particularly for those from traditionally underrepresented groups?

Vice Chair Beattie recommended that GC explore graduate student preparation and training that integrates HSI initiatives, specifically in terms of programming and messaging.

Members discussed the low enrollment numbers of graduate students in courses offered by undergraduate groups and wondered whether graduate students felt disincentivized to take these courses or if they simply were unaware that they could enroll in them. Members agreed that this could be better communicated to the students. Chair Abatzoglou added that at the November 14 All Graduate Group Chairs' Meeting, several Chairs noted that they could do a better job in terms of sharing courses that they think could be of interest to a broader group.

Chair Abatzoglou reported that at the Shared Governance Retreat, the administration focused primarily on developing Master's programs at UC Merced. Doing so could create a more vibrant community for graduate training and also support the region by producing people with advanced degrees.

Members discussed the idea of developing and offering more Master's programs. It was noted that other universities offer more Master's programs because these programs are professional training programs,

which UC Merced has not yet dedicated resources to yet. Additionally, if the development of Master’s programs is pursued, it needs to be done in an ethical way and not solely as a means to generate revenue. Another concern raised was that if quality Master’s programs were not offered at UC Merced, it may damage the university’s reputation for graduate education broadly. Additionally, faculty are already stretched thin, which may negatively affect the PhD and Bachelor’s programs, as well as faculty availability.

A consultant stated that some of UC Merced’s current Master’s students do not feel supported or included in the university community. It would appear unfair and irresponsible to ask more Master’s students to attend UC Merced when the campus is not adequately supporting current Master’s students. The consultant added that completing a Master’s degree is not necessary for all professions.

Another consultant stated that, from an industry perspective, the general belief is that one should return to school for a Master’s degree only if it provides access to a job they cannot acquire without a higher degree. Specifically, general Master’s degrees may not be valuable, whereas targeted Master’s programs can be.

Actions:

- The GC Analyst will provide the Senate Executive Director with an update.
- Members will further discuss at a future GC meeting the priorities they would like to address this year.

VIII. Systemwide Review Item – Chair Abatzoglou

- A. [Proposed Revisions to the Presidential Policy on the Use of Animals in Research, Teaching, and Testing](#)
The proposed revised policy would update and replace UC’s current policy “[Use of Animals in Research and Teaching](#)”.

GC is a lead reviewer.

Actions:

- Member Frank agreed to serve as lead reviewer.
- The lead reviewer will send their comments to the GC Analyst by Wednesday, January 8, 2024.
- GC voting members will be invited to review the lead reviewer’s draft memo at a future GC meeting.
- Comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, January 31, 2025.

IX. Any Other Business

Chemistry is proposing a PharmD Hybrid Degree Program where students would complete their undergraduate degree at UC Merced in four years by either majoring in Biochemistry, Biological Sciences B.A., or Biological Sciences B.S. Then, they would transfer to UCSF to complete two years of PharmD school and one year of general graduate school (3 years). UC Merced’s current policy for establishing an undergraduate/graduate hybrid degree program states that only 12 units are allowed to count towards both the undergraduate and graduate portion of the degree; however, the proposers may request to double count 17 units.

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

Attest: John Abatzoglou, GC Chair