

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)

Thursday, May 9, 2024

11:30am – 1:00pm

ADMIN 245

MINUTES OF MEETING

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom met at 11:30am on May 9, 2024. Chair Jayson Beaster-Jones presiding.

I. Chair's Report – Jayson Beaster-JonesA. [DivCo Updates](#) (April 29)

Senate Chair Hibbing provided an update on campus demonstrations and Commencement.

Chair Beaster-Jones notified FWAF members that he is serving on the Protest Oversight Group (POG) as the FWAF Chair is automatically an ex-officio member, per the policy on Expressive Activities and Assembly. POG serves as a liaison between the campus and protestors. Chair Beaster-Jones noted that both POG and DivCo are working towards the same goal of keeping the campus community safe.

FWAF members reviewed the UC Merced policy on Expressive Activities and Assembly.

B. [May 3 Meeting of the Division](#)

Due to a lack of quorum, the Merced Division was issued an electronic ballot after the meeting to vote on the proposed amendments to the Divisional Senate Bylaws and Regulations.

II. Consent Calendar

A. Today's agenda

B. [April 18 draft Meeting Minutes](#)

Action: Today's agenda and the April 18 Meeting Minutes were approved as presented. The FWAF analyst updated the Senate website accordingly.

III. Systemwide UpdatesA. [UCAF Updates](#) (April 22) – David Jennings

UCAF members discussed the UC Regents Policy on Public and Discretionary Statements by Academic Units.

UCAF members also discussed the new union negotiations for GSRs and TAs and the potential impact of such negotiations on faculty's Academic Freedom.

IV. Consultation with VPAP Hansford

VPAP Hansford stated that planning is underway for the upcoming commencement ceremonies and UC Board of Regents meeting. He added that he is glad the Senate has been included in the

discussions and represented on POG through Chair Beaster-Jones. VPAP Hansford also shared that there is a POG chat where updates and communication can be transmitted very quickly.

Members consulted with VPAP Hansford on ways to best keep the campus community safe during the upcoming commencement ceremonies and UC Board of Regents meeting.

Members inquired if there was a recommended approach for faculty if they wished to be present during protests as observers or advocates for the students.

Action: Chair Beaster-Jones will consult with the POG regarding faculty's role in the possible protests and encampments at UC Merced.

V. **Consultation with AVPAP Song**

A. Formal Faculty Misconduct Complaint Process

AVPAP Song shared a slide set with FWAF members outlining UC Merced's Senate faculty misconduct complaint process. She explained the discipline process as it relates to APM 016 and MAPP 016. AVPAP Song also noted that her office works closely with other campus partners, such as the Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) and the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED), if the alleged misconduct intersects with their offices.

AVPAP Song noted that confidentiality is very important to consider while handling matters of potential misconduct and discipline. She also acknowledged that there needs to be a better balance between confidentiality and providing assurance to the campus that these matters are being worked on. AVPAP Song shared that her office has recently started to utilize a new software that will help to track cases and will at some point be able to provide data to show an overview of the state of discipline and conduct on our campus and how the issues were generally resolved.

FWAF members then consulted with AVPAP Song regarding the confidentiality of the respondent and why the complainant is not privy to the outcome of the complaint.

Action: In the Fall, FWAF will invite AVPAP Song to a meeting to continue conversations regarding this topic.

VI. **UC Merced Faculty Association (UCMFA) – UCMFA Board Members Charlie Eaton and Maria-Elena Young**

UCMFA is an independent faculty advocacy group dedicated to representing and advocating for the interests of faculty members at UC Merced. They work towards fostering a supportive academic environment and addressing faculty concerns.

UCMFA complements work done by UCM Academic Senate members such as FWAF. As a dues-sponsored organization, however, UCMFA is completely independent and can focus on non-academic issues such as economic and employment-related concerns before various state entities. UC Faculty associations, for example, were instrumental in enacting the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act of 1979.

UCMFA Board Members Eaton and Young briefly described the structure of the organization to FWF members. UCMFA is under the umbrella of The Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) and is currently run by an Executive Board consisting of six members. The Executive Board has been working to get the infrastructure of the organization in place and to also raise the percentage of members.

A current goal of UCMFA is to have elections in the Fall for a more formal leadership structure consisting of a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Steering Committee. Other goals for the Fall include developing peer support groups and composing a welcome letter to EVC/P Dumont.

UCMFA is an association that requires a paid membership. There are different tiers of dues depending on a faculty's rank. A large portion of the dues go to CUCFA, while other portions go towards administrative support and liaising with other faculty associations.

Members discussed the benefit of having a faculty association and ways in which the Senate could collaborate with the UCMFA. It was noted that the UCMFA could be a voice for UC Merced faculty in addition to the Senate. At times, faculty associations can even act more quickly than the Senate and can also be more concerted in their efforts.

FWF members recommended that UCMFA reach out to faculty for suggestions on what UCMFA should prioritize, much like the outreach FWF conducted with the Department Chairs in the Fall 2023 semester. The rationale being that the number of memberships would grow and the buy-in from the faculty would be increased if they knew that their concerns were going to be addressed by UCMFA.

Actions:

- The FWF analyst sent Professor Eaton and Professor Young the results from FWF's request to Department Chairs regarding their FWF-related priorities.
- In the Fall, FWF will invite the UCMFA leads back to a meeting to discuss future collaborations and new developments.

VII. Grant Proposal Submissions – Eva De Alba

The [Sponsored Projects Office \(SPO\)](#) is the authorized office to submit faculty proposals to sponsors. At times, SPO will suggest or request changes on grant proposals that can delay the proposal's submission. As the writing and submission of grant proposals is a way to express Academic Freedom, and the results from these grant applications can affect merits and promotions, it is essential that proposal submissions move forward in a timely manner.

Members noted that faculty have expressed difficulties working with SPO and, at times, SPO requires faculty to change components of their proposals, even when they are completely compliant with a sponsor's guidelines. Additionally, the required revisions from SPO may alter the proposal in a negative way which can jeopardize the way that reviewers interpret the proposal.

Members discussed what steps could be initiated in order to request an examination of SPO that could lead to regulations being established on the capabilities of SPO in their dealings with grant proposals. ED Paul suggested raising this issue with the Committee on Research (CoR). Members

agreed that it would be beneficial to send a memo to CoR noting their concerns and invite CoR to add content to the memo, as relevant.

Actions:

- The FWAF analyst will draft a memo containing the committee's comments and circulate it for members to review.
- A joint FWAF/CoR memo will be sent to DivCo.

VIII. Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) Access – Vice-Chair Ma

Vice-Chair Ma received an email from a colleague noting the limited availability of the ECEC and the inadequate childcare access in Merced in general.

Action: Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed and will be added as an agenda item in the Fall.

IX. Other Business

Action: Chair Beaster-Jones will consult with the UCFW Healthcare Task Force regarding FWAF's healthcare concerns and report back to members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.
Attest: Jayson Beaster-Jones, FWAF Chair