

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 5, 2024
1:00pm – 2:30pm
ADMIN 345

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom met at 1:00pm on September 5, 2024. Chair Beaster-Jones presiding

I. Welcome and Introductions – All

Chair Beaster-Jones introduced himself and welcomed new and returning members. Members introduced themselves and noted their years of service at UC Merced and on FWAF.

II. Consent Calendar – Chair Beaster-Jones

A. Today's Agenda

Action:

- The agenda was approved as presented.
- The FWAF Analyst will update the Senate website accordingly.

B. [FWAF Conflict of Interest Policy¹](#)

Action:

- FWAF's COI Policy was approved as presented on September 6, 2024. The FWAF Analyst notified Fatima and the Senate Chair that FWAF did not have any concerns with its COI Policy.

III. Informational: FWAF Resources – Chair Beaster-Jones

Members are encouraged to read the information described below prior to the meeting.

A. Duties of FWAF

The Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF) considers and advises on matters related to the welfare of faculty, and reviews and makes recommendations with respect to any University-related issues that may affect the academic freedom of the University Community. Topics for consideration include salaries, benefits, insurance, retirement, housing, and conditions of employment. FWAF maintains liaison with the [University Committee on Faculty Welfare](#) (UCFW) and the [University Committee on Academic Freedom](#) (UCAF).

Chair Beaster-Jones further explained that FWAF focuses on policy issues related to quality of life for faculty, such as healthcare, access to childcare, issues with financial systems, and occasionally instances with conflict between faculty.

¹ All Senate Committees are encouraged to review their respective COI policy at their first meeting in the Fall. All Senate Committees COI policies are available on the Senate website: <https://senate.ucmerced.edu/conflict-interest>

Chair Beaster-Jones is the UCM representative for the University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) which addresses childcare issues, healthcare issues, and other faculty welfare issues that are common across campuses.

B. [FWAF's Bylaws](#)

C. [Membership](#)

- Jayson Beaster-Jones, Chair, SSHA
- Yanbao Ma, Vice Chair, SOE
- Kinjal Dasbiswas, SNS
- Jennifer Lu, SOE
- Beth Nowadnick, SOE
- Ma Vang, SSHA

Ex-Officio (non-voting):

- Kevin Mitchell, Senate Chair, SNS
- Courtenay Monroe, Senate Vice Chair, SSHA
- Tom Hansford, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (alternate: Anna Song, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Personnel)

Chair Beaster-Jones informed members that Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAP) Tom Hansford attends a portion of each FWAF meeting to discuss issues that may arise related to faculty welfare. He added that occasionally, the EVC/Provost is invited to FWAF meetings to discuss financial issues or access to staff and faculty lines. Chair Beaster-Jones is also hopeful to have a retiree join the committee soon to provide insight on issues that arise regarding retiree healthcare, access to pension, etc.

D. [Meeting Schedule](#) (Thursdays, 1:00-2:30pm)

The first meeting will be held in ADMIN 345 with the plan to hold subsequent meetings via Zoom.

- September 5
- October 10
- November 7
- December 5

E. [FWAF's Box Site](#) (all internal committee documents will be posted on this site)

F. [FWAF AY 23-24 Annual Report](#)

G. Committee Confidentiality

H. [Guide to Committee Membership & the Practice of Executive Session](#)

I. [Consultation Guide](#) (also refer to the [2010 memo](#) from Academic Council to President Yudof)

J. Senate Digest (distributed to all Senate faculty every Friday)

K. [UCM Bylaws and Regulations](#)

L. [Systemwide Bylaws and Regulations](#)

M. [CoC's Guide to Populating Academic Senate Committees: Leadership and Membership Commitments](#)

N. Distribution of Work on the Committee

All campus and systemwide review items will be posted on the Senate website [here](#).

Some review items may be assigned to one or more FWAF reviewers before each scheduled meeting.

Occasionally, FWAF will be asked to review and comment on policy issues. One item that the committee will begin reviewing this week is the *Policy on Vaccination Programs* (item IX on today's agenda).

FWAF typically meets once a month and occasionally opines on campus and systemwide policies and proposals. Chair Beaster-Jones is also a member of DivCo and will share updates with FWAF members throughout the academic year.

IV. **Chair's Report – Jayson Beaster-Jones**

A. Updates from Protest Oversight Group (POG) Meetings (August 14 and 19)

The FWAF Chair serves as ex-officio on POG, which is a group composed of administrators and staff who monitor and intervene when protests occur on campus. This group was established in 2012 but has recently increased their meeting frequency due to the campus activities related to Gaza. Due to several other commitments that Chair Beaster-Jones has, UGC Chair Sharping has volunteered to serve as ex-officio on POG this year.

The administration feels strongly that free speech is a fundamental right and they do not want violence on our campus. There is a set of rules from UCOP that FWAF will need to address this year involving a unified standard that all campuses will be expected to follow.

B. Upcoming Event: Annual Governance Retreat

The exact date is to be determined, however October 29 and 30 are under consideration.

The leadership from all UC Merced Senate committees will attend the retreat to collaborate with the administration on future plans for the campus.

Chair Beaster-Jones noted that enrollment numbers are slightly below where they were last year at this time and the university was hopeful for increased enrollments to amend the budgetary issues. Additional budget cuts are anticipated, but the Chancellor is still on board with a 4.2% salary increase.

V. **Representation on Systemwide Senate Committees – All**

A. [University Committee on Faculty Welfare](#) (UCFW)

UCM Representative: Jayson Beaster-Jones

B. [University Committee of Academic Freedom](#) (UCAF)

Action:

- Member Lu volunteered to serve as the UCAF representative.
- The FWAF Analyst notified Executive Director Paul.
- CoC reviewed and endorsed Prof. Lu's appointment.

VI. Representation on Campus Committees – All**A. [Periodic Review Oversight Committee \(PROC\)](#)**

PROC supports and advances UC Merced’s educational and institutional effectiveness and organizational learning through its campus-wide advisory and oversight responsibilities for academic and administrative assessment, both periodic and annual.

Action:

- FWAF declined to provide a PROC representative.
- The FWAF Analyst notified Executive Director Paul.

B. [Protest Oversight Group \(POG\)](#)

Representative: Jay Sharping (UGC Chair/DivCo Member)

VII. Review of FWAF AY 24-25 Priorities – Chair Beaster-Jones

A memo reflecting FWAF’s AY 23-24 priorities can be found [here](#).

A preliminary list of priorities for AY 24-25 can be found [here](#).

Chair Beaster-Jones noted the three primary issues that FWAF focused on last year: the campus financial system, staffing/budget issues, and the cost of healthcare.

He then discussed the following carryover items:

- **ECEC.** Many faculty have been on the wait list for over two years and still have not been granted access. Furthermore, prior to the pandemic, six classrooms were used but now only three classrooms are operating.
- **Healthcare Access and Cost.** The closest Tier 1 providers are located in Fresno. Chair Beaster-Jones will continue collaborating with the UCFW Healthcare Task Force for the three campuses that do not have university hospitals.

A member noted that there are other well-established entities in Merced that are not Tier 1, such as El Portal Imaging, that should be onboarded.

A member also inquired about the increase in health care costs and its effect on staff. Chair Beaster-Jones explained that the cost of one’s benefits is dependent on their salary, so changes in cost affect all faculty, staff, and administration.

- **Issues regarding Sponsored Projects (SPO) and their intervention with faculty proposals.** There have been many refusals to send proposals forward if certain changes were not implemented.
- **Continued collaboration with the UC Merced Faculty Association (UCMFA)** to ensure certain issues are being addressed and FWAF is not duplicating efforts.

Members also discussed new issues to address this year:

- **Faculty parking.** Faculty wonder if students are parking in areas they should not be

because parking has become difficult to find in areas that they are paying for.

- **Family-friendly policies for parents who are primary caregivers.** This includes reimbursement for childcare when a faculty member is required to travel for work with an overnight stay but are also the primary caregiver of a child(ren). Faculty can request an exception to the policy; however, only certain funds can be used for this and most faculty do not have endowments. Chair Beaster-Jones noted that a policy was developed a few years ago regarding what can and cannot be reimbursed, and FWAF should revisit the policy to recommend revisions for more inclusivity. This issue may need to be addressed systemwide, as well.
- **Transportation services for faculty, specifically to airports and to medical entities.** A member recommended advocating for a shuttle service to UCSF. Chair Beaster-Jones confirmed that he will look into making arrangements with a provider, which could make it cost neutral for the campus.
- **Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO).** Many tenure and promotion processes were broken during the pandemic. Many faculty could not enter labs and did not have access to childcare. Chair Beaster-Jones believes that such hardships should not be the defining component of one's career. He noted that there has been significant research that suggests that people of color and single parents/caregivers are far less likely to achieve tenure. He emphasized that this is a huge task if the committee decides to address it, as it will require policy changes that will take years to enact, but FWAF could initiate the first steps. FWAF will also need to collaborate with the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) on this.
- **Separating FWAF into two committees:** The Faculty Welfare Committee and the Academic Freedom Committee.

Action:

- The FWAF Analyst will update the list of priorities to include the following:
 - Issues with faculty parking
 - Family friendly policies for parents who are primary caregivers
 - Transportation services for faculty, specifically to airports and to medical entities
 - Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO)
- Chair Beaster-Jones will consult with UCFW counterparts regarding transportation to other locations for medical resources.
- FWAF Analyst will add ARO as a future agenda item for further discussion.

VIII. Consultation with VPAP Tom Hansford

A. [Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions on Campus Expression](#)

VPAP Hansford discussed the University of California's new orientation of existing policies regarding time, place, and manner restrictions. The first amendment guarantees free speech and free assembly; however, it is difficult for individuals to comprehend that there are limits. None of one's rights are absolute. There are some restrictions in time, place, and manner in all places throughout the world.

Last year during the protests, UC Merced acted properly but other campuses had more significant activity. The State Legislature and the Regents drew conclusions about what occurred in Spring 2024 systemwide based on the occurrences at other campuses. The State Legislature notified all campuses that \$25 million in funding would be withheld if it were not clearly articulated to all members of the campus community the rules around time, place, and manner and the consequences for violating the rules.

VPAP Hansford explained the Campus Climate Initiative to members. President Drake requested an addition to UC Merced's policy: you cannot use masks for the purpose of concealing identity. VPAP Hansford noted the difficulty to adhering to this new rule because not everyone's intent for wearing a mask is known.

VPAP Hansford noted that campuses used to have a lot of discretion on how to handle expressions, but now the State Legislature decides how all campuses handle expression of any kind. VPAP Hansford confirmed that it is okay to engage in protest activity, but that the Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions Policy must be followed.

Members discussed the different agencies and their protocols for handling escalation. UC Merced's first form of contact is directed to the State Troopers who have the appropriate training to handle protests.

B. Summer Compensation

Last year, there were issues regarding summer compensation. VPAP Hansford's unit developed a large Summer Compensation Work Group who formed a list of minor process improvements to implement for this past summer. VPAP Hansford confirmed that it went very well. This year resulted in a 93% on-time compensation rate for faculty, whereas last year was 66%.

IX. Systemwide Review Item – Chair Beaster-Jones

A. [Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Vaccination Programs](#)

The policy includes the following key issues:

- Students will be required to be up to date on their MMR, MenACWY, Tdap, and VZV vaccinations, provide proof of immunity for those diseases, or obtain a University-approved exception, as a condition of Physical Presence at a University Location or in a University Program.
- Students may request exceptions to any of these vaccination requirements premised on medical contraindications, religious objections, or disability. There are no exceptions permitted for students' mandatory completion of a tuberculosis screening questionnaire to evaluate their risk of latent tuberculosis.
- In the event that applicable law or public health orders impose stricter vaccination requirements, students would be required to comply with those stricter requirements.
- Students who are not up to date with the relevant vaccination requirements (which includes those who have been granted exceptions) or who have not satisfied the tuberculosis screening requirement may be subject to Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (e.g., masks and testing) above and beyond those who have demonstrated compliance and may be excluded from the Location or site of an outbreak.

- Additionally, students who are not compliant with the vaccination programs and/or screening program must participate in any Vaccine Education required by their Location Vaccine Authority (LVA). Additional Vaccine Education may be required by the LVA in the event of an outbreak or consistent with applicable federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or accreditation standards.

Comments are due to the Senate Chair by **Friday, September 20, 2024**.

Action:

- Lead reviewer: Member Dasbiswas
- The lead reviewer will send their comments to Melanie, Petra, and Fatima by **Friday, September 13**, and comments will be circulated to members via email in order to be finalized and sent to the Senate Chair by **Friday, September 20**.

X. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.
Attest: Jayson Beaster-Jones, FWA Chair