

Undergraduate Council (UGC)**Meeting Minutes****Thursday, January 23, 2025****10:30am – 12:00pm**

Pursuant to call, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) met at 10:30am on January 23, 2025. Vice Chair Gutierrez presiding.

I. Consent Calendar – 10:30am – 10:35am

- A. Today's Agenda
- B. [November 22 Meeting Minutes](#)
- C. [December 6 Meeting Minutes](#)
- D. [Request from SoE for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline for CSE 188, effective Fall 2025.](#)
- E. [Request from SNS for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline to offer CHEM 002L and CHEM 010L in-person in Summer 2025.](#)
- F. [Request from SSHA for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline for several course proposals effective Fall 2025.](#)

Action:

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.
- The SoE, SNS, and SSHA Curriculum Managers were notified regarding approval of their School's respective request.

II. Chair's Report – Chair Sharping – 10:35am – 10:45am

- A. Welcome new member Bin Liu

Vice Chair Gutierrez welcomed returning member Bin Liu, and member Liu introduced himself.

- B. December 16 DivCo Meeting
- C. December 16 Meeting of the Division
- D. January 6 UCEP Meeting

Action:

- The three meeting updates were tabled for the February 6 UGC meeting (please note that minutes for each of the meetings mentioned above are still in draft form, and therefore cannot be shared at this time).

III. December 20 [UCIE](#) Update – Greg Wright – 10:45am – 10:50am

- UC sends approximately 6,000 students to study abroad annually, though this year saw a slight decrease in enrollments, primarily due to complications with the new FAFSA process. There is hope that enrollment numbers will start to

increase again moving forward.

- 24% of study abroad offerings are in STEM fields.
- UC Study Abroad is doing well financially, with a positive balance of \$12 million.
- Programming in Israel was canceled on October 7, 2024, and there is currently no programming in Russia.
- Members are curious about the support that will replace Vivian-Lee Nyitray, the Director of the UC Education Abroad program, who has been on the committee for 10 years.
- All UC campuses have expressed concerns about how visa policies and study abroad programs will be affected under the new leadership.

IV. January 16 [UCOPE](#) Update – Susan Varnot – 10:50am – 10:55am

- UC is conducting several leadership searches, and concerns about representation were raised regarding the search for UCSB's leadership, as there is no Humanities and Arts representative on the search committee.
- A work group has been tasked with the development of fully online degrees.
- A work group is examining the adoption of a universal, systemwide academic calendar, evaluating its pros and cons. A question was raised about the potential workload impacts on Unit 18 members from the proposed calendar changes.
- A work group was created to review faculty conduct, specifically examining APM 015 and APM 016, and determined that no changes are needed at this time.
- Members discussed the sunset of UCOPE and whether its work should be folded into the [University Committee on Educational Policy \(UCEP\)](#). Some members expressed concern that the work would disappear, while others suggested enhancing UCEP with a more robust subcommittee to handle programs beyond entry level writing requirements. A proposal for a revised UCOPE charge is under consideration.
- Concerns were raised about the UCOPE Entry Level Writing Requirement Coordinating Council (ECC), which includes representatives from all UC campuses. Issues included inconsistent reporting across campuses and the possible loss of systemwide oversight for writing programs. If UCOPE is discontinued, a proposal for a three-year reporting cycle was discussed, though some campuses face challenges in gathering resources for effective assessment and reporting. Additionally, there are significant variations in the fees associated with campus placement practices. Members emphasized the need for a more centralized structure to help address these issues.

V. Consultation with Registrar Webb – New Student Block Registration – 10:55am – 11:10am

The draft implementation and assessment plan is available [here](#).

The Office of the Registrar is exploring the implementation of New Student Block

Registration as a pilot for the Fall 2025 incoming class. Although registration is largely an administrative process, it also carries academic implications, and the Registrar would like to ensure the Senate is informed and invite any engagement or feedback, should there be interest.

Registrar Webb shared a PowerPoint presentation, available [here](#), highlighting the goal to automate registration for incoming students. Rather than students trying to choose their own courses that are required for their major, the proposal is to register the students into blocks (preselected groups of classes) based on their degree program and placements. The Registrar has implemented metrics to assess the effectiveness of this program in Fall 2025 and then into Spring 2026.

The reason for implementing this program is to address the challenges students face when registering for courses. A majority of new students indicated that registering for courses was either somewhat or very challenging. The idea is to streamline processes, make registration more user-friendly, and ensure that students have a smoother experience overall. Registrar Webb noted that she has data from CSUs who have begun using this model if anyone is interested.

The Registrar will continue collaborating with various campus constituents to determine where this model would be most effective. For example, the Athletics Department would likely not benefit from it, whereas programs such as Living Learning Communities (LLCs), Honors students, SJV Prime students, etc. would. The Registrar is also designing effective communication for incoming students similar to [CSU Fresno's website](#).

Lastly, students who are automatically assigned to courses based on their major will still have the flexibility to make changes to their schedule. The plan is to leave about 5% of open seats in every section to allow flexibility for students to adjust their schedules. A member expressed concerns about leaving seats open because some departments, such as Chemistry, fill to max capacity each term and there are often times not enough instructors to teach the courses. Therefore, it may be challenging to keep seats open. Registrar Webb confirmed that she will be reviewing the 4-year course plans in the Catalog, organizing the course blocks, and ensuring that seat availability aligns with predictions, which will allow for necessary adjustments.

Registrar Webb mentioned that all students who register for orientation will be automatically opted into the program, as attending orientation is a key indicator of the student's intent to attend UC Merced. However, students who are not automatically opted into the program will still have the option to register for classes with available seats.

A member wondered how this block scheduling affects registration for SPARK seminars. Registrar Webb responded that this is an ongoing conversation, and she will keep UGC apprised.

Another member expressed concern about how the new system will accommodate the different populations of incoming Chemistry majors - those who qualify for Honors Chemistry and those who do not. The member also pointed out that UC Merced does not have the same restrictions on who can be a STEM major compared to other UC campuses, which is a key point to consider when implementing this model. It might be beneficial to ensure Honors students get priority in certain courses or offering different pathways for students based on their academic track. Registrar Webb noted that with direct consultation with the Curriculum Managers, the placement process will be more flexible and better aligned with faculty recommendations.

A member inquired about students who enter UC Merced as undeclared. The Registrar plans to send undeclared students an interest form to gauge their potential major interests, which will help in creating a registration block tailored to them.

On January 30, 2025, Registrar Webb shared an updated Implementation Plan, available [here](#). Registrar Webb will present this information to the School Department Chairs in February.

VI. Discussion: Carnegie Classification – Alejandro Gutierrez - 11:10am – 11:15am

A team was tasked with writing an application for the Carnegie classification as a community-engaged campus, and a system is needed to track which courses are community-engaged. Vice Chair Gutierrez and SSHA Professor Bortfeld met with Registrar Webb to discuss this possibility and wonder whether this tracking system requires Senate input.

The current plan is to review a list of the courses that have been taught in the last two years and determine (through a combination of IOR input and their judgement) which courses count as community engaged. The Registrar would then help flag the courses in the system for future tracking.

Vice Chair Gutierrez summarized the plans to create a tracking system and inquired about UGC's involvement in the process. The UGC Analyst shared that after consulting with Senate Executive Director Paul, it was recommended that UGC not be involved in determining which courses count as community-engaged. Instead, UGC could receive a memo each term listing the flagged courses. UGC agreed that this approach would be sufficient.

Action:

- Voting members agreed that UGC should not opine on the flagged courses but rather receive a memo each year with a list of the courses that are flagged as community-engaged.
- The UGC Analyst formally notified Vice Chair Gutierrez and SSHA Professor Bortfeld.

VII. Systemwide Review Item – Catherine Keske - 11:15am – 11:25am**A. [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](#)".

Lead reviewer: Catherine Keske

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

Member Keske summarized her assessment noting that the revisions indicate that each UC location is responsible for ensuring that they are in compliance with relevant regulatory and guidance documents.

She highlighted the importance of the 3 Rs on page 3 of the policy:

1. Reduction - minimizing the number of animals used, without jeopardizing statistical validity
2. Refinement - use of methods which minimize the pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm that research animals might experience
3. Replacement - avoiding the use of animals in an experiment where possible, and substituting with non-animal method (e.g., computer simulation) or lower animal species where appropriate.

Chair Sharping also reviewed the proposal. He and member Keske believe the policy is beneficial for UC undergraduate researchers, including those at UC Merced. They both recommend endorsing the policy.

Action:

- Voting members voted in the executive session and unanimously approved the draft memo.
- UGC Analyst will transmit the final memo to the Senate Chair.

VIII. Approval of Courses¹ – Santosh Chandrasekhar, Haiyan Liu, and Maria Zoghbi - 11:25am – 11:40am

The Subcommittee's recommendations are available [here](#).

Action:

- The following courses were approved, and Curriculog will be updated accordingly:
 1. [CHE - 141 - Materials Processing & Performance I: Materials Thermodynamics and Kinetics](#) (new; crosslisted with MSE 151 and MBSE 212; Fall 2025)

¹ RECUSALS
Jay – PHYS
Catherine – CHE and MSE
Lindsay – PH
Santosh – CSE

2. [ENVE - 146 - Hydraulic Systems Analysis and Design](#) (modify existing; Fall 2025)
3. [PH - 180H - Unmasking the Past: Epidemics and Public Health in the U.S.](#) (new; Fall 2025)
4. [ROTC - 051 - Introduction to the Profession of Arms](#) (new; Spring 2026)
5. [ROTC - 062L - Sophomore Leadership Laboratory](#) (new; Spring 2026)
6. [ROTC - 151 - Applied Leadership in Small Unit Operations](#) (new; Spring 2026)
7. [ROTC - 152L - Junior Leadership Laboratory](#) (new; Spring 2026)
8. [COMM - 169 - Topics in Linguistics](#) (new; Fall 2025)
9. [CHE - 118 - Introduction to Nanotechnology and Nanoscience](#) (new; crosslisted with MSE 118; Fall 2025)
10. [MSE - 118 - Introduction to Nanotechnology and Nanoscience](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with CHE 118; Fall 2025)
11. [DSC - 104 - Ethics in Data Science](#) (new; Spring 2026) – with a recommendation to add PLOs.

Action:

- The following courses were approved contingent upon minor revisions. Curriculog will be updated accordingly:
 12. [CSE - 188 - Natural Language Processing](#) (new; Spring 2026) – revise 6-8 range for non-contact hours to a specific number. All hours should add to 12.
 13. [MATH - 029 - Introduction to Proof-Writing in Mathematics](#) (new; Fall 2025) – All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 13).
 14. [NSED - 180 - Critical Perspectives on the History of Science and Mathematics](#) (new; Fall 2025) – revise non-contact hours to a whole number. All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 12.5).
 15. [PHYS - 172 - Quantum Information Science](#) (modify existing; conjoined with PHYS 272; Spring 2026) – revise non-contact hours to 8. All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 13).
 16. [COMM - 170 - Communication Methods](#) (new; Fall 2025) - The answer to the question “Do you want this course to satisfy a General Education requirement?” is still listed as “No.” I think the proposer meant “Yes.”
 17. [BIO - 149 - Conservation Biology](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with ESS 149; Spring 2026) – revise contact and non-contact hours. All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 14)
 18. [ESS - 149 - Conservation Biology](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with BIO 149; Spring 2026) - revise contact and non-contact hours. All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 14)
 19. [BCME - 001 - Bioengineering and Biochemical & Biomolecular Engineering Seminar](#) (new; crosslisted with BIOE 001; Fall 2025) - “BIOE” should not be included in this title if “BCME” is missing from the BIOE 001 title. Missing number of non-contact hours. Also, recommend spelling out BCME acronyms since it is a new major.

20. [BIOE - 001 – Bioengineering](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with BCME 001; Fall 2025) - title says "Bioengineering" and Abbreviated Title says, "Bioengineering Seminar", which seems to be backwards. Missing number of non-contact hours. Also, recommend spelling out BCME acronyms since it is a new major.
21. [BCME - 021 - Introduction to Computing with Python](#) (new; crosslisted with BIOE 021; Fall 2025) - The course is being modified to decrease lab hours from 4 to 2 and increase lecture time. The brief explanation of changes is not very clear without including all history.
22. [BIOE - 021 - Introduction to Computing with Python](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with BCME 021; Fall 2025) - The course is being modified to decrease lab hours from 4 to 2 and increase lecture time. The brief explanation of changes is not very clear without including all history.
23. [BCME - 135 - Biochemistry for Engineers](#) (new; crosslisted with BIOE 135; Fall 2025) - revise 6-8 range for non-contact hours to a specific number. All hours should add to 12. Also, recommend spelling out BCME acronym since it is a new major.
24. [BIOE - 135 - Biochemistry for Engineers](#) (modify existing; crosslisted with BCME 135; Fall 2025) - revise 6-8 range for non-contact hours to a specific number. All hours should add to 12. Also, recommend spelling out BCME acronym since it is a new major.
25. [ECON - 001H - Introduction to Economics Honors](#) (new; Fall 2025) – revise non-contact hours. All hours should add to 12 (currently adds to 16)
26. [MATH - 155 - Mathematics Pedagogy](#) (new; Fall 2025) – still need to correct contact hours from 13 to 12.

IX. Any Other Business – All – 11:40am – 11:45am

A member initially reported that their videos on CatCourses were missing. The member then followed up with the UGC Analyst and Vice Chair Gutierrez to clarify that the videos were still accessible but had been relocated due to a system update.

X. Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 11:45am – 12:00pm

No minutes were recorded during the executive session. The action items were shared with UGC voting members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.

Attest: Alejandro Gutierrez, UGC Vice Chair.