

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)**Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 10, 2025
3:00pm – 4:30pm**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom met at 3:00pm on February 10, 2025. Vice Chair Ma presiding.

I. Consent Calendar – Vice Chair Ma

- A. Approval of Today's Agenda
- B. Approval of the [January 27 Meeting Minutes](#)

Action:

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

II. [Academic Senate Awards](#) – Vice Chair Ma

The Call for Nominations for the Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship will be sent out soon.

Senate Executive Director Paul stated that additional information will be provided once the official Call is issued.

Action:

- Vice Chair Yanbao Ma (SoE) and members Kit Myers (SSHA) and Kinjal Dasbiswas (SNS) volunteered to serve on the Awards subcommittee.
- Fatima and Melanie will follow up with additional information once the Call goes out.

III. Consultation with Interim Director of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), Thomas Lee

Interim EHS Director Lee shared his PowerPoint presentation, available [here](#). He reported on the various accomplishments since February 2024, specifically the internal audit. During the internal audit, it was suggested that a resource and staffing assessment be conducted to identify any gaps in personnel or resources within the unit. As part of this audit, EHS hired a group called Marsh, who specializes in risk management and insurance. They visited UC Merced in November 2024 and conducted stakeholder interviews to understand how EHS is aligned with best practices in the UC system.

Interim Director Lee summarized the lab safety follow-up audit that was conducted in August 2024. Slide 7 shows the number of FTEs in each EHS department (represented by the blue bars) and the number of program areas each department handles (shown by the gold bars). UC Merced is represented by a small number of FTEs but a large number of program areas. The red line indicates the ratio between the two, highlighting that UC Merced has significantly fewer staff managing a broader range of responsibilities. At most other UC campuses, EHS is responsible for an average of 1.8 program areas. At UC Merced, each staff member is responsible for approximately 6.6 program areas, revealing a significant workload at UC Merced compared to other campuses. Following the staff and resource assessment in 2017, the recommendation was to add 9.5 FTEs over the next four fiscal years. In 2017, EHS had 7 FTEs. By 2025, that number has increased to 10. However, the workforce

planning recommendation from 2017 projected 16.5 FTEs by 2021, showing a gap between the recommended and actual staffing levels.

Interim Director Lee concluded his presentation by emphasizing the importance of supporting faculty welfare and academic freedom, particularly in relation to safety culture in research communities at institutions of higher learning. One key point from the literature on safety culture emphasizes that EHS needs to work closely with the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) and the Schools to understand the aspirations for research and align them with what the institution can realistically support. Continued support for research is vital, but additional resources will be necessary to meet the growing needs of the university.

Action:

- Members are to email Interim EHS Director Lee (thomaslee@ucmerced.edu) with any questions.

IV. Consultation with VPAP Tom Hansford

A. Emeriti/ae privileges

VPAP Hansford provided an updated list of emeriti/ae privileges following FWF's December 5 discussion.

The list of privileges and benefits that emeriti/ae faculty can expect at UC Merced includes the following:

- Continued use of UC Merced email account and access to the single sign-on system.
- Membership and voting rights in the Academic Senate.
- Library privileges.
- Access to purchasing campus parking permits at the normal rates.
- Keycard access to university facilities.
- Ability to continue serving as a Principal Investigator (PI) for research grants.
- Eligibility for the Annual Dixon Award, which is exclusively for UC Merced emeriti/ae faculty.

Other possible privileges and opportunities for emeriti/ae faculty:

- Departmental voting rights, though these are determined by each department as per Bylaw 55.
- Access to software.
- Eligibility to serve on graduate program committees, as long as it aligns with the respective graduate group's Policies and Procedures.
- Although not guaranteed, emeriti/ae faculty may be able to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for continued access to remaining research funds.
- Eligibility to serve as a recall appointee, allowing emeriti/ae to be rehired by the university to teach courses, conduct research, or even take on administrative roles.
- By exception, potential to purchase for personal use State-owned equipment at current market value.

VPAP Hansford will confirm with the Senate Executive Director whether emeriti/ae faculty are still eligible for Senate grants. He also confirmed that emeriti/ae faculty will not have access to UC Merced's athletic facilities.

The FWAF emeritus faculty member stated that he has not been able to access any of the software since he retired. VPAP Hansford confirmed he will look into this.

Action:

- If members believe that any other items are missing from the list, they are to email VPAP Hansford (thansford@ucmerced.edu).
- VPAP Hansford will provide another update at a future FWAF meeting.

B. Regental interest in the faculty discipline process

The January 22, 2025 Regents meeting notes are available [here](#).

VPAP Hansford reported that the Regents of the University of California have expressed increased interest in faculty discipline. A joint systemwide Senate-Administrative working group was created to explore potential adjustments to different aspects of the discipline system, specifically [APM 015](#) and [APM 016](#). The Regents are concerned about the pace at which the working group is progressing and have urged them to present a proposal by May. This proposal will outline potential changes and methods for addressing the Regents' primary concern - the lengthy duration of the discipline process itself. The Regents believe it takes too long for the most severe disciplinary cases to reach them because they are the last step in the process for faculty dismissal. VPAP Hansford will provide an update to FWAF members in May once the proposal is submitted.

C. VPAP/APO budget reduction

VPAP Hansford shared that the campus is undergoing a 5% budget reduction exercise, which impacts every office, including the Academic Personnel Office (APO). This means that cuts must be made within his office's budget, which is mainly used for staff salaries and funding academic personnel systems, leaving very little flexibility for other expenses.

The programs likely to be affected include the junior faculty mentoring program, which has already been paused this year and may continue to be placed on hold. Other potential areas for cuts include the Faculty Equity Advisor program, the faculty lounge, the membership to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, and Faculty Convocation. VPAP Hansford emphasized that these cuts are necessary to meet the 5% target and noted that the Senate will have a chance to provide feedback on the cuts through the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA). He clarified that faculty salaries are not included in APO's budget.

VPAP Hansford noted the potential impact of a reduction in Federal funding, particularly in the types of Federal funds that the campus and UC system currently rely on. He mentioned that such a reduction could significantly affect major health campuses like UCSF, UCLA, and UC San Diego, especially if something like NIH indirect cost return were to change. He speculated that this shift could also alter the dynamics with the State legislature, potentially requiring further intervention or adjustments. While uncertain about the specifics, he expressed concern over how these changes could ripple across the UC system.

V. Systemwide Review Items

A. [Proposed Revisions to Academic Personnel Manual \(APM\) Section 675, Veterinary Medicine Salary Administration](#) – Vice Chair Ma

Summary of proposed revisions:

- Clarification that faculty members paid on the Veterinary Medicine Salary Scale are not permitted to participate in the Health Sciences Compensation Plan ([APM - 670](#)).
- Clarification that participation by faculty members paid on the Veterinary Medicine Salary Scale in the Negotiated Salary Program ([APM - 672](#)) or any future compensation or salary plan is predicated on the requirement that faculty first fully meet the minimum contribution requirements specified in APM - 675-8.d, 675 - 8.e, and 675 - 8.

Lead Reviewer: Chair Beaster-Jones

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

Members reviewed the draft memo and did not have any concerns.

Action:

- FWAF members voted and unanimously endorsed the draft memo.
- FWAF Analyst transmitted the final memo to the Senate Chair.

B. [Proposed Revisions to APM 036 – Employment](#) – Amelia Farid

The policy revisions respond to the need to address a new bill signed into California state law that adds section 66284 to the California Education Code, effective January 1, 2025 (reference [AB 1905](#) “Public postsecondary education: employment: settlements, informal resolutions, and retreat rights”), and requires the University to adopt a written policy regarding official letters of recommendation, among other requirements, as a condition of receiving state funding. The proposed technical revisions are intended to bring the University into compliance with section 66284 of the California Education Code.

Lead Reviewer: Amelia Farid

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

Members agreed to review the draft memo via email.

Action:

- Members are to review the proposed revisions and lead reviewer's draft memo and share any additional comments **by Monday, February 24, 2025**.
- **Comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, February 28, 2025.**

VI. Other Business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.

Attest: Yanbao Ma, FWAF Vice Chair