

Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC)**Meeting Minutes****Wednesday, February 19, 2025****1:45pm – 2:45pm****ZOOM****I. Consent Calendar – Chair Cleary – 1:45pm – 1:50pm**

A. Today's Agenda

B. [January 22 Meeting Minutes](#)**Action:**

- The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

II. Vice Chair's Report – Joel Spencer – 1:50pm – 2:00pm

A. February 7 BOARS Meeting

- Discussions at BOARS centered around the challenges facing higher education, particularly in California. The President of the State Board of Education Linda Darling-Hammond emphasized the need to collaborate on improving the education system, noting that higher education is facing criticism over costs and necessity.
- Academic Senate Chair Cheung mentioned significant upcoming changes and advised caution, especially regarding email communication, as anything could potentially be subject to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.
- The UC system is facing budget shortfalls, with admissions declining by 1% annually, raising concerns about its sustainability.
- There are currently ongoing searches for a new UC President and several Chancellors at various UC campuses.
- Several California State University (CSU) representatives attended the BOARS meeting to discuss the importance of collaboration between UCs and CSUs, especially regarding teacher training. This led the conversation to shift to CalGETC, where there is growing pressure to improve and streamline the transfer process from community colleges to CSU and UC systems. The focus is on increasing the number of transfer students, but there have been some challenges in collaborating effectively between the systems.
- There was also significant discussion regarding how national policies are impacting the UC system, with an emphasis on strategizing and addressing current challenges.

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III. Changes to AP Exam Scoring – Joel Spencer – 2:00pm – 2:20pm

The College Board recently implemented a significant change to AP Exam scoring, resulting in a noticeable increase in passing rates for several AP exams. UC is concerned

about how this new methodology impacts the reliability of AP scores as an indicator of college readiness at selective universities.

This change was initiated following a noticeable decline in the number of students passing their core AP exams. This was likely a response to economic pressures, as a drop in passing rates would mean fewer students would be willing to pay for AP exams, given that the likelihood of passing and earning college credit is slim.

By adjusting the scoring to increase passing rates, the College Board may be awarding college credit to students who may not be adequately prepared for advanced coursework in subjects like AP World History or AP Biology. This raises questions as to whether UC campuses should reassess how they award credit for AP exams, especially in certain fields. If students are entering the UC system with AP credits but lack the preparation they should have, it could undermine the quality of education, especially for more challenging majors. Vice Chair Spencer asked the committee for their feedback.

Using AP World History as an example, Vice Chair Spencer clarified that historically, 65% of students would pass the exam with a score of 3 or above. However, as time has passed, the passing rate has decreased to 55%. Instead of keeping the standards of what a 3 or 4 means, the system is adjusting the scoring scale (essentially "curving" the scores) to ensure that 65% of students pass, even if the raw scores are lower.

Action:

- Members collectively agreed to share the AP exam scoring changes with their department faculty:
https://allaccess.collegeboard.org/allaccess/pdf/ap_score_changes_2024.pdf.

IV. Report from Office of Admissions Director Noji and Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Hagg – 2:20pm – 2:40pm

A. Non-resident student admissions, retention, and financial aid (undergraduate and graduate)

VCEM Hagg shared his PowerPoint presentation, available [here](#). He discussed several changes that make year-to-year comparisons difficult, such as moving the admission timeline from March to December and sending financial aid award notifications earlier. He also reported on the challenges in extracting specific retention rate data due to the inclusion of international students and other populations, which skews the results. The UC Merced retention rates on tableau reports follow a specific model that includes these populations, making it difficult to isolate accurate data for retention.

Regarding international student recruitment, an international workgroup is working on a recruitment plan that will be finalized later this semester and launched in the summer. The goal is to set realistic expectations for Fall 2026, with a tiered approach to how many international students can be reasonably expected. Director Noji highlighted an initiative to increase the number of non-resident international students at UC Merced by focusing

on rankings and participation in surveys that are important to international applicants. A survey was recently sent to the faculty to gather recommendations for international colleagues who can speak positively about UC Merced. Director Noji reminded members to review the survey and forward it to any international colleagues who can contribute.

VCEM Hagg then shared an update on the history of domestic non-resident student applications and admissions at UC Merced. There was a slight decrease in applications this year compared to last year, from 1,602 to 1,479. So far, 872 students have been admitted, but the process is still ongoing, and therefore this number is not final. For Fall 2024, UC Merced saw the highest enrollment of domestic non-resident students since 2021, with 13 students enrolled. As of now, 1,760 students have been admitted, and 22 international students have already enrolled for Fall 2024. With the increase in applications, there is another anticipated increase in international students this fall.

VCEM Hagg also provided an update on the Global Access Program, which is available to domestic non-California resident students and international students. This does not include the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) students, as they have a separate offering. For domestic non-California residents and international students, the program offers a \$20,000 annual scholarship for four years, provided the student maintains a 3.25 GPA for eligibility and a 3.0 GPA to maintain good standing during enrollment. 23 students received the Global Access Program scholarship in Fall 2024, and 3,039 Global Access Program scholarships have been offered for Fall 2025.

The WUE Program includes students from several Western states, including North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Idaho, and other Western states, but not Texas. Under this program, students from these states can attend UC Merced for one and a half times the resident cost. It is a guaranteed program, as long as the student meets the minimum 3.4 GPA requirement to be UC-eligible.

V. Any Other Business – 2:40pm – 2:45pm

No other business was discussed.

VI. Informational Items will be regularly uploaded on the “Informational Items” AFAC Box Folder [here](#).