

**Undergraduate Council (UGC)****Meeting Minutes****Thursday, March 20, 2025****10:30am – 12:00pm**

Pursuant to call, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) met at 10:30am on March 20, 2025. Chair Sharping presiding.

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

- A. Today's Agenda
- B. [March 6 Meeting Minutes](#)
- C. [Request from SoE for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline for ME 137 labs to be delivered online in Fall 2025, and an exception to UGC's February 3, 2025 deadline to make this a permanent change for Spring 2026.](#)
- D. [Request from SSHA for an exception to UGC's curricular deadlines to offer a list of new and revised courses effective Fall 2025, Spring 2026, and Summer 2026.](#)
- E. [Request from SSHA for a one-time modality exception to deliver PSY 104-01, SOC 015-01, SOC 133-01, SOC 146-01, WRI 010-02, and PSY 140-01 online in Fall 2025.](#)
- F. [Request from SNS for an exception to UGC's February 3, 2025 deadline to offer BIO 164 – Human Anatomy in Spring 2026.](#)

\* Please note for all Fall 2025 courses, the deadline for inclusion in the AY 25-26 Catalog was March 14, 2025.

**Action:**

- Today's agenda and the March 6 meeting minutes were approved as presented.
- The requests from SoE, SSHA, and SNS were approved. The UGC Analyst notified the School Curriculum Managers respectively.

**II. Chair's Report – Jay Sharping – 10:35am – 10:40am****A. March 11 DivCo Meeting**

- DivCo transmitted comments to the administration regarding the Interim Policy on Consensual Relationships.
- DivCo transmitted comments to Academic Council regarding the Proposed Revisions to APM-036, General University Policy Regarding Academic Appointees/Employment.
- DivCo approved the PK-3 Non-Degree Certificate Proposal: Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Instruction Credential.
- Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) Dean Roberts Webb gave a presentation on PACE's goals and forthcoming items.
- Discussions were held regarding VPDUE Bergerson's draft charge for the "Climate of Respect" task force.
- EVC/Provost Dumont provided feedback on the budget reduction exercise.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Kurt Schneer and EVC/Provost Dumont will make preliminary recommendations, with input from the Senate Chair and CAPRA Chair.

- EVC/Provost Dumont reported that there are no substantial changes to the state budget. Members discussed other potential areas for cuts, but members agreed that reducing the TAS budget appears unfeasible.
- The campus is actively working on a plan in response to the grant pauses and stop-orders. Faculty are instructed to send any grant funding-related communication to the Sponsored Projects Office (SPO).

Chair Sharping also announced that he has been actively participating in several program reviews, including those for sociology, biology, philosophy, chemistry, and environmental systems science, among others. A common topic of discussion at each of the meetings included the concern about how to replace senior faculty and other staff who are retiring or leaving for other positions, especially given the resource constraints. Another theme is the consistency and effectiveness of foundational courses, such as those in writing, math, and chemistry.

### III. Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC) Updates – Catherine Keske – 10:40am – 10:50am

#### A. March 13 PROC Meeting

Member Keske provided an update on the following programs:

- **Interdisciplinary Humanities (IH):** The program's response has been shared with VPDGE Hratchian.
- **Merritt Writing Program (MWP):** There is a focus on cultivating a campus-wide writing culture, and one of the program learning outcomes is to establish the importance of writing for undergraduate students. Member Keske recommended that UGC become involved in this initiative to help promote and reinforce the importance of writing across campus.
- **Community Research and Service (CRS):** The review is not yet complete. The minor is small but has potential for significant growth and impact.
- **Public Health (PH):** The program shared its draft MOU with SSHA Dean Arriola.
- **Anthropology:** Their program response is due May 1, 2025.
- **Natural Science Education (NSED):** Waiting for a team member's availability to schedule their site review.
- **Psychology:** Submission for the program response has been delayed, which is being followed up by the Office of Institutional Assessment.
- **Spanish:** Facing declining enrollment, they are requesting a visiting assistant professor to boost recruitment.
- **Biology:** The program's report was expected last week.
- **Chemistry:** Underwent a site visit earlier this week.
- **Mechanical Engineering (ME):** Their site visit is scheduled for Fall 2025.

- **Philosophy:** The review team commended the program but noted that it is ambitious for the small group of faculty to create and move forward with the Philosophy Department and major. The need for a new faculty member was emphasized, though budget constraints make this difficult. Without the addition, the program could face significant challenges.
- **Sociology:** The program's report is due today.
- **Political Science:** Requesting additional information regarding the review team.
- **Global Arts Studies Program (GASP):** Progressing with their review, aiming to move forward with three team review members.

Member Keske concluded her update by highlighting the key concern that many programs are at a critical point where they could either thrive, or they could face challenges if they do not receive new faculty members or replacements.

B. [Draft Charge for Combined Review Work Group](#)

- GC's feedback on the draft charge is available [here](#).

Chair Sharping summarized the draft charge and the feedback from GC. The charge focuses on aligning program reviews between graduate and undergraduate programs, creating a vertical alignment to streamline the review process. The review would consider both levels of the program simultaneously.

GC recommended additional faculty representation on the committee to ensure diverse perspectives. GC also recommended approaching program reviews from a departmental perspective rather than focusing on individual programs, which could potentially be more efficient. Members agreed that the idea of a departmental review is quite appealing, and in some ways, might make more sense than combining the graduate and undergraduate programs for review. This approach could bring more clarity and efficiency, particularly for departments with multiple programs.

**Action:**

- Members agreed with GC's comments on the draft charge.
- The UGC Analyst notified Executive Director Paul of UGC's support of GC's comments, emphasizing the importance of considering review at the departmental level rather than the program level.

**IV. UGC Awards Subcommittees – 10:50am – 10:55am**

A. [Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award for Non-Senate Faculty](#)

**Selection Process:** The Undergraduate Council (UGC) will form an ad-hoc committee from its membership to serve as the UGC Awards Committee with a minimum of three members.

Membership will include:

- At least one UGC Senate faculty who will also serve as Chair of the Awards Committee

- A UGC ex-officio member (VPDUE Bergerson or VCSAE Oseguera)
- A Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning representative (UGC Analyst will contact a member of CETL)

**Action:**

- Member Santosh Chandrasekhar (SoE) volunteered to serve as the Chair of the subcommittee.
- VPDUE Bergerson volunteered to serve as the ex-officio member of the subcommittee.
- UGC Analyst contacted a member of CETL to serve on the subcommittee.
- UGC Analyst will share the nominations with the subcommittee members following the March 31, 2025 deadline.
- The deadline for the subcommittee to provide their recommendation is April 10, 2025.
- The awardee will be announced at the May 7, 2025 Meeting of the Division.

**B. Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award for Senate Faculty**

**Selection Process:** The Undergraduate Council (UGC) will form an ad-hoc committee from its membership to serve as the UGC Awards Committee with a minimum of three Senate faculty.

Membership will include:

- Three UGC Senate faculty (one from each School)
- A UGC ex-officio member (VPDUE Bergerson or VCSAE Oseguera)
- Unit 18 Lecturer (UGC Analyst will contact a Unit 18 Lecturer)

**Action:**

- Chair Sharping (Chair of subcommittee; SNS), Vice Chair Gutierrez (SoE), and member Susan Varnot (SSHA) volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.
- VCSAE Oseguera agreed to serve as the ex-officio member on the subcommittee.
- UGC Analyst will identify a Unit 18 Lecturer to serve on the subcommittee.
- UGC Analyst will share the nominations with the subcommittee members following the March 31, 2025 deadline.
- The deadline for the subcommittee to provide their recommendation is April 10, 2025.
- The awardee will be announced at the May 7, 2025 Meeting of the Division.

**V. Draft Campus Policy on Undergraduate Certificate Programs – Aurora Pribram-Jones and Catherine Keske – 10:55am – 11:10am**

SSHA Associate Dean Anne Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Catherine Koehler joined the December 6, 2024 UGC meeting to present their proposal

for a campus policy on undergraduate certificate programs.

For reference, the December 6, 2024 meeting minutes are available [here](#) (item III.)

Members Pribram-Jones and Keske reviewed the proposal and offered comments, available [here](#).

Member Keske summarized her and member Pribram-Jones's comments, emphasizing that undergraduate certificate programs are valuable because they enhance students' credibility and specialization, and they are reflected on transcripts. While the lead reviewers strongly support and appreciate this initiative, they have identified several areas in the draft policy that could use clarification and improvement.

First, there is confusion around the term "requirements" in the policy, and whether a certificate could be earned without taking any courses. Questions also arose regarding the expectation that certificates must enhance both degree attainment and post-graduation goals, suggesting that this could conflict with students' progress toward their degree. It was recommended to revise the language to allow for either enhancement of degree completion or post-graduation goals, but not both.

Additionally, the lead reviewers recommended clarification on the role of University Extension in offering certificate programs, particularly whether these programs can consist only of Extension courses. Member Keske also emphasized the need to define roles for programs such as the Honors Program, General Education requirements, graduate courses, Capstone classes, and freshman seminars in undergraduate certificate programs, and whether an MOU is required. The lead reviewers also questioned whether transfer credits or study abroad credits should be allowed through petition. Additional recommendations aim to fix minor typos throughout the draft policy.

Overall, while the lead reviewers are supportive of the draft policy and view it as a positive step for UC Merced, they believe that the suggested clarifications and adjustments are essential for its effective implementation.

**Action:**

- The UGC Analyst will draft a memo based on the lead reviewers' comments and today's discussion.
- The UGC Analyst will work with Chair Sharping and members Pribram-Jones and Keske to finalize the draft memo.
- Voting members will be invited to review and approve the draft memo prior to transmittal to SSHA Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Koehler.

**VI. Campus Review Item – Chair Sharping – 11:10am – 11:20am**

A. [Policy on Assurance of Safety Standards](#)

The proposed policy aims to establish a comprehensive process for identifying and addressing safety deficiencies and non-compliance issues. This policy is intended

to promote a safe and supportive environment for all members of the UCM community, including faculty, staff, students, and visitors. It will apply to all academic and research activities, encompassing teaching and research laboratories, fieldwork, shared research support facilities, and machine shops used for academic and research-related purposes.

**Lead Reviewers:** Jay Sharping

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

Chair Sharping summarized his assessment, highlighting that the policy update focuses on identifying and addressing safety deficiencies in labs, specifically around the roles and processes involved in resolving those issues. One of the key points is the classification of deficiencies into two tiers: Tier 1 - critical issues needing immediate corrective action, and Tier 2 - issues requiring action but not as urgent. The policy clarifies responsibilities, especially the role of the PI in ensuring safety, but leaves some ambiguity around who exactly is responsible for shutting down a lab and deciding when it can be reopened.

Key concerns include the unclear chain of responsibility, as it is not specified who has the authority to reopen a lab once it is shut down, and the lack of a timeline for reopening. There is also confusion about which departments or individuals are responsible for overseeing the resolution of safety issues. Additionally, there is no clear point of contact for PIs to seek guidance when addressing safety concerns.

Chair Sharping added another concern regarding the lack of recognition for the role undergraduates play in research labs, particularly as they may be new to lab safety protocols and might require additional guidance. Members agreed to add this point to the draft memo.

**Action:**

- Voting members voted in the executive session and approved the draft memo with the addition of language regarding the unique roll of undergraduate students in research.
- UGC Analyst updated the memo accordingly and transmitted the final version to the Senate Chair by March 21, 2025.

**VII. Approval of Courses<sup>1</sup> – Santosh Chandrasekhar, Haiyan Liu, and Maria Zoghbi - 11:20am – 11:35am**

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

**Action:**

- The following courses were approved, and Curriculog was updated accordingly:

---

<sup>1</sup> RECUSALS  
Jay - PHYS

1. [EH - 180 - Student Naturalist Training](#) (new, Spring 2026)
2. [GASP - 111B - Painting Nature](#) (new; Spring 2026)
3. [HON - 002H - Honors Seminar II](#) (new; Spring 2026)
4. [PHYS - 008 - Introductory Physics I for Physical Sciences](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
5. [PHYS - 008L - Introductory Physics I for Physical Sciences Lab](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026) – Add a note recommending the proposer update the information provided for the maximum enrollment section, since they refer to rooms that will be available as part of the 2020 project.
6. [PHYS - 009 - Introductory Physics II for Physical Sciences](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
7. [PHYS - 009L - Introductory Physics II for Physical Sciences Lab](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
8. [PHYS - 010 - Introductory Physics III](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
9. [PHYS - 018 - Introductory Physics I for Biological Sciences](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
10. [PHYS - 018L - Introductory Physics I for Biological Sciences Lab](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
11. [PHYS - 019 - Introductory Physics II for Biological Sciences](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
12. [PHYS - 019L - Introductory Physics II for Biological Sciences Lab](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
13. [CRES - 009 - Cinema For The People](#) (new; crosslisted with GASP 060B and HIST 009; Fall 2025), [GASP - 060B - Cinema For The People](#) (new; crosslisted with HIST 009 and CRES 009; Fall 2025), and [HIST - 009 - Cinema For The People](#) (new; crosslisted with GASP 060B and CRES 009; Fall 2025) – Add a note to recommend the proposer revise the resource requirements from N/A. The course will need a classroom with a projector and a decent sound system and blinds so films can be screened (as described in the course format).

**Action:**

- The following courses were approved contingent upon minor revisions being addressed. Curriculog was updated accordingly:
  1. [ESS - 159 - Insect Ecology and Evolution](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026) – fix the typo in “Brief Explanation of Change” (“**I am are** requesting....”). Also, include the average number of non-contact hours.
  2. [NEUR - 001 - Introduction to Neuroscience](#) (new; Fall 2025) - No CLO corresponds to PLO2.
  3. [COMM - 179 - Topics in Media Production](#) (new; crosslisted with GASP 149A; Spring 2026) and [GASP - 149A - Topics in Media Production](#) (new; crosslisted with COMM 179; Spring 2026) – The



original GASP 004 (Introduction to Arts and Cultural Studies) is being discontinued from Fall 2025. GASP 001 (Introduction to Media and Performance Studies) is being renumbered to GASP 004 and crosslisted with COMM 17 starting Fall 2025. Needs to be corrected for both proposals. PLO5 listed with the last CLO is ambiguous (is it COMM or GASP?) for both proposals. GASP PLOs are not provided in the COMM proposal (though listed in CLOs) and COMM PLOs are not provided in the GASP proposal (though listed in the CLOs).

4. [CRES - 197 - Colloquium in History and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies](#) (new; crosslisted with HIST 197; Fall 2025) and [HIST - 197 - Colloquium in History and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies](#) (new; crosslisted with CRES 197; Fall 2025) – In the elaboration of the course's format (and in the syllabus), it is stated that the course is structured as a Colloquium that meets every-other week. Recommend clarification on whether this means that there will be a 6-hr session every-other week? Also, the course can be repeated 3 times for credit, but what is the rationale?

#### **VIII. Any Other Business – All – 11:35am – 11:40am**

No other business was discussed.

#### **IX. Executive Session – Voting Members Only – 11:40am – 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: Jay Sharping, UGC Chair.