

**Undergraduate Council (UGC)****Meeting Minutes****Thursday, April 17, 2025****10:30am – 12:00pm**

Pursuant to call, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) met at 10:30am on April 17, 2025. Chair Sharping presiding.

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

- A. Today's Agenda
- B. [April 3 Meeting Minutes](#)
- C. [Request from SNS for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline to make modifications to the restrictions for BIO 11/11L and BIO 12/12L, effective Fall 2025.](#)
- D. [Request from SoE for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline to make modifications to the prerequisites for MSE 104L, effective Fall 2025.](#)

**Action:**

- The agenda and April 3 meeting minutes were approved as presented.
- The requests from SNS and SoE were approved. The UGC Analyst notified the respective Curriculum Managers.

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

- A. April 7 and 10 [UCEP](#) Meetings
  - UC Merced Professor Tanya Golash Boza provided an update on the UCDC program, which offers students internship opportunities in Washington, D.C. The program is doing well overall, with strong application and placement numbers. Professor Golash Boza anticipates increased demand for interns from Congress, though there are currently no placements available in federal agencies or the White House. Efforts are underway to enhance the program, including clarifying learning outcomes and refining the program description.
  - Academic Senate Chair Cheung provided an update on the current hiring freeze, noting that any exceptions must be formally justified. Additionally, diversity statements are no longer required for UC faculty hiring; they are now optional.
  - The UC Student Health Insurance Plan (UC-SHIP), which provides health coverage for both undergraduate and graduate students, is currently under financial stress, and premiums are likely to increase.
  - A special Assembly of the Academic Senate meeting was held during spring break to discuss a proposal for administrators to receive salary raises at the same time as faculty, which was voted down.
  - The Academic Calendar Report has been under review at various levels, though the concept has not been well received so far.
  - The UCSF Memorials, which were voted on last month, failed in all nine

divisions.

- An Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate (ICAS) meeting took place, which includes representation from the University of California, California State University, and the California Community College systems. The Regents were also present. Key takeaways included strong support for the University of California in Sacramento, along with an acknowledgment that federal-level challenges are placing the UC system under significant stress. There is also strong interest in improving intersegmental collaboration across the three segments of California's Master Plan for Higher Education.
- Leadership searches are currently underway for the UCOP President, as well as for the Chancellors of UC Santa Barbara and UC Riverside.
- The Total Remuneration Work Group is expected to issue its report by late fall. At least one UC campus has been targeted by D.C., and according to Academic Senate Chair Cheung, the Regents are taking this matter seriously. The Academic Senate is actively engaging in these issues and consulting frequently.
- A discussion was held regarding high school ethnic studies courses and the potential for adding an ethnic studies requirement to UC admissions. However, the current UC admissions proposal does not align well with the existing state requirement for a high school ethnic studies course. While the state does mandate that students complete such a course to graduate, the mandate is currently unfunded, making compliance voluntary. This issue remains under active discussion.

B. April 8 DivCo Meeting

- VPDUE Bergerson joined the meeting and reported on the many initiatives within the Division of Undergraduate Education and the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CETL), including the Faculty Fellows program, Avoiding Burnout Faculty Learning Community, and the Course Design Institute.
- VPDUE Bergerson and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement are working to revise the academic integrity policy, establish a Campus Retention Committee to address student retention challenges, and review various existing policies to eliminate obstacles to student success.
- The Chancellor reported on the budget reductions and the hiring freeze, explaining that with personnel costs accounting for about two-thirds of the budget, any significant cuts will likely impact staffing. He emphasized that a 5% cut might be manageable without major disruptions, but deeper cuts would likely affect personnel.
- The Chancellor updated Divisional Council on the revocation and termination of visas, which has affected 4 to 5 students and postdocs at UC Merced. The International Student Services team is assisting these students with degree completion and providing necessary resources.
- The Chancellor highlighted several positive developments at UC Merced,

including the achievement of R1 status, a significant milestone for the campus. He also noted a 50% increase in applications, the highest among all UC campuses, reflecting growing interest in UC Merced. He acknowledged the difficult times but reminded everyone that other institutions may be facing even greater challenges.

Chair Sharping shared that he met with Senate Chair Mitchell, GC Chair Abatzoglou, and Senate Executive Director Paul on April 11, 2025 to discuss and provide policy guidance for students facing deportation and those who must leave abruptly. A memo from the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) and the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA) was received and will be reviewed as part of the response.

**III. April 16 [University Committee on Preparatory Education \(UCOPE\) Update](#) – Susan Varnot – 10:45am – 10:55am**

- Discussions were held about the revocation of visas affecting 4-5 students and postdocs at UC Merced, with over 100 international students across the UC system impacted. Legal and systemwide guidance is being consulted, with particular concern about protecting international faculty. There were also questions raised about undocumented student support and faculty vulnerability to shifting immigration enforcement, with a request for more systemwide communication on these issues.
- UCOPE is considering a proposal to sunset the committee and establish a subcommittee or working group under the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP). Alternatively, there is a suggestion to repurpose UCOPE into a more forward-looking body focused on longitudinal planning and preparedness, particularly in response to post-COVID learning loss. This would involve revising its charge to create a more robust role that examines educational preparedness issues and gather meaningful data to inform systemwide discussions.
- Feedback was provided on a proposal to implement a centralized reporting system and software for writing placement. Concerns were raised about the challenges this might present across UC campuses given the differences in academic calendars (quarterly vs. semester systems) and writing program structures.
- Entry Level Writing Requirement Coordinating Council (ECC) Chair Madeleine Sorapure shared that the ECC is in its pilot phase, gathering reports from all UC campuses. These reports will be summarized and shared with UCOPE (or its successor). Key concerns were raised about AP scores as indicators of writing preparedness, and the issue of grade inflation in writing courses. A proposal for a small student fee (e.g., 50 cents per student) was discussed to support writing placement and assessment efforts across the UC system, ensuring all campuses have consistent reporting software. It was also suggested that the ECC model for writing preparedness could be a pilot for similar coordinating councils

in other disciplines such as math and chemistry, to facilitate cross-campus conversations about student preparedness in those areas.

**IV. UC Merced Guidelines Concerning Scheduling Conflicts with Academic Requirements – Chair Sharping – 10:55am – 11:10am**

UGC and GC have been invited to review and comment on the draft guidelines on Missed Class, developed collaboratively with Professor Eric Walle, Director of Recreation & Athletics David Dunham, and Associate Director of Recreation & Athletics Payton Williams. This important document aims to establish clear guidance and expectations for students and faculty in cases where students must miss classes or assignments due to extracurricular commitments, such as athletic competitions, professional conferences, or performances.

Chair Sharping summarized the draft policy, highlighting the following:

- Although many matriculated students actively participate in a variety of university-sponsored activities, their primary responsibility remains academic.
- The professional judgment of instructors in determining the pedagogical needs of their courses should be recognized and respected.
- The document includes a helpful reference to UC Merced’s policy on scheduling athletic competitions and practices.
- The draft policy includes an emphasis on avoiding scheduling during exam week and the week prior, whenever possible. Coaches are expected to play a supportive role, but ultimately, it is the student’s responsibility to notify their instructor in writing of any potential conflicts, ideally by the first week of class.
- Students are expected to propose how they plan to resolve any conflicts with class obligations. For student athletes at UC Merced, this process includes the completion of an official Athletics Missed Class form, signed by both the student and the instructor, which outlines any accommodations agreed upon. Instructors are encouraged to make accommodations when feasible, but the policy makes it clear that the pedagogical needs of the course remain the primary factor in determining whether an accommodations is appropriate.
- The draft policy includes a statement: “absent any evidence that an accommodation would create a significant burden on instructor workload or significantly reduce student learning, experiences or course requirements, best practices that instructors should be willing to work with the student to determine a mutually satisfactory accommodation.”
- The course syllabus acts as a contract between instructors and students, providing essential information on course expectations and potential conflicts.
- Due to workload concerns, it is not the responsibility of instructors or teaching assistants to tutor students on missed material outside of regular contact hours.
- Instructors are not required to create alternative assessments for students with exam scheduling conflicts. However, they can consider solutions such as utilizing alternative exam times for students with mandated accommodations (like student athletes) or using a dropped score in the grading structure to allow

students to miss certain assignments or exams without penalty.

- If a reasonable solution cannot be reached between the student and instructor, the student can take the following steps:
  - Contact their coach, who will try to reach out to the instructor to find a resolution.
  - If that does not work, email the assistant dean to assist in resolving the issue.
  - If no resolution is found through these steps, the student must accept the instructor's decision regarding missed work.

Chair Sharping pointed out the frequent use of the term “should” throughout the document. While it may be intended to express encouragement or best practices, it can sometimes come across as vague or noncommittal. He recommended the policy proposers replace “should” with “shall” or “will” in certain contexts to make expectations clearer.

Members engaged in discussion and provided the following recommendations for clarification:

- The policy needs clearer, enforceable consequences. For example, some student athletes intentionally enroll in classes they know they will miss frequently due to practice. The policy could address this issue by requiring students to work with their coaches to enroll in classes that minimize scheduling conflicts.
- While class absences due to athletic events are a major concern, similar issues arise with students missing class for work. The proposers should make the policy clearer that it does not apply to scheduled employment.
- It would be helpful to link or append to the draft policy the UC Merced Athletics Missed Class Form, referenced on page 2.
- A standardized template or form that students can use to communicate with instructors, especially when it is their responsibility to notify faculty in writing and propose a solution to resolve schedule conflicts, would be beneficial.

The template could include:

- A table with known dates of absences (e.g., for games, conferences, etc.)
- Checkboxes for the type of session being missed (lecture, lab, etc.) and whether the conflict is known in advance or still uncertain.
- Space to explain the nature and importance of the event (such as a conference).

The value of having a form that prompts students to carefully consider exactly what class components they will miss, like labs or exams, rather than just providing a generic list of events. A detailed form would help students recognize the academic impact of their absences and support more informed conversations with instructors.

- There is concern about the use of “mutually satisfactory” arrangements, as the focus should not be on satisfaction. Instead, the priority should be to ensure that the arrangement is pedagogically valuable and supports the course’s

integrity. While students may not be happy about taking an exam early, it should be acceptable if it is necessary for maintaining the educational experience, which should be centered on learning rather than comfort.

- How the policy handles conferences that are not university-sponsored but are still vital for students' academic growth, especially for research students, should be explicitly addressed in the policy. This would ensure that students who miss class for such events are not penalized. For students majoring in fields like Chemistry or Physics, presenting at a national conference is a significant educational opportunity, and the policy should reflect that.
- Under **Guidelines for Accommodations** (page 2):
  - There is a lack of clarity in how students are expected to propose an accommodation. The policy states that “faculty are encouraged to explain to the student in writing the specific pedagogical reasons that prevent accepting the student’s proposed accommodation”; however, it is unclear how the student is to propose the accommodation in the first place - whether directly to the instructor, through Student Accessibility Services, or another channel. Given that earlier sections of the policy reference written communication, clearly defining this process to avoid misunderstandings is recommended. Without that clarity, students might assume that simply speaking with someone else or going through another office is sufficient, which can cause confusion for both students and faculty.
  - The use of the word “encouraged” also raises questions about whether faculty are expected to provide written explanations or if it is optional. Clarifying whether faculty are expected to include this information in the syllabus, rather than relying on ad-hoc written responses, is essential. There is also concern that the paragraph in question addresses too many issues at once - proposed accommodations, faculty responses, pedagogical justification, and student enrollment choices. A suggestion should be made to break the content into separate sections for better clarity.
  - There is also concern with the phrasing “absent evidence,” which seems to create a burdensome dynamic. It implies that if instructors do not provide enough written justification, they might be overruled or forced to comply with an accommodation by default. In large classes, or those with complex in-person components, it might simply not be feasible to meet that expectation in the timeline someone else finds acceptable. That kind of pressure could discourage instructors from asserting legitimate pedagogical concerns, especially if they fear being penalized for not responding “adequately” or quickly enough.
  - Asking instructors to adjust their syllabi on an individual basis raises broader concerns about academic freedom. While flexibility is important, such requests may be difficult to implement, time-consuming, and could undermine instructors' autonomy and the structure of their courses.

**Action:**

- The UGC Analyst and Chair Sharping drafted a memo incorporating members' comments.
- The final memo was transmitted to the Senate Chair and Senate Executive Director Paul on April 25, 2025.

**V. Campus Review Items – Chair Sharping, Maria Zoghbi, and Haiyan Liu – 11:10am – 11:30am****A. [Accounting B.S. and Minor Proposal](#)**

The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#), and for minors, [here](#).

The lead reviewer summarized their assessment, highlighting the following points:

- Statistical information and predictions used to estimate student enrollment for the new major are too general and not tailored to the specific area.
- The proposal does not clarify how the new Accounting Major differs from existing majors. There is mention of a new course (ECON 050), but it does not seem specific to Accounting, raising concerns about the uniqueness of the program.
- The proposed program relies on upper-division classes that have never been taught due to faculty lack of expertise. The plan to hire part-time faculty (Unit 18 lecturers) raises concerns about how faculty can supervise and ensure quality education.
- The proposal does not address how students will access expensive Accounting databases since the Library lacks funding for these resources. There's uncertainty about whether alternative, cheaper resources exist.
- The faculty creating the proposal seem to lack expertise in Accounting, as they did not account for critical resources, such as the databases.
- The existing ECON classes are near capacity, and with an expected increase in students, there may be insufficient resources to handle the demand. The proposal relies on the Business Administration B.A. proposal for faculty hires, which has not been approved yet, creating uncertainty about feasibility.
- The proposal mentions a need for small class sizes for effective pedagogy but later suggests potentially larger classrooms.
- There is a lack of clarity about how many credit units can count towards the major versus general education requirements.

The lead reviewer recommended that the proposers address these concerns before UGC grants approval.

A member, who is also an author of the proposal, noted that the development of the program is in response to student demand. The Accounting Major, along with a Business Administration degree, is seen as a path to stable careers, which is why the

university is pushing for their launch. However, there are several trade-offs and challenges being navigated:

- The Accounting program is designed to complement the Business Administration degree, using foundational Economics courses that are required for both programs. This approach allows students to start the Accounting program while prioritizing the Business Administration program, which is already in high demand.
- The university's push for these programs is driven by the need to boost enrollments, especially for high-demand degrees like Business Administration and Accounting. This demand is seen as a way to address future career stability for students, even though there are concerns about how this will all play out, especially with developments in AI and technology.
- One of the major concerns is the lack of full-time, tenured faculty members with expertise in Accounting. Given constraints, like the hiring freeze, the plan is to hire part-time faculty who can teach the core Accounting courses. Although this solution does not fully address the concern about having experts to run the program, the goal is to oversee the program effectively and ensure quality teaching.
- While databases are useful for Accounting courses, they are not considered critical. However, there is an ongoing funding problem for these resources, which is acknowledged as a trade-off. The university is aware of the challenge but is working with available resources.
- To address the capacity issues with Economics courses, additional hires for the Business Administration program will indirectly help provide the necessary Economics courses for the Accounting program. This approach is seen as a way to address both programs simultaneously, although the complementary nature of the two programs is crucial for the plan to work.
- The concerns about the balance between small and large classes, which could impact teaching quality, are acknowledged as important, but the overall challenge of managing growing enrollments in a constrained environment makes it difficult to stick to smaller class sizes.
- The proposal recognizes these critiques and acknowledges the trade-offs involved. The push for the new majors is happening in a tight enrollment environment, and while not all concerns can be fully addressed, the team is doing their best to navigate these challenges while trying to deliver a valuable program for students.

**Action:**

- Members decided not to approve the proposal but requested revisions to the memo to clearly outline what changes are needed for potential approval.
- The final memo was transmitted to the Senate Chair on April 25, 2025.

B. [Business Administration B.A. and Minor Proposal](#)

The policy governing the review and approval of Undergraduate Degree Programs is available [here](#), and for minors, [here](#).

The lead reviewer summarized their assessment, highlighting the following points:

- The proposal is strong and aims to benefit the campus in the long term by increasing student enrollments.
- The new program focuses on preparing students for the job market by offering courses that align with industry standards. Upon completing relevant courses, students will be able to apply for professional certifications, which is a positive aspect of the proposal.
- The proposal requests four research faculty lines, one teaching professor, and one Unit 18 lecturer, which is a significant ask for a new program. There is concern about whether the hiring process could be more strategic, starting with teaching faculty before transitioning to research faculty, rather than immediately hiring three research faculty. This would allow for a more gradual approach to staffing, especially since new courses (like Writing and Economics) are set to be taught by these research faculty.
- Another concern was regarding Library support. The Library currently lacks the budget for necessary Business databases for teaching and research. They are seeking external support to fund these resources, but the source of this funding is unclear.

It was clarified that replacing these resources with Open Access textbooks or Open Educational Resources (OER) is unlikely due to the proprietary nature of the data they contain. These resources will eventually need to be purchased, which is a challenge but a necessity for the program's success. The importance of addressing these resource needs was emphasized.

A member inquired about the anticipated referral pool for students pursuing Accounting and Business degrees and how many students are expected to transfer from community colleges into these programs. Furthermore, how would these classes contribute to the accreditation process for the potential new Gallo School?

A member, who is also an author of the program, responded that the target is 240 new UC Merced students per year, with the expectation of growth over time. The exact breakdown between new students and transfer students is noted in the document, but the overall enrollment should be balanced. Additionally, the new programs will be central to the creation of the Gallo School, which is also set to provide important resources like funding for things like Library and database resources. The Gallo School has money set aside that can be used to support these programs, which will hopefully help attract additional funding and resources.

**Action:**

- Members decided not to approve the proposal but requested revisions to the memo to clearly outline what changes are needed for potential approval.
- The final memo was transmitted to the Senate Chair on April 25, 2025.

**VI. Approval of Courses<sup>1</sup> – Santosh Chandrasekhar, Haiyan Liu, and Maria Zoghbi - 11:30am – 11:40am**

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

**Action:**

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

1. [BIO - 164 - Human Anatomy](#) (modify existing; Spring 2026)
2. [NSED - 025 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in Elementary School – Seminar](#) (new; Fall 2025)
3. [NSED - 026 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in Elementary School – Fieldwork](#) (new; Fall 2025)
4. [NSED - 045 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in Middle School – Seminar](#)
5. [NSED - 046 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in Middle School – Fieldwork](#) (new; Fall 2025)
6. [NSED - 065 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in High School - Seminar](#) (new; Fall 2025)
7. [NSED - 066 - Introduction to Teaching Science and Mathematics in High School - Fieldwork](#) (new; Fall 2025)
8. [COMM - 141 - Management Communication Theory and Practice](#) (new; crosslisted with WRI 018; Fall 2025)
9. [WRI - 118 - Management Communication Theory and Practice](#) (modifying existing; crosslisted with COMM 141; Fall 2025)

**Action:**

➤ The following courses were approved contingent upon minor revisions being addressed. Curriculog will be updated accordingly:

1. [DSA - 102 - Interactive Data Collection & Visualization](#) (new; Fall 2026)
  - Request including PLO2 in the list of CLOs.
2. [MATH - 022 - Calculus II for Physical Sciences and Engineering](#) (modify existing; Summer 2025)
  - Request including CLOs in the prescribed format.
  - Request 2-4 year curriculum plan.
3. [MATH - 024 - Linear Algebra and Differential Equations](#) (modify existing; Summer 2025) - UGC approved a request for exception for Spring 2025 effective term; has been revised to Summer 2025).
  - Request 2-4 year curriculum plan.

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<sup>1</sup> RECUSALS

Maria – BIO

Susan - WRI

**VII. Any Other Business – All – 11:40am – 11:45am**

No other business was discussed.

**VIII. 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: Jay Sharping, UGC Chair.