[Undergraduate Council](#) (UGC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 1, 2025
10:30am – 12:00pm

Pursuant to call, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) met at 10:30am on May 1, 2025. Chair Sharping presiding.

I.   Consent Calendar – 10:30am – 10:35am
   A. Today's Agenda
   B. [April 17 Meeting Minutes](#)
   C. [Request from SNS for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline to submit a new course, PHYS 007, in Curriculog, effective Fall 2025.](#)
   D. [Request from SSHA for an exception to UGC's February 3, 2025 deadline to offer PHIL 162 in Spring 2026.](#)
   E. [Request from SoE for an exception to UGC's October 14, 2024 deadline to offer ENGR 057 lecture online in Fall 2025.](#)

   Action:
   ➢ The agenda and April 17 meeting minutes were approved as presented.
   ➢ The requests from SNS, SSHA, and SoE were approved. The UGC Analyst notified the respective Curriculum Managers.

II. April 22 DivCo Meeting Update – Lindsay Crawford – 10:35am – 10:40am
   • EVC/Provost Dumont and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Schnier have finalized their decisions regarding the administrative budget reductions, but these need to be communicated to the Chancellor before anything is made public. UC Merced will proceed with a 5% budget cut due to the current deficit, with additional reductions of 3–4% planned in the coming years.
   • A Senate Faculty Town Hall has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 7, 2025, at 2:30pm prior to the Meeting of the Division.
   • The EVC/Provost and the Chancellor met with the Senate Chair and Vice Chair to discuss the NEH Library grant reduction. This cut released $750,000 in matching funds from the Chancellor, and they are now exploring options for gap funding.
   • Approximately 100 UC students have had their visas revoked systemwide, including 4 at UC Merced. Administrators continue to emphasize that there is limited action they can take in response.
   • Proposed revisions to APM-500, *Recruitment–General*, aim primarily to identify potential sexual predators. The discussion raised several key questions: Why limit the review to only the past seven years? Can candidates be expected to self-disclose truthfully? Should all candidates complete a release form? What privacy and confidentiality concerns might arise, particularly for international applicants? Overall, the group emphasized the need for clear and well-defined procedures.

- UC Merced Professor Roger Bales presented a proposal for a Living Laboratory for Climate Solutions, a research initiative aligned with the campus's Fossil Free Plan. The initiative aims to integrate student involvement in both classroom and laboratory research. While it was unclear why the presentation was made to Divisional Council, Professor Bales sought the Senate's support in "elevating" the plan to encourage broader faculty participation. The School of Engineering has expressed strong enthusiasm for the proposal.

III. **Consultation with AI Workgroup Member Lisa Yeo – 10:40am – 10:55am**
   A. Update on the Academic Senate AI Workgroup (AI-WORKGROUP)

Professor Yeo introduced herself as a member of the University Committee on Academic Computing and Communications (UCACC), which led to her involvement in the Academic Senate Artificial Intelligence (AI) Workgroup. The work group was formed to evaluate how AI is being adopted across the 10 campuses, specifically from the faculty perspective. The group's charge includes identifying faculty concerns, assessing AI use in admissions, teaching, research, and service, and recommending best practices within the Senate's purview. This initiative complements the existing AI Council, which focuses more on administrative and operational uses of AI across the system.

The Senate AI work group, composed of faculty representatives from all 10 campuses and diverse disciplines, has divided into four subgroups: instruction, research, data stewardship, and admissions. Each subgroup is working in parallel, and the group is now beginning to synthesize its findings. A key theme emerging across all areas is the need for flexibility, agency, and shared decision-making in how AI is used. This includes allowing instructors and departments autonomy in deciding how AI is used in classrooms and research; addressing academic integrity not only through enforcement but through open, discipline-specific conversations on appropriate use, especially with students; recognizing opportunities AI might offer, such as increasing faculty involvement in admissions processes; and moving away from simple "transparency" toward collaborative, trust-based practices that respect privacy and dignity while advancing the university's educational and research missions.

The group acknowledges the complexity of graduate education, where students often straddle roles as both learners and researchers, a nuance that has not been fully addressed yet, especially within the instruction subgroup. The work group plans to submit its report by the May Assembly.

A member raised a question about whether, given the complexity of the AI work group's charge and its broad scope, there have been discussions or recommendations about how individual departments or disciplines can engage in these conversations. The member also wondered if there has been any consideration of organizing campus wide events or forums to facilitate productive, discipline-specific dialogue around AI use. Professor Yeo responded that, yes, the work group is considering how to support conversations within departments and disciplines, and this will be reflected in the final report through high-level principles and illustrative use cases. While the instruction

subgroup is still working at a high level, it emphasizes that AI should support, not replace, core educational goals like inquiry and critical thinking. On campus, discussions about AI are happening in isolated pockets rather than through coordinated efforts. Professor Yeo noted that some initiatives, such as one in the School of Engineering (SoE), are happening independently and often come as a surprise. The UC Merced Office of Information Technology (OIT) currently maintains a general AI landing page with links to known efforts, though it is not actively coordinating activities at this time.

Professor Yeo further discussed concerns around using AI tools in an educational setting, particularly regarding data privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). A common concern regarding student assignments, art creation, and transactional data (like login frequency) is whether such data can be legally shared or used under FERPA guidelines. She also raised the question of whether AI tools should be used in a way that ensures data remains localized within the system, or if it is shared externally (with open AI platforms like ChatGPT), where it could potentially be used for broader training purposes. There is a strong push to ensure that AI tools are licensed in a way that prevents educational data from being shared or used externally. However, Professor Yeo is still unsure about the implications for FERPA and confirmed that she will look into it further.

VPDUE Bergerson highlighted the challenges of using AI in the review process for graduate admissions or program applications. The dilemma is determining whether AI has contributed to an applicant's essay, raising concerns about fairness and authenticity. She also discussed the role of advising students on improving their work with AI, offering suggestions for enhancing an essay without completely rewriting it. VPDUE Bergerson recognizes that while AI can be useful for providing feedback, there is a delicate balance between offering support and crossing into unfair assistance. The primary concern is ensuring students are evaluated fairly - penalizing poor essays due to typos, while not rewarding those who overly rely on AI. She mentioned that the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) is focusing on AI as a theme for both the Course Design Institute and next year's Faculty Fellows, which will lead to more pedagogical initiatives and work related to AI.

The Library is also offering GenAI workshops:
https://library.ucmerced.edu/research/instructors/by-request-workshops;
https://libguides.ucmerced.edu/Generative-AI

IV. **VPDUE Bergerson's Report – 10:55am – 11:05am**
   A. Student Retention Committee

   VPDUE Bergerson reported on a strategic initiative on enrollment and retention. She and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement (VCSAE) Oseguera are forming a Student Retention Committee at UC Merced. The committee's goals are to analyze retention data to identify gaps and areas for improvement, develop retention goals for the next few years and a plan to achieve them, and propose a future

structure for overseeing retention efforts, whether the committee remains ongoing or hands off to administration.

She further explained that although UC Merced is recognized nationally for strong retention among students of color, first-generation college students, and Pell-eligible students, there is still room for improvement. The goal is to identify and address gaps in retention for these groups by better coordinating existing campus efforts. This includes examining how advising, pedagogy, financial aid, and student support services can be more effectively leveraged to keep students enrolled and successful.

The committee will begin work in the fall and meet monthly during the first year. Membership will include representatives from Advising, CETL, the Library, the Registrar's Office, Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS), Student Affairs, and faculty.

Action:
➢ Members are to contact VPDUE Bergerson if they are interested in serving on the committee.

V. **[Revised Draft Campus Policy on Undergraduate Certificate Programs](#) – Aurora Pribram-Jones and Catherine Keske – 11:05am - 11:15am**
During the March 20, 2025 UGC meeting, members reviewed Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Koehler's draft Campus Policy on Undergraduate Certificate Programs, and transmitted a memo with recommended revisions on April 4, 2025.

On April 23, 2025, Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Koehler provided a revised proposal that addressed the concerns raised by UGC (linked above).

The lead reviewers acknowledged that while some of UGC's concerns were addressed, others were overlooked. They noted that the proposers' response did not address questions related to national laboratories and alternative programming approaches, but they felt that requesting further revision in these areas might not be necessary. A key remaining concern that should be addressed involves the relationship between Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) and the Senate, particularly in terms of oversight and integration with PACE programs. It was suggested that the draft policy be revised to explicitly exclude certificates developed through PACE partnerships. Instead, PACE-related certificates could be addressed under a separate policy, with a clearer articulation of PACE's collaboration with UGC.

Conversely, a member expressed concern that if certificates developed through PACE follow a separate process, departments could begin developing certificates independently of PACE, potentially duplicating or conflicting with existing PACE offerings, leading to confusion and undermining PACE's role. While some interpreted

the current proposal as a safeguard against such overlap, others found the intent ambiguous and potentially restrictive.

In the end, members supported the inclusion of PACE in the certificate proposal process but cautioned against positioning PACE and the Senate as equivalent bodies without clearer governance structures. The Curriculum Advisory Board's role is still undefined, further complicating matters. A question was raised about the specific role of PACE in the certificate program review process, particularly whether PACE would function as an additional level of review (within Curriculog or elsewhere in the workflow). Members agreed that clearer guidance on PACE's involvement and coordination would strengthen the policy.

Further discussion focused on the procedural workflow for certificate proposals. Specifically, whether they would be treated as Catalog revisions or as new programs requiring full campus review. Registrar Webb clarified that new certificates would undergo full campus review, consistent with the process for new academic programs, while revisions to existing certificates might require only UGC to review.

Members agreed that, while the proposal is clear at the policy level, it would be helpful to include a more explicit statement or chart clarifying the exact workflow, especially for faculty and curriculum staff who manage these submissions. There was also support for distinguishing clearly between policies for establishing new certificates and those for revising existing ones.

UGC recommended that the proposers include in their draft policy a reference to the [Campus Policy on Academic Degree Programs Approval Process](), specifying adherence to its outlined procedures. Members also advised including a statement that consultation with PACE should occur during the same phase as outreach to other affected parties in the proposal development process.

Action:
  ➢ Members agreed to recommend revision to the draft policy to include the two additional edits outlined above (referencing campus policy and clarifying consultation with PACE).
  ➢ A memo was transmitted to SSHA Associate Dean Zanzucchi and Executive Director of Degree Completion Koehler on May 8, 2025.

VI. **UGC's Revised Policies and Procedures – Chair Sharping – 11:15am – 11:30am**
    During the April 3, 2025 UGC meeting, members reviewed proposed revisions to the Supplemental Questionnaire and the Procedures and Policies for Approval of New and Revised Undergraduate Courses. Following the meeting, Chair Sharping made additional edits to the two documents to further clarify the modality definitions and include information regarding impacted courses and programs. The edits are shown in tracked changes at the links below.

A. [Procedures and Policies for Approval of New and Revised Undergraduate Courses](#)
   The updates include:
   1. Revised definitions for in-person, online, hybrid, and hyflex courses.
   2. New sub-definitions for online with in-person exams, online synchronous, and online asynchronous.
   3. Included information regarding impacted courses and programs

B. [Supplemental Questionnaire](#)
   For consistency with the policy (linked above), this document has been updated to reflect revised definitions for in-person, online, hybrid, and hyflex courses, as well as new sub-definitions for online with in-person exams, online synchronous, and online asynchronous.

Chair Sharping summarized the revisions, highlighting that both documents have been updated to include more detailed definitions of instructional modalities. While there was previously an effort to simplify the categories to just "online" and "in-person," it became evident to UGC and the Registrar that more nuanced distinctions were necessary. As a result, the updated policy now defines multiple formats, including in-person, hybrid, and hyflex. The "online" category is further divided into three subtypes: online with in-person exams, online synchronous, and online asynchronous.

The revisions also introduce new considerations regarding the impact of proposed courses on existing programs, especially service courses that act as prerequisites across multiple disciplines. For example, if a new course or program requires Math 021, the proposing department must consult the Math Department to ensure alignment and capacity. To address these situations, the policy now includes questions such as: "Does the proposed course have an impact on existing courses?" and "Does the proposed course have a prerequisite from a different school? If so, has that program been consulted, and are sufficient offerings available to meet anticipated student demand?" The UGC review criteria have been expanded to include these cross-school and program impact considerations. This supports a broader and more coordinated evaluation process for new course proposals.

A member questioned whether the "prerequisite and co-requisite change" listed under the regular review process refers strictly to formal prerequisites and co-requisites, or if it also includes other enrollment restrictions such as class standing and major restrictions. Chair Sharping explained that this change was originally intended to be removed, as it lacked a strong rationale and would unnecessarily complicate the streamlined review process currently in place for many course modifications. While he acknowledged that prerequisite changes with broad programmatic impact might occasionally warrant deeper review, he recommended omitting this change to preserve the efficiency of the system. However, during the Executive Session, voting members agreed to retain this change, but clarified that it does not extend to restrictions such as class standing, major requirements, etc.

Members also discussed the definition of hybrid courses, particularly in relation to online versus in-person instruction and accreditation standards. It was clarified that hybrid courses combine both in-person and online components, but confusion remains about how percentage thresholds should be applied. Registrar Webb noted that the current campus policy seems to treat any course with any portion of online instruction as hybrid, unless it exceeds 50% online instruction, in which case it is categorized as fully online.

Chair Sharping and Registrar Webb explained that the 50% threshold likely originates from Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation guidelines. For WASC, if more than 50% of a program's instruction is online, it triggers an additional accreditation review. Registrar Webb added that WASC broadly defines anything not fully in-person, including hybrid and hyflex formats, as "online," even if campus definitions are more specific. UGC's policy defines fully online courses as those with no in-person attendance, and hybrid courses as those with both components. Registrar Webb questioned whether the phrase "more than 50% of instruction occurs online" was necessary, arguing it may be redundant; if instruction is not online, it must be in person. She also sought clarification on whether the online subcategories (asynchronous, synchronous, and with in-person exams) are mutually exclusive or combinable. Chair Sharping confirmed that these options are not exclusive, and instructors can select multiple formats.

Chair Sharping further clarified that the 50% threshold serves a procedural purpose: it triggers additional scrutiny during course approval, such as requiring the Supplemental Questionnaire. This threshold was not arbitrarily chosen but is consistent with UC and WASC standards. Registrar Webb suggested that instead of embedding the percentage in the modality definitions, it might be better to link it explicitly to the course approval process, so that any course with more than 50% online instruction would require additional documentation, regardless of how it is labeled.

Action:
- ➢ Members agreed to make additional edits, specifically regarding the percentages included in the modality definitions.
- ➢ An updated version of the Supplemental Questionnaire and the Procedures and Policies for Approval of New and Revised Undergraduate Courses will be included on the May 15 UGC meeting agenda for review.

VII. **Approval of Courses – 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 will be updated accordingly:
  1. CRES - 184 - Power, Liberation, and the Body (new, Fall 2025)

2. [EE - 181 - Photonics and Optoelectronics](new; Spring 2027)
3. [USTU - 003 - Introduction to the Research](new; Summer 2025) University

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

1. [AE - 001 - Introduction to Aerospace Engineering](new; Fall 2026)
   - Request proposers fill in section for "Does the content of this course overlap with an existing course or is it substantially similar to an existing course? (Response required for UG courses only)"
   - "Open only to following major/minor(s)" was selected but information was added.
   - No restrictions for majors or class level? The absence of restrictions for this introductory course could cause issues with advanced students or students from other majors registering for it.
   - Request proposers complete section for "Describe the content of the course work to be completed outside of class meetings".

2. [BCME - 145 - Bioprocess Engineering](new; crosslisted with BIOE 145; Fall 2026) AND

3. [BIOE - 145 - Bioprocess Engineering](modify existing; crosslisted with BCME 145; Fall 2026)
   - 4 units: 3hour lecture +1 hour discussion + 6 non-contact hours (total 10). Needs to total 12 hours for a 4-unit course.
   - Request including CLOs for PLO 3 and 5.

4. [COMM - 132 - Health and the Media](new; crosslisted with PH 104; Spring 2026) AND

5. [PH - 104 - Health and the Media](modify existing; crosslisted with COMM 132; Spring 2026)
   - PH PLOs are not listed with COMM proposal and vice versa.
   - CLO 1 is listed in the attached syllabus but is missing from both proposals.

6. [DSA - 121 - Capstone II](new; crosslisted with MIST 181; Fall 2026)
7. [MIST - 181 - Capstone II](new; crosslisted with DSA 121; Fall 2026)
   - DSA PLOs are missing from the MIST proposal and not listed with the CLOs and vice versa.
   - Answer to the question on whether this course satisfies a GE requirement is listed as no. This should be yes. Also, satisfying GE requirement of culminating experience should be stated under "Brief explanation of the Change".

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

No other business was discussed.

    IX.   **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.