

DIVISIONAL COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2020

Attendees: Chair Tom Hansford, Vice Chair Robin DeLugan, Christopher Viney, David Kelley, Patti LiWang, LeRoy Westerling, Jay Sharping, Michael Scheibner, Erin Hestir, Michael Dawson, Asmeret Asefaw Berhe, Carolin Frank, and Josué Medellin-Azuara.

Absent: Linda Hirst

I. Consultation with EVC/Provost

EVC/Provost Camfield consulted with Division Council on his ideas for how the university should become more flexible given the sudden changes caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, the campus should make research and teaching more resilient. VCORED Trina will take the lead with respect to the campus research mission. EVC/Provost Camfield stated that he will serve as the lead on educational changes. He asserted that the campus should change its thinking towards modular courses that would allow for a degree of flexibility; when a future crisis occurs, faculty could easily shift components of their courses to online delivery until such time as the crisis is concluded and in-person teaching can resume.

EVC/Provost Camfield announced the need to create a committee comprised of faculty members, OIT, and CETL to strategize the designing of more resilient, modular courses. He envisions this committee also addressing questions related to the effectiveness of teaching lab courses with a low density of students and personnel in the labs. He also announced that he wants to create another committee comprised of the Registrar and staff associated with curriculum, advisors, and tutors to opine on how support staff can facilitate a more resilient teaching enterprise. EVC/Provost Camfield acknowledged that there will likely be flaws as the campus seeks to create a more resilient teaching enterprise, but the process to at least build the outlines of a new educational process must begin now.

A Division Council member requested that any future, resilient model of teaching must take into account the difficulty of delivering computational courses remotely. Students taking such courses remotely are working on multiple platforms and operational systems and this is not as efficient as all students working on the same machines in a computer lab.

EVC/Provost Camfield pointed out to Division Council members that a need for a more flexible educational process is not only due to the current COVID-19 pandemic but for any future occurrence that would cause a disruption to campus operations, such as a campus shutdown due to poor air quality which UC Merced has already experienced.

A Division Council member asked about infrastructure needs in the context of a shift to a modular delivery of courses. Some courses in engineering and the natural sciences require the use of high-quality, specific desk top systems and platforms that students do not have access to at home. It would therefore be difficult for faculty members to adapt their courses in the manner required by a modular or hybrid approach. EVC/Provost Camfield replied that he understands the challenges and hopes the new committee he discussed earlier will advise him

on the needs of faculty members. He added that the campus is currently examining how to use the funds provided by the economic stimulus bill, specifically for expenses incurred due to the shift to online courses. The campus is also submitting requests for reimbursement for COVID-19-related expenses from the state and federal government as required. Resources will be a significant challenge, but the campus is actively seeking funds.

A Division Council member asked about data that speaks to students' ability to adapt to flexible teaching modalities. EVC/Provost Camfield answered that the minimal data he has analyzed thus far indicates that students with greater social capital and more resources at their disposal have a higher chance of success. He added that UC Merced is working with UC San Diego on mining data lakes on how students use learning management systems. He is also asking faculty members who teach gateway courses for data on participation and drops. The goal is to conduct studies quickly in the face of the current pandemic crisis and subsequently develop more robust studies in the future.

II. Chair's Announcements – Tom Hansford

A. Academic Council Updates

- i. The Regents did not act on the cohort tuition plan at their last meeting.
- ii. Academic Council approved measures that would provide flexibility for our incoming fall 2020 class and subsequent classes: reporting of standardized test scores will be optional for students enrolling in 2021 given that they did not take the tests in a traditional manner this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been incorrect reporting in the media that the UC is not conducting testing at all; to clarify, testing is occurring, but the UC is making it optional for students to report their test scores.
- iii. Systemwide Provost Michael Brown and UC President Napolitano have decided that faculty will not receive an increase to their salary scales next year. Faculty will still receive their merit increases resulting from their normal academic reviews.
- iv. UCOP will issue an announcement in June regarding the future of UC employee salaries.
- v. A survey will soon be issued to UC faculty about remote instruction. Chair Hansford encourages faculty to respond and be forthright in their answers. Students will also be surveyed by another method.
- vi. Academic Council and Academic Assembly endorsed the recommendations from the Standardized Testing Taskforce.
- vii. Academic Council and UCEP are working on emergency changes to instruction policies. UCEP temporarily suspended the requirement that Writing 1 must be passed with a grade of C or higher. That requirement was causing complications in UC Merced's emergency course continuity policy with regard to the Pass/No Pass component. Chair Hansford shared that many at the systemwide level have praised UC Merced's policy and hailed it as a model for others to emulate.

B. Senior Leadership Team Meetings

- i. In March, UC Merced lost \$7.4 million due to the coronavirus pandemic. The losses sustained by other UC campuses are considerably higher.
- ii. Summer session will be delivered via online instruction. There was a discussion about fall 2020 instruction, but Chair Hansford stated he will address this later in today's agenda.

- iii. Overall, UC Merced’s construction projects are proceeding smoothly save for a few delays. However, there are supply chain challenges related to obtaining necessary building materials.
- iv. UC President Napolitano’s recent communication to the UC system announced that there will be no layoff of career employees through June 30, 2020. It is unknown what will occur after that time. President Napolitano stated that she is willing to remain in her role, if needed, for the next few months during this time of crisis.

A Division Council member asked for an update on the UC Merced Chancellor search. Chair Hansford reiterated what he had announced at a previous Division Council meeting, which is, interviews were completed in March and no update has been forthcoming. Similarly, there are no updates on the UC President search. Academic Council and Academic Assembly both informed the Regents that they must follow past precedent and include faculty members on the search committee such as the systemwide Senate Chair and Vice Chair. The Regents refused.

- III. Consent Calendar
 - A. The Agenda
 - B. March 30, 2020 Meeting Minutes
 - C. Revised Bylaw I.III.5 Divisional Representatives

Action: The consent calendar was approved as presented.

- IV. Planning for Fall 2020 Instruction

Chair Hansford announced that other UC campuses have begun to prepare for fall 2020 instruction in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He asked for Division Council’s input on how UC Merced should proceed. Non-UC institutions have considered various options, such as 1) instituting online instruction for the entirety of fall 2020, 2) beginning the fall term with remote instruction and switching to in-person instruction at a later point, 3) conducting in-person instruction for small courses and labs and online instruction for large courses, and 4) converting every course to a hybrid model of in-person and online instruction. Interim Chancellor Brostrom has suggested that UC Merced decouple from the UC Berkeley academic calendar and start our fall term one month late to allow for the possibility of in-person instruction.

A Division Council member asked for clarification on UC Merced’s liability and plans if the campus reopens for in-person instruction and someone later contracts the coronavirus. Chair Hansford agreed that this is a risk, and shared that Interim Chancellor Brostrom prefers UC Merced to proceed more conservatively than the rules set out by local health officials. The UC Merced administration will focus on liability issues and health; the Academic Senate is asked to give feedback on faculty workload for fall 2020, e.g. preparing multi-modal or fully online courses while being cognizant of educational quality.

A Division Council member suggested that the campus draft a statement of principles to guide decision making on fall 2020 instruction. The principles can include considerations for equity and inclusion and emphasize quality over quantity, i.e. offering fewer sections.

A Division Council member pointed out that VCOREDs across the UC system are discussing a phased-in approach to ramping up campus research operations but that may not be transferrable to planning for fall 2020 instruction. The member asked whether faculty who return to campus to teach will be eligible for hazard pay. It is not advisable to incentivize bad decisions.

Another Division Council member requested that the statement include a principle about adequate resources to ensure student success and the safety of all students and employees. Another Council member warned that giving faculty a choice of modality of their fall 2020 courses carries equity implications because many faculty have child care issues. He added that there have been disruptions to research administrative support across campus and this has caused delays for faculty in submitting grant proposals. He asserted that the campus needs to address the research mission in addition to the educational aspect.

A Division Council member suggested delivering undergraduate courses online for fall 2020 but holding graduate courses in-person; the rationale is that graduate courses are smaller which means less density on campus, and graduate students play a key role in the campus research mission.

A Division Council member suggested adding a principle related to fiscal responsibility, given that the university revenue stream is significantly impacted due to the cancellation of student housing and dining contracts. Another Division Council member recommended a principle that affirms the importance of educational quality and safety.

V. Update from UGC Chair Sharping: Final Exam Guidance

The proposed policy was discussed at the March 30 DivCo meeting and was revised following the March 30 DivCo discussion.

UGC Chair Sharping explained that faculty, the administration, and students are interested to know how final exams for spring 2020 will be conducted. To that end, UGC has revised the policy to allow faculty to cancel a final exam assuming that sufficient course work has been completed to satisfy assessment requirements and that students are notified of the cancellation. The revised policy also encourages the use of various options associated with exams including technology and online proctoring that is vetted by campus technology infrastructure.

VI. CoR's Research Enhancement Proposal

CoR is proposing a two-part initiative that aims at restructuring and enriching campus-wide research support. The proposal was reviewed by the School Deans, VPDGE Zatz, and Graduate Council. Their comments and endorsements were made available to Division Council members prior to this meeting.

CoR Chair Scheibner summarized the main elements of the two-part initiative. He pointed out that the key stakeholders who were invited to review the proposal prior to this meeting all endorsed the proposal and offered useful comments. A member of GC did have concerns with regards to humanities faculty. Chair Hansford stated that he supports the two-tiered grant program idea and given that some of the program's funds will be allocated to the Schools to use as they see fit, the humanities should not be disadvantaged.

Chair Scheibner stated that he seeks Division Council’s endorsement of the proposal so that CoR can move forward with seeking funding to support the ideas contained in the proposal. Ultimately, the proposal will be transmitted to the Interim Chancellor, the EVC/Provost, and the APAPB.

Action: Division Council members to send CoR Chair Scheibner their feedback on the proposal.

VII. Systemwide Review Item

A. Revised Presidential Policy on Travel Regulations

The main revisions consist of the following:

- a) Incorporation of the Internal Audit Recommendations regarding documentation necessary to support first or business class travel, and the need to document the business purpose of each day of the trip;
- b) Update the policy for the new IRS business mileage reimbursement rate effective January 1, 2020;
- c) Substitution of gender-neutral language throughout the policy;
- d) Addition of a new section on sustainable travel; and
- e) Clarification of what is included in the foreign per diem and link to the Department of State website in Appendix B.

FWAF Chair Frank stated that FWAF endorsed the policy with no additional comments.

Division Council members had no additional comments.

Action: The Merced Division’s endorsement of the revised Presidential Policy will be transmitted to the systemwide Senate Chair.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Attest: Tom Hansford, Senate Chair