



**Academic Council
Minutes of Meeting
September 24, 2025**

I. Consent Calendar

1. Today's agenda items and their priority
2. October 9, 2025 Assembly agenda topics

ACTION: Council approved the consent calendar.

II. Executive Session

III. Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs/ Systemwide Academic Personnel

- Amy K. Lee, Deputy Provost, [Systemwide Academic Personnel](#)
- Monica Varsanyi, Vice Provost, [Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs](#)

Vice Provost Varsanyi introduced herself and described her background, which includes leadership positions at the City University of New York and a scholarly focus on immigration federalism.

Leadership Appointments: Chris Witko has been appointed executive director of the UC Center Sacramento; Dan Waite is the new associate vice provost and executive director of the UC Education Abroad Program; and Catherine Baker has been named inaugural director of the UC Student Policy Center in Sacramento.

Degree Plus Pilot Program: UCSB and UCSD are piloting a two-year program that allows undergraduates to earn UC Extension certificates aligned with labor market needs alongside their bachelor's degrees and paired with paid internships. Funded by the Lumina Foundation, Strada Foundation, and UCOP, the initiative integrates three elements: the student's degree, a UCOP-and foundation funded paid internship, and a three-course certificate. UCSB certificates focus on artificial intelligence skills, while UCSD's cover data visualization, process management, and arts management. The goal is to improve career readiness without significantly extending time to degree. Each campus will enroll 120 students annually, with the pilot designed to gauge interest before potential expansion.

Early Career Faculty Award Program: A new initiative will provide approximately 60 grants of \$50,000 each to early career faculty across UC. Each campus may nominate up to 10 faculty, with at least two awards guaranteed per campus. The funds may be used flexibly for research-related needs such as course release, summer salary, travel, or support for students and postdocs. The program is designed to support junior faculty, especially those affected by recent federal funding disruptions. Applications will be screened at the campus level and then reviewed by an external committee to minimize bias. The awards are intended to support projects that will help assistant professors achieve tenure.

Policy Reviews: Deputy Provost Lee noted that the [interim systemwide guidelines on faculty discipline and proposed revisions to APM 015 and 016](#) are open for comment until November 26, with final Regents' approval expected in January 2026. [Proposed revisions to APM 036](#) are open for comment until December 19. They respond to [faculty feedback](#) on an earlier draft that included a disclaimer requirement for letters of recommendation. The new proposal clarifies that academic references may use UC letterhead without disclaimers stating that the author is not speaking on

behalf of UC. Only employment-related references will require such disclaimers. The revisions also incorporate new provisions related to compliance with wage and hour laws under the Fair Labor Standards Act, and lactation accommodation requirements for academic appointees.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members asked whether startup funds would be considered as part of the Early Career Award Program eligibility criteria. They emphasized the importance of fair criteria and clear communication and guidance. Vice Provost Varsanyi explained that the program is project-based and requires applicants to disclose current funding. She noted that refinements may be made in future years, such as allowing variable award amounts, and encouraged feedback on the program.
- Council members expressed concern about situations in which a letter of recommendation combines academic and employment elements, such as commenting on a teaching assistant's instructional abilities. Deputy Provost Lee acknowledged the complexity of these cases, committed to seeking further legal clarification, and promised to include specific guidance in a forthcoming FAQ.
- In response to questions about police reporting under the interim discipline policies, Deputy Provost Lee explained that an MOU is being developed with campus police departments to facilitate evidence-sharing in investigations. The model follows existing sexual violence/sexual harassment (SVSH) protocols, which prevent police from withholding information that would otherwise stall investigations.

IV. Consultation with UC Senior Managers

- **James B. Milliken, President**
- **Katherine Newman, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs**
- **Caín Díaz, Associate Vice President, Budget Analysis & Planning**

President Milliken introduced himself and reflected on his 37 years of experience in higher education leadership. He emphasized that he came to UC because he views it as the most important university in the world. He acknowledged that he is still learning UC's unique culture and political context. He highlighted two pressing issues that have dominated his early tenure:

Federal Actions: Shortly before his arrival, federal agencies suspended grants at UCLA and issued a draft resolution agreement seeking \$1 billion along with various compliance provisions. UC is open to good-faith discussions but believes the \$1 billion demand is a nonstarter. He explained that alternatives such as suing or refusing to negotiate are playing out at a few other institutions and have brought about significant consequences such as freezing billions in research funding, restricting international student enrollment, and placing financial aid under government control.

Disclosure of Incident Reports at Berkeley: The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) required UC to produce case files and incident reports that included personally identifiable information. President Milliken noted that universities typically produce summary or redacted information in complying with information sharing requirements. UC initially provided summaries and redacted materials, but OCR deemed the responses inadequate. President Milliken acknowledged that UC could have communicated more effectively about the circumstances and rationale for producing the identifiable information. He is reviewing past practices to ensure stronger protections and clearer communication going forward, and he stressed his commitment to balancing legal obligations with protecting students, faculty, and staff.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members asked if UCOP would release a statement addressing faculty concerns about the disclosure of names, and whether UCB's decision to notify affected individuals was unusual compared to practices at other institutions. Members asked whether names from other UC campuses had been disclosed and stressed the importance of clear, proactive communication. Others urged UC to adapt its approach to current circumstances, noting that past practices may not be appropriate in today's climate. Concerns were also raised about provisions in agreements at other universities that could restrict classroom speech. Members emphasized the importance of resisting requests for personal information when possible and encouraged UC to rely on faculty legal expertise. They asked UC to assure faculty that they would be notified if their names appeared in future disclosures. Finally, members asked that faculty voices be more proactively included in decision-making, rather than responding after decisions are made.
- In response, President Milliken said additional information, including FAQs and explanatory materials, would be released soon. He explained that the University is legally obligated to respond to OCR requests. He noted that most universities do not notify individuals when names are disclosed, though practices vary depending on the investigation and the relevance of the information. He agreed that faculty perspectives in decision making are important and that the University needs to find ways to engage faculty without violating any potential confidentiality restrictions.
- President Milliken said he would confirm details regarding other campuses and emphasized the importance of communications that highlight UC's efforts to protect faculty and students. He confirmed that he has consulted UC and external legal experts and welcomed further engagement.
- President Milliken said that in cases similar to UC Berkeley's, UC would carefully consider the notification issue. However, he cautioned that not all document productions warrant notification, particularly when names appear in large volumes of routine or irrelevant material.

Provost Newman opened by noting the challenges of consulting with faculty during the summer and emphasized the need for mechanisms that allow faculty input year-round for fast moving or time-sensitive items. She highlighted several topics:

Public Confidence in Higher Education: Recent survey data from the Vanderbilt Project and Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies show strong bipartisan support for higher education and particularly high confidence in UC. Provost Newman described this as an encouraging counterpoint to negative national media narratives.

UCAD Interim Report: She praised the Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions (UCAD) interim report as courageous and forward-looking. She announced the formation of UCAD Plus, a joint Senate-administration effort to advance UCAD's recommendations and explore long-term planning for research, graduate education, and faculty evaluation in light of federal pressures. UCAD Plus will include broad faculty engagement, with regular communications and systemwide review.

Graduate Education: She addressed speculations about suspending admissions in some graduate programs, clarifying that no suspensions will occur. Instead, departments must carefully assess resources to ensure they can support both current and incoming students. She reaffirmed the importance of sustaining the graduate pipeline.

Academic Congress: She previewed a Zoom-based systemwide Academic Congress scheduled for October 28–29, 2025 on the labor market destinations of recent graduates, which will bring together economists, policymakers, and employers.

Discussion highlights:

- Members emphasized the need to communicate UC’s value in rural areas. Provost Newman agreed and described efforts to collect and share data on UC’s impact in agriculture, health, and rural economies.
- Members raised concerns about the future of graduate programs, reports of admissions suspensions, and the need for reliable communication. Provost Newman reiterated that no suspensions are planned and that transparency is critical.
- Members recommended that UCAD Plus distinguish between urgent, short-term issues and longer-term planning, and prioritize reversible decisions over irreversible cuts. Provost Newman agreed, stressing the importance of flexibility and faculty governance.

Associate Vice President Díaz provided a budget update:

- **Budget Compact:** UC is in the final year of its compact with the governor. State budget shortfalls have resulted in lower appropriations and deferred funding, leaving UC with less than the planned 5% annual increases. While some cuts were deferred, campuses continue to face structural deficits and rising costs. The compact’s renewed after the term of the current governor ends is uncertain. UC anticipates a reset of UC’s funding relationship with the state in 2027–28.
- **Enrollment Funding:** UC is over-enrolled in fall 2025 by about 4,000 undergraduates beyond compact targets. While this helps meet the state’s access goals, it strains UC resources. He stressed the importance of funding not only new students but also those already enrolled. After adjusting for inflation, per-student core funding has declined and is now close to levels at the start of the compact, highlighting the need for sustained state support.
- **Capital Needs:** UC has not had a statewide general obligation bond since 2006. Capital projects are being financed through trade-offs in the operating budget, limiting flexibility.
- **Tuition Stability Plan:** UCOP is considering modifications to the plan, which keeps tuition flat for each student cohort, including: 1) maintaining the 5% annual cap (tied to inflation) on increases but allowing unused increases to be “banked” for future years; 2) reducing the share of incremental tuition revenue set aside for financial aid from 45% to 35%; 3) switching from California Consumer Price Index to the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) as the inflation measure; 4) considering a modest additional adjustment to hedge against inflation.

Discussion highlights:

- Members asked about UC’s long-term strategy for state engagement, especially after the compact ends. Díaz said future negotiations could provide an opportunity to recalibrate funding, especially by separating support for operations from enrollment growth.
- Members raised concerns about the proposed reduction in the financial aid return-to-aid percentage and the shift to HEPI. AVP Díaz responded that HEPI better reflects higher education cost drivers, though it is a national rather than California-specific measure.

V. Senate Officers’ Announcements

- **Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Chair**
- **Susannah Scott, Academic Council Vice Chair**

- **Monica Lin, Academic Senate Executive Director**

September Regents Meeting: Chair Palazoglu noted in his [remarks](#) that change is inevitable and often difficult, but when embraced collectively through shared governance, it can create opportunities for growth and strengthening UC's mission and values. President Milliken reported that he presented a "What Is at Stake" document to legislators, emphasizing UC's reliance on \$17 billion in annual federal funding. He highlighted that \$4.5 billion annually is needed to sustain core operations and research. Legislators appeared surprised at the scale of the challenge. He also noted that every dollar invested in UC generates \$14 in economic value.

ICAS ([Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates](#)): ICAS leadership identified two priority themes for the year: (1) strengthening ICAS' collective voice in state and national higher education policy, and (2) improving clarity and alignment in transfer and articulation.

Common Course Numbering: The California Community Colleges are implementing a [Common Course Numbering](#) (CCN) system, mandated by Assembly Bill 1111, to flag comparable courses in campus catalogs. UC faculty input is important to ensure alignment for transfer. Chair Palazoglu invited campus vice provosts and deans of undergraduate education to encourage UC faculty in 19 specified disciplines to provide feedback.

Joint and Senate Workgroups: Several groups will be active this academic year:

- **[UCAD](#):** The Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions will reconvene to refine its draft report in response to systemwide feedback and develop new recommendations. In addition, Provost Newman is convening UCAD Plus, a joint Senate-administration task force that will include UCAD members and focus on long-term planning.
- **[PUDP](#):** The joint Task Force on the Performance of Undergraduate Degree Programs, a successor to the Presidential Task Force on Instructional Modalities and UC Quality Undergraduate Degree Programs (IMOD), is charged with developing metrics, principles, and data collection methods for assessing online courses and programs. An initial report is expected this fall, with longer-term work on infrastructure and costs continuing into the year.
- **Systemwide Discipline Data and Investigation Model:** A joint work group is addressing streamlined data collection and reporting for faculty discipline cases and the development of a single investigation model. It aims to finish its work by January 2026.
- **Privilege and Tenure Workgroup:** A University Committee on Privilege and Tenure (UCPT) workgroup will form three subgroups to review proposed revisions to APM 015/016, conforming Senate bylaw revisions that will be proposed by another UCPT-led workgroup, and interim guidelines on extramural speech in collaboration with the University Committee on Academic Freedom.

2024-25 Report on Senate Leadership & Faculty Service: The systemwide Senate released its first annual [report](#) tracking faculty participation in systemwide service. It highlights opportunities to broaden representation from certain campuses and summarizes Senate service on special committees and joint task forces.

Other Updates:

- The Senate AI Work Group is expected to present its report in fall 2025.
- The UCSB Senate passed a resolution proposing "mutual academic defense compacts" to strengthen academic freedom and institutional integrity.
- The Senate is engaged with UCOP on the 2026 healthcare benefits structure. UC is increasing its contribution to 9.5% of costs (up from 7% last year). More details will be shared by UCOP leaders in October ahead of open enrollment.

- The systemwide Senate Office launched the five-year stewardship review process for Chancellor Larive (UCSC). In the spring, a similar review will be initiated for Chancellor Hawgood (UCSF).

VI. President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (PPFP)

○ Mark A. Lawson, Director, President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

History and Mission: The PPFP, now in its 41st year, originated from UC's charge under the 1960 Master Plan to prepare future UC faculty. It provides two-year fellowships that include salary, mentoring, and professional development for postdocs whose research, teaching, and service advance UC's mission. The program has always been compliant with Proposition 209.

Competitiveness and Incentives: In the most recent cycle, nearly 1,300 applicants competed for 41 fellowships. Fellows are selected through a two-round, faculty-led review process, with no administrative role in selection. UC campuses receive \$425,000 in discretionary funds to hire fellows as tenure track faculty. Additional funds are sometimes available for STEM startup packages. Mellon Foundation support also temporarily augments incentives for social sciences and humanities hires.

Impact: Over the past five years, fellows have made up 5% of UC's ladder-rank faculty hires. About 40% of fellows are hired into UC ladder-rank positions, and another 20–25% into equivalent positions nationwide. Since 2003, 410 PPFP fellows have joined the UC faculty. Fellows also have higher tenure and retention rates than open-search hires.

Criticism: The program has been criticized in national media and named in a joint Department of Justice/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigation. The University is clarifying misconceptions about the program's legality and process through the review.

Discussion highlights:

- Members asked whether hiring incentives could be more evenly distributed across campuses. Director Lawson explained that incentives are not capped and are allocated based on campus demand rather than a fixed distribution. Usage varies widely by campus and discipline, with recent growth partly supported by the Mellon Foundation. Earlier limits on incentives had suppressed hiring, while removing those limits increased systemwide participation.
- Members raised concerns that PPFP appointments are announced on July 1, which misaligns with regular hiring cycles and can lead to off-cycle waiver requests. Director Lawson acknowledged the issue and noted efforts to explore earlier reviews in certain disciplines and to improve coordination with campus schedules.
- Members asked whether fellows continue to receive professional development support, such as grant-writing workshops. Director Lawson confirmed that these activities remain a core part of the program and are offered across disciplines. He added that PPFP provides letters of support and structured training plans, which have helped fellows compete for major awards.
- Director Lawson highlighted the importance of Senate oversight/input. He suggested revisiting the [2016 guidance on the use of search waivers](#), and reaffirming the Senate's past stance that PPFP fellows should be considered during hiring freezes given their demonstrated success.

VII. Revision to Senate Regulation 750

The proposed revision to [Senate Regulation 750](#) adds "Math Fellow" (formerly Visiting Assistant Professor) as an instructional title authorized to teach both lower- and upper-division courses. This

revision implements a UC–UAW bargaining agreement to use the Math Fellow title as a narrowly defined instructional position. The revision also brings Senate regulations into alignment with APM 230, which eliminates references to the Visiting Assistant Professor in Mathematics title and replaced it with “Math Fellow.”

ACTION: Council unanimously approved the proposal for revision and agreed to advance it to the Assembly for further consideration.

VIII. Office of State Governmental Relations

- **Kathleen Fullerton, Associate Vice President (AVP) & Director, [State Governmental Relations](#) (SGR)**

Role of SGR: AVP Fullerton’s Sacramento office is part of UCOP’s External Relations and Communications Division. It has 13 staff organized into operations, legislation, budget, and advocacy (including [UCAN](#), the UC Advocacy Network). Each year, the team reviews roughly 3,000 bills, about 10% of which directly affect UC. Staff engage with legislators to amend, support, or oppose legislation, and manage UC’s advocacy efforts. SGR meets monthly with Senate leadership and consults campuses to identify faculty experts to testify on bills when needed.

State Budget: California faces a multi-billion-dollar deficit. In the governor’s January budget proposal, UC was initially slated for an 8% cut. After negotiations, this was reduced to a 3% cut with a promise of repayment the following fiscal year. SGR will continue to advocate to secure those funds and to help buffer potential federal cuts. UC can only advocate for items approved by the Regents, who will vote on the proposed 2026–27 budget in November. To reinforce UC’s importance, legislators received district-level handouts highlighting UC’s economic impact.

Legislation: UCOP sponsored five bills this year; four passed the Legislature and await or have received the governor’s signature. Sponsored bills require significant advocacy from SGR. UC rarely begins by outright opposing bills. Instead, staff work with authors to negotiate amendments. Each year, about 10–20 bills ultimately face UC opposition. Key issues and actions included:

- Two bills ([Assembly Bill 1098](#) and [SB 638](#)) evolved into legislation creating a California Education Interagency Council, a consultative forum for coordination across higher education segments.
- UC and UAW are collaborating in support of [Senate Bill 607](#) (Wiener), which proposes a \$23 billion research funding bond in response to federal funding threats. Likely slated for the November 2026 ballot, the measure would require legislative approval and the governor’s signature.
- UC successfully defeated or amended bills seeking greater transparency and oversight of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools.
- UC did not take a formal position on new laws addressing issues tied to federal enforcement, such as police masking and ICE notifications, but provided technical input to ensure feasibility.

Discussion highlights:

- A Council member asked whether a bond measure is a sustainable long-term replacement for federal research funds, and suggested alternatives such as creating a California Science Foundation. AVP Fullerton responded that SB 607 requires significant development, including clearer timelines, funding sources, and consideration of supplemental appropriations or private contributions.

- A member asked if AB 1098 could threaten UC autonomy. AVP Fullerton explained that the bill is expected to be signed by the governor and emphasized that the resulting council will be consultative only, without regulatory authority.
- A member asked about the impact of new state laws on UC policies, particularly related to time, place, and manner (TPM) rules for campus demonstrations. AVP Fullerton said the new laws will not change UC's TPM policies, though they may affect UC police operations.

IX. Reports from Senate Division Chairs

Federal Enforcement and Information Sharing: Across multiple campuses, faculty are deeply concerned about federal investigations, disclosure of names, and perceived threats to academic freedom. Chairs noted a strong desire for clearer, more proactive communication from UCOP to counter misinformation and reassure faculty. Several reported divisions among faculty, with some urging resistance to settlement and others prioritizing the preservation of research funding.

Shared Governance: Many campuses raised concerns about insufficient consultation, particularly around budget cuts, IT consolidation, and responses to federal pressures. Chairs emphasized the need to strengthen Senate-administration collaboration and avoid wherever possible framing decisions as “emergencies” that bypass shared governance.

Budget Challenges: Most campuses are facing budget shortfalls, prompting cost-cutting, restructuring, or new revenue initiatives. Chairs stressed the importance of Senate involvement in budget planning to safeguard academic priorities.

Information Technology and AI: Trellix implementation continues to generate concern. Chairs also reported resistance to administrative efforts to centralize IT services, citing concerns about cost, efficiency, and lack of consultation. AI governance and integration into teaching and research is emerging as a systemwide priority, with campuses forming committees, advisory groups, and issuing calls for proposals to assess AI's impact.

Faculty Morale and Campus Climate: Faculty morale is low due to uncertainty over federal investigations, budget cuts, and shared governance tensions. Some campuses are addressing related issues, such as abusive student evaluations and the need to improve campus climate. Several chairs also reported preparations for possible graduate student strikes and their likely impact on instruction and operations.

Senate Communication: Division chairs suggested developing new channels to share information more quickly across campuses. They also noted efforts to better orient faculty to Senate processes and strengthen faculty participation.

X. Executive Session

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm

Minutes prepared by Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director

Attest: Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Chair