



**Academic Council
Minutes of Meeting
January 28, 2026**

I. Consent Calendar

1. Today's agenda items and their priority
2. December 17, 2025 Academic Council minutes
3. UCD Master of Engineering in Sustainable Transportation
4. February 12, 2026 Assembly agenda topics

ACTION: Council approved the consent calendar.

II. Senate Officers' Announcements

- **Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Chair**
- **Susannah Scott, Academic Council Vice Chair**
- **Monica Lin, Academic Senate Executive Director**

Nominations and Senate Service: Chair Palazoglu reminded Council that nominations are open for Academic Senate Vice Chair (deadline February 27, 2026) and for a faculty representative to the Regents' Health Services Committee (deadline April 17, 2026).

Stewardship Reviews: The stewardship review of UCSC Chancellor Larive is nearing completion, and meetings with the president and chancellor are forthcoming. The stewardship review of UCSF Chancellor Hawgood has begun and is expected to conclude by the end of the academic year.

Sacramento Engagement: Vice Chair Scott reported on attending a UC-hosted legislative reception in Sacramento with legislators, UC leadership, and campus representatives. She noted strong interest in the governor's proposed budget and potential research funding initiatives, as well as broad support for the University.

January Regents Meeting: Chair Palazoglu's [remarks](#) to the Board focused on academic freedom and its grounding in Academic Personnel Manual (APM) provisions and Regents' policies. The Regents approved revisions to APM - 015 and 016 and requested a follow-up report on implementation in two years. The next phase of work will involve developing systemwide guidance on how policy violations are determined for expressive activities.

Math Preparation: Chair Palazoglu updated Council on discussions with UCSD faculty regarding a proposed math index to identify students who may be underprepared in math, building on the November 2025 UCSD Senate-Administration Workgroup on Admissions [report](#). He also noted increased national scrutiny of math preparation and placement practices and reported that he is working with BOARS to convene broader discussions on college preparedness and standardized testing.

CSU Settlement: A recent settlement involving the CSU and CSU faculty unions concerned notice to employees when personal information was disclosed in response to certain federal investigations. The underlying court decision affirmed that federal regulatory requirements supersede state notice laws, underscoring the limited protections available under state law in such circumstances.

Course Syllabi: Chair Palazoglu noted concerns about increasing requests for course syllabi, including federal inquiries and recent actions by the University of North Carolina system, and indicated plans to engage [UCEP](#) and [UCAf](#) on potential recommendations.

Discussion Highlights

- A Council member noted that UC's [Policy on Ownership of Course Materials](#) affirms instructor ownership of course materials, including syllabi, and urged reaffirmation of this position in response to external requests.
- A Council member encouraged broader involvement of the University Committee on Preparatory Education ([UCOPE](#)) in systemwide discussions on math preparation and placement, including post-matriculation curricular strategies.

III. Executive Session

IV. Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs & Systemwide Academic Personnel

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

Taskforce on Expressive Activities: Following the Regents' approval of [revisions to APM 015 and 016](#), Systemwide Academic Personnel is convening a joint Senate-administration taskforce to draft guidelines on faculty expressive activities. The taskforce will develop FAQs and guidance clarifying when faculty extramural speech and classroom expression may constitute misconduct under APM 015 and when such speech is protected by academic freedom and the First Amendment. The taskforce will include five Senate members and five administrators. It will meet during February and March and issue a draft for systemwide review starting in April 2026. The guidelines will be considered by Council on June 24, and by the Assembly at a special meeting in July.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members noted the involvement of faculty with expertise in First Amendment law and academic freedom and asked about coordination with UCAF and ongoing campus-level deliberations. Deputy Provost Lee noted that the taskforce will build on principles outlined in the UCPT workgroup [report](#) and acknowledged the need to align systemwide and campus conversations.

V. Consultation with UC Senior Managers

- **Katherine Newman, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs**
- **James B. Milliken, President**
- **Nathan Brostrom, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, UC Finance**

Remarks from Provost Newman

Math/STEM Preparation Congress: Provost Newman announced that a systemwide Academic Congress on math preparation and STEM pathways will be held March 9–10, 2026 via Zoom. All UC faculty are invited to register and attend.

International Collaborations: Provost Newman noted exploratory discussions underway regarding formal research collaboration models with partners in the UK and Europe, intended to diversify research funding and collaboration opportunities amid federal uncertainty. Questions remain about feasibility, costs, and potential state-level participation.

Degree Plus: Provost Newman highlighted progress on the Degree Plus pilot at UCSD and UCSB, which integrates undergraduate degree programs with Extension-based workforce certificates aligned with employer needs and paid internships to support students' transition to the workforce. UC is exploring whether new federal Workforce Pell funding for short-term credentials could be applied to the certificate and internship components, which currently lack access to financial aid.

UCAD Plus: Provost Newman expressed optimism about progress on [UCAD Plus](#) and indicated that an update on working group activities would be shared shortly.

Discussion Highlights

- Council members emphasized the importance of ensuring that international collaborations do not exclude research areas facing heightened scrutiny or reduced federal support. Provost Newman noted that the effort is intended to be flexible and expandable over time.
- Members highlighted differing campus approaches to math and chemistry preparation and stressed the need to reflect multiple models rather than a single preferred approach.
- Members raised concerns about rising graduate student researcher (GSR) costs and reduced instructional support due to campus budget pressures. Provost Newman noted that UC leadership is exploring responses.
- Members noted existing campus-level internship and industry partnership models. Provost Newman emphasized that Degree Plus is intended to systematize and scale such efforts and reported strong demand for Degree Plus at the pilot campuses.

Remarks from President Milliken

State Budget: President Milliken expressed his appreciation for the governor’s proposed budget for UC but noted legislative concerns about competing priorities. He described multiple proposed state bonds that could help the University, including housing and research bonds.

California Master Plan: President Milliken noted growing legislative interest in revisiting the California Master Plan for Higher Education and A–G requirements, driven by concerns about unmet demand for access to a UC education. Some legislators are exploring expanded degree authority for CSUs and community colleges. He emphasized the need for UC to consider new delivery models to serve a larger and more diverse population and invited faculty input on how UC should respond.

Confidence in Higher Education: President Milliken identified declining public confidence in higher education, based on national and California polls, as a major long-term concern that predates recent political developments. He cited polling showing erosion of trust related to both value (cost, debt, ROI, relevance) and values (perceived political bias and limited viewpoint diversity). He emphasized that UC has a strong value story, including low average student debt and high levels of tuition-free attendance, but must communicate it more effectively while addressing broader drivers of the cost of education, such as housing.

Discussion Highlights

- Council members suggested reframing declining public confidence as part of a broader crisis of expertise affecting many institutions. Members proposed increasing the public visibility of UC faculty experts through community engagement and regional outreach.
- Members raised concerns about fear among undocumented and mixed-status students, staff, and faculty, and urged clearer communication about UC’s obligations under state law (e.g., SB 98 and SB 307). President Milliken acknowledged these concerns.
- Council members emphasized the importance of alumni and students as ambassadors, recommending listening tours, alumni engagement, and student-led messaging to address concerns about preparation, political bias, and institutional relevance.
- President Milliken agreed on the importance and impact of faculty, students, and alumni voices, and emphasized the need to address confidence at the national level, not only within California.

Remarks from CFO Brostrom

State Budget: CFO Brostrom reported legislative support for the governor’s 2026-27 proposed budget, including the final 5% year of the UC compact, repayment of deferred funds, and continuation of the zero-interest loan. However, the proposal includes no new funding for non-resident enrollment buy-downs or capital projects. He cautioned that diverging revenue forecasts and the state’s reliance on volatile high-income tax revenues point to longer-term uncertainty.

Compact and Enrollment: UC has exceeded its compact commitments by enrolling approximately 15,000 additional resident undergraduates and reducing nonresident enrollment at UCB, UCLA, and UCSD. Because the state has not funded the nonresident buy-down for two years, campuses may be allowed to increase nonresident enrollment up to previously funded levels.

Affordability and Workforce Alignment: Nearly 75% of incoming California students graduate debt-free, and UC student debt remains well below national averages. UC has expanded degree production in workforce priority areas, including STEM and education.

Capital and Ballot Measures: With no capital funding included in the state budget, UC is monitoring potential ballot measures related to capital, housing, and research. At the federal level, congressional actions have moderated or rejected proposed cuts to research agencies and reductions to indirect cost recovery.

Discussion Highlights

- Members asked how the proposed budget increase would flow to campuses. CFO Brostrom explained that after required set-asides, remaining funds would be distributed through the Budget Allocation Model.
- Members asked about increasing resident or nonresident enrollment to address budget pressures. CFO Brostrom noted legislative resistance to higher nonresident enrollment but suggested that differentiated nonresident tuition by campus may be a feasible strategy.
- A member questioned whether debt-free pathways might affect perceptions of UC’s value; CFO Brostrom emphasized affordability as a core strength while acknowledging the complexity of public messaging.

VI. State Governmental Relations

○ Kathleen Fullerton, Associate Vice President, State Government Relations (SGR)

Legislative Context and Activity: The current state Legislature is a supermajority Democratic body with a strong equity and access focus. Increasing California resident enrollment remains a legislative priority and nonresident enrollment is widely viewed as displacing residents, making it a persistent political third rail. The Legislature is in the second year of a two-year session, with relatively few higher education bills introduced thus far. Bills of interest include:

- [AB 713 \(Solache\)](#): Would require employment of undocumented students.
- [AB 664 \(Alvarez\)](#): Would allow community colleges to award certain bachelor’s degrees without existing review processes stemming from previously passed state legislation.
- [AB 1159 \(Addis\)](#): Focuses on strengthening student data privacy protections and may signal future legislation affecting disclosures to federal agencies.
- **Bonds:** Three statewide bonds are under consideration: a UC capital bond ([AB 48 Alvarez](#)); a statewide housing bond that could include higher education housing; and a science and health research bond ([SB 895 Wiener](#)).

Master Plan and Degree Authority: There is increasing legislative interest in reexamining the Master Plan, driven by unmet demand for four-year degrees, particularly in regions where UC and CSU capacity is constrained. While there is strong appreciation for UC’s research mission, some

legislators are exploring alternative degree delivery models, including expanded roles for community colleges.

Discussion Highlights

- Council members asked what revisiting the Master Plan might mean for UC’s research mission. AVP Fullerton explained that legislators are primarily focused on expanding access to four-year degrees rather than dismantling the research university model.
- Members sought clarification on the legal distinction between state court rulings and legislation related to undocumented student employment; AVP Fullerton explained that federal legality remains unresolved and could be tested through litigation.
- Members discussed the role of dual enrollment and alternative pathways in expanding access. AVP Fullerton noted growing legislative interest in these approaches.
- Council members emphasized the importance of protecting degree quality alongside equity- and access-focused reforms. AVP Fullerton agreed and underscored the importance of UC’s continued engagement to ensure that these efforts do not undermine academic quality.
- AVP Fullerton confirmed that previously introduced bills affecting BOARS are no longer active.

VII. Proposed Presidential Policy on Education Loan Practices

Council reviewed comments from Senate divisions and committees on [proposed revisions](#) to the Presidential Policy on Education Loan Practices, intended to ensure compliance with recent federal guidance on private education loans, including deferred tuition plans. Reviewers generally supported the revisions as largely technical or clarifying, while encouraging greater clarity, transparency, equity considerations, and oversight should deferred tuition programs expand.

ACTION: Council approved forwarding the comments and a summary letter to Vice President and Vice Provost Gullatt.

VIII. Proposed Revisions to Senate Bylaw 140

- **Kristen Holmquist, Chair, University Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity, and Equity (UCAADE)**

Council reviewed a revised proposal to update [Senate Bylaw 140](#) by renaming UCAADE the University Committee on Diversity and Equity (UCODE) and removing references to “affirmative action” from the committee’s name and charge. The revisions reflect systemwide review feedback and Council’s discussion in December 2025 and were unanimously endorsed by UCAADE.

ACTION: Council approved the revisions and will forward to the Assembly for consideration.

IX. Office of Research and Innovation

- **Theresa Maldonado, Vice President, Office of Research and Innovation**

Vice President Maldonado briefed Council on the expansion of federal research security and compliance requirements, noting that a majority of new or modified regulations have emerged in the past decade. She emphasized that restrictions on research, particularly publication, data sharing, and participation based on citizenship, are increasing across agencies and research areas, driven by bipartisan national security and economic competitiveness concerns.

She explained that “restricted research” at UC is defined as research that limits participation based on citizenship and/or restricts dissemination of results, and she stressed that these requirements are typically specified in funding solicitations. While such restrictions have long existed in industry-sponsored research, they are now appearing more frequently in federal awards. New compliance frameworks may be necessary to allow UC faculty to continue participating in key research areas.

She emphasized that UCOP is not imposing new mandates but seeks continued dialogue with faculty and Senate leadership to develop clear guidance and compliance infrastructure that minimizes burden on individual researchers.

Discussion Highlights

- Members asked how restricted research is identified and communicated; VP Maldonado emphasized that restrictions are sponsor-driven and specified in funding solicitations, underscoring the importance of early review and consultation.
- Concerns were raised about citizenship-based limits, particularly for graduate students and postdocs; VP Maldonado noted that such requirements already exist in some federal programs and are managed on a case-by-case basis.
- Members questioned the effectiveness of research restrictions in preventing inappropriate knowledge transfer and noted potential inconsistencies with industry practices; VP Maldonado acknowledged these concerns and suggested further clarification would be helpful.
- Council members expressed concern about spillover effects on shared research spaces and academic environments; VP Maldonado emphasized that restrictions are typically project-specific and comparable to existing controlled research practices.

X. Presidential Policy IMT-1300 Information Technology Accessibility

- **Van Williams, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Digital Innovation & Technology (DIT)**
- **Meena Chandra, Anti-Discrimination Director and Acting Executive Director, Systemwide Office of Civil Rights (SOCR)**
- **Wendy Tobias, Disability Rights Director, SOCR**
- **Monte Ratzlaff, Chief Information Security Officer, DIT**
- **Trevor Finneman, Principal Counsel, Disability & Education Affairs, UC Legal**
- **Judy Thai, Director of Application Engineering, DIT**

UC leaders joined Council to discuss systemwide [Senate feedback](#) on the UC IT Accessibility Policy (ITAP). Vice President Williams emphasized that the policy reflects legally mandated digital accessibility requirements that include externally set timelines. He acknowledged widespread concern about the feasibility of full compliance by the enforcement deadline, given the scale of UC's digital content and limited resources. UCOP is elevating estimated implementation costs and resource needs to the president and chancellors and is working to provide clearer systemwide guidance and tools. He noted the launch of updated [ITAP FAQs](#) and a centralized [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage with additional policy and regulatory information.

Leaders also acknowledged concerns about the administrative burden associated with exception processes and indicated they are exploring ways to streamline local implementation while meeting legal requirements. They emphasized that the policy is intended to be a facilitative framework rather than a punitive enforcement mechanism, with a focus on institutional compliance and support rather than penalties. Counsel clarified that digital accessibility obligations are proactive and extend beyond individual disability accommodations, and that UC, not individual faculty, bears responsibility for compliance and legal defense when faculty act within the scope of their duties.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members stressed that faculty lack time, expertise, and tools to remediate large volumes of course and web content individually. They described widespread anxiety about another unfunded mandate and urged UC to prioritize centralized solutions, including systemwide PDF remediation tools, LMS-embedded accessibility features, and staff-supported conversion services, rather than relying on individual faculty compliance. Members requested

clearer prioritization guidance, phased compliance approaches, and concrete “first steps” for faculty, rather than broad FAQs. Members emphasized that IT accessibility compliance is distinct from student accommodations and should be managed institutionally rather than by individual instructors. Members also raised concerns that compliance pressures could encourage faculty to reduce course content to avoid risk, potentially harming teaching quality.

- UC leaders acknowledged these concerns, agreed that greater centralization and staffing support are necessary, and committed to continued engagement with campus leadership and Senate bodies as implementation proceeds.

XI. Proposed Revisions to Senate Bylaw 192 and Senate Regulations 636 and 761

- **Bradley Queen, Chair, University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE)**

Council considered proposed revisions to Senate Bylaw [192](#) updating the University Committee on Preparatory Education’s charge, and revisions to associated Senate Regulations [636](#) (Entry Level Writing Requirement) and [761](#) (Remedial Courses). During discussion, a member encouraged broader recognition of mathematics curricular pathways for non-majors, beyond placement alone. Chair Queen noted that a new UCOPE mathematics subcommittee is being formed to address both placement and curricular pathways, while explaining that the bylaw revisions were intentionally drafted at a high level to preserve flexibility.

ACTION: Council approved circulating the proposed revisions for systemwide Senate review.

XII. College Board’s New Scoring System for Advanced Placement Exams

- **Dave Volz, Chair, Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)**
- **Catherine Sugar, Chair, University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP)**
- **Bradley Queen, Chair, University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE)**

Council reviewed a memo from [BOARS](#), [UCEP](#), and [UCOPE](#) about the College Board’s new Evidence-Based Standards Setting (EBSS) process for scoring Advanced Placement (AP) exams. In 2022, the College Board transitioned to EBSS, which is intended to incorporate broader empirical evidence and faculty input but has coincided with notable increases in pass rates across several exams. These changes raised concerns given UC’s reliance on AP scores of 3 or higher for awarding credit and satisfying admissions, course placement outcomes, and degree requirements. The committees consulted the College Board to understand the methodology and implications of EBSS; however, questions remain about score distribution changes and the limited information available to fully assess causes. Although EBSS may ultimately be an improvement over prior approaches, the committees emphasized the importance of monitoring whether AP scores under EBSS continue to predict success in UC coursework. The committees are not recommending immediate changes to UC AP credit policies but urged campuses to be aware of evolving outcomes and to assess whether existing score thresholds continue to align with local academic standards and expectations.

Council members emphasized the importance of continued monitoring of student outcomes under EBSS, the need for greater transparency regarding AP scoring changes, and the role of campuses in evaluating whether AP credit and placement practices remain appropriate.

ACTION: Council endorsed the letter and will transmit it to Senate divisions.

XIII. Revisions to Senate Bylaws 195 and 336

Council reviewed amendments to Senate Bylaws [195](#) and [336](#) meant to align with the revisions to APM - 015 and 016 approved by the Assembly on [January 15, 2026](#) and by the Regents on [January 21, 2026](#). Council members supported the amendments but noted that existing paragraph 195.B.3

(“Constitute special Hearing Committees as provided for in Bylaw 336.A.”) may be redundant or ambiguous in light of proposed new paragraph 195.B.2. Council agreed to seek guidance from UCRJ on final revisions to Bylaw 195 before submitting it to the Assembly on February 12, 2026.

ACTION: Council provisionally approved the revisions pending input from UCRJ.

XIV. Final UCAD Report

Council reviewed the final report of the Senate Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions ([UCAD](#)). Members agreed that the transmittal letter should highlight substantive revisions incorporated since the interim report was released, including new sections on *Planning for the Future of Doctoral Education* and *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission and Visibility*, as well as significant expansions to other sections.

ACTION: Council endorsed the report and will transmit it to the Senate divisions and the UCAD Plus Steering Committee and workgroup co-chairs.

XV. Reports from Senate Division Chairs

Division chairs reported faculty concern about the budget, including program reductions, staffing losses, and risks to core teaching and research functions. Many emphasized the need to prioritize the academic mission in budget planning and called for greater transparency, improved data access, and meaningful shared governance in financial decision-making. Several also noted concern about perceived growth in administrative costs and staffing relative to faculty investment.

Chairs reported systemwide challenges in graduate education, including reduced admissions, program downsizing, time-to-degree policy changes, and visa or enrollment complications for international students, with potential impacts on research productivity, instructional capacity, and student support.

Chairs also highlighted concerns related to federal and state policy developments, particularly immigration enforcement and support for undocumented and international students, as well as implementation challenges associated with IT accessibility requirements, AI governance, and cybersecurity mandates, often noting uneven campus capacity and resource constraints.

Several divisions also reported ongoing leadership transitions and efforts to strengthen Senate-administration collaboration on budget and policy matters.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm
Minutes prepared by Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director
Attest: Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Chair