



**Academic Council  
Minutes of Meeting  
February 25, 2026**

**I. Consent Calendar**

1. Today's agenda items and their priority
2. January 28, 2026 Academic Council minutes
3. UCLA variances to Senate Regulations 784, 780, 900, 810, 740
4. UCD Online Master of Engineering in Water Resources

**ACTION: At a member's request, the UC Davis Online Master of Engineering in Water Resources was removed from the consent calendar for discussion. Council approved the remainder of the consent calendar.**

**II. UCD Online Master of Engineering in Water Resources**

The member requesting discussion emphasized that their concerns did not relate to the academic quality of the program, but to its fully asynchronous design. They noted that fully asynchronous programs raise broader questions about instructional engagement, assessment integrity, accreditation, and long-term program quality, particularly in light of advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and challenges associated with online proctoring. Others expressed hesitation about approving a fully asynchronous degree without clearer systemwide guidance on standards and review practices.

The chairs of [CCGA](#) and [UCPB](#) explained that the proposal had undergone the standard review process, including external reviews, and that concerns raised during review had been addressed to the committees' satisfaction. They noted that the asynchronous format aligned with the program's goal of serving working professionals.

Several members suggested that the Council should develop clearer principles for evaluating programs across instructional modalities and consider strengthening post-approval review mechanisms. There was general agreement that the issues raised extended beyond this single proposal and warranted further deliberation.

**ACTION: Council voted to table the proposal until the March 2026 meeting to allow for a more structured discussion. There were no votes in opposition and one abstention.**

**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](#)**

Vice Provost Varsanyi reported that the joint Senate-administration taskforce on faculty expressive activities includes five Senate members and five administrators and is co-chaired by herself and University Committee on Privilege and Tenure Vice Chair Michael Robinson-Dorn. The taskforce is revising and refining draft FAQs and guidance previously circulated clarifying when faculty extramural speech and classroom expression may constitute misconduct under APM - 015 and 016, and when such speech is protected by academic freedom and the First Amendment. The group is considering whether the guidance should rely on specific examples or articulate more general

principles. Discussions have been detailed and substantive, with careful attention to language addressing practical scenarios faculty may encounter. Given the complexity and importance of the issues, the group is considering whether additional time is needed to complete its work.

**Discussion highlights:**

- Council members expressed appreciation for the work and emphasized that the topic is too important to rush. It was noted that the Berkeley Division has convened a parallel committee addressing expressive activity, and expects to bring recommendations forward in early April 2026. The co-chairs of the systemwide and Berkeley efforts plan to compare approaches and ensure alignment where appropriate.

**V. Senate Officers' Announcements**

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

**Leadership Nominations:** Nominations for systemwide Senate vice chair are requested by this Friday. Nominations for the Senate representative to the Regents' Health Services Committee are due April 17, 2026.

**ICAS:** The Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates ([ICAS](#)), chaired this year by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges president, will hold its annual Legislative Day in Sacramento on March 12, 2026. Senate leadership from the three segments will meet with legislative staff and members of the Legislative Analyst's Office to discuss higher education priorities. In addition, a broader UC Day in Sacramento is scheduled for April 29, along with additional faculty research showcase events.

**State Legislation:** [Senate Bill 895](#) (Wiener) is advancing in the California Senate, and UC's State Governmental Relations Office is coordinating advocacy efforts, including outreach through the [UC Advocacy Network](#). Several bills were introduced before the legislative deadline concerning the expansion of bachelor's degrees at California community colleges and doctoral degrees at the CSU. These measures raise concerns about potential impacts on UC and its academic authority.

The three segments continue work on common course numbering and transfer templates under California [Assembly Bill 1111](#). Although progress has been made, the bill's author (Berman) intends to introduce additional legislation due to concerns about implementation timeline.

**Admissions Workgroup:** Senate leadership will meet with President Milliken to discuss launching a comprehensive review of undergraduate admissions policies and college preparedness. A Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools ([BOARS](#)) workgroup is being charged to develop a roadmap focused on A–G requirements, with engagement from K–12 and state education partners.

**Scholarly Publishing and Copyright:** UC remains in contract negotiations with the American Chemical Society (ACS). The primary issue concerns AI and text and data mining (TDM) rights. ACS is seeking case-by-case approval and potential project fees for computational research using licensed content. The University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication ([UCOLASC](#)) has urged preservation of fair use rights consistent with agreements reached with other publishers. The outcome may set precedent for future negotiations.

A \$1.5 billion class action settlement involving Anthropic was recently announced concerning alleged copyright infringement in training large language models. Payments are expected to be distributed to publishers and authors, and some UC Press titles are included in the settlement.

## **VI. Consultation with UC Senior Managers**

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

Provost Newman described growing public and governmental interest in strengthening connections between universities and employers and in demonstrating return on investment, particularly as entry-level labor markets tighten and unemployment among recent graduates increases. She noted that AI is expected to further reshape workforce demands and suggested that higher education is entering a new phase in which students and alumni will require ongoing skill development. She emphasized that building stronger bridges between UC and the labor market does not mean altering underlying degree programs but rather supplementing them with additional training opportunities.

She highlighted UC's Degree Plus pilot underway on two campuses, which integrates three components: (1) the traditional degree, (2) an Extension certificate aligned with employer needs, and (3) a paid, structured internship. She stressed that the initiative is designed to complement, not modify, academic degree programs by providing skill-based preparation that departments may not be able to offer. She also described efforts to secure Pell funding and other funding streams to support the program.

She noted that UC Extension is uniquely positioned to deliver industry-aligned, rapidly updated training developed in partnership with employers. She cautioned against applying traditional Senate oversight models to Extension programs, arguing that workforce training serves a distinct purpose from academic degrees. She said Degree Plus outcomes are being rigorously evaluated.

### ***Discussion Highlights***

- Council members expressed both interest and concern about Degree Plus. Some suggested that skill development, AI fluency, and experiential learning should be integrated directly into academic disciplines rather than located in Extension. They cautioned against creating parallel structures that could divert resources from departments or diminish incentives to modernize curricula. Others viewed Extension as playing a complementary role and structured internships as a meaningful enhancement to traditional degrees.
- Members raised concerns about equitable access to Extension programs for working students, as well as about quality control and Senate oversight. Provost Newman reiterated that internships must be paid and that securing financial aid is central to ensuring broad access. She noted that Extension's mission and certificate model differ fundamentally from Senate-governed academic programs, and that imposing Senate oversight could undermine its workforce focus.
- Additional caution was raised about alignment with the state's higher education framework and the University's role within it. Provost Newman noted that Extension training operates at a more advanced professional level and does not replicate the mission of other segments.

### **Remarks from CFO Brostrom**

CFO Brostrom emphasized continued budgetary pressures on UC driven by state funding uncertainty, rising mandatory costs, and constrained capital capacity. While recent state budgets have provided stability, significant out-year risks remain, including potential deferrals and slower revenue growth.

The University's multi-year financial planning framework seeks to balance enrollment growth, compensation commitments, debt service, pension obligations, and capital renewal needs. Mandatory cost increases, such as labor agreements, health benefits, utilities, and insurance, continue to outpace core operating revenue growth. As a result, campuses face ongoing pressure to identify efficiencies and prioritize expenditures.

He also addressed capital planning and debt capacity, noting that higher interest rates and construction costs have reduced project feasibility and financial flexibility. UC is taking a more cautious approach to new capital commitments and prioritizing projects tied to enrollment, housing, and critical infrastructure renewal.

Strong investment performance has stabilized the UC retirement plan relative to prior volatility, though long-term liabilities remain substantial. Liquidity levels are sound, and UC continues to maintain strong credit ratings, but financial discipline will be essential in the coming years.

### ***Discussion Highlights***

- Council members raised questions about the long-term sustainability of enrollment growth commitments in light of state funding uncertainty and rising per-student costs. They also noted pressures associated with collective bargaining agreements, deferred maintenance, and the growing backlog of capital renewal needs. Members asked about financial transparency and the clarity of budget communications to faculty.
- CFO Brostrom acknowledged the fiscal pressures associated with collective bargaining agreements but emphasized that workforce stability and competitive compensation are institutional priorities that must be incorporated into long-term planning. He confirmed that infrastructure investment remains a major challenge, particularly as debt capacity tightens. He also highlighted efforts to improve multi-year projections and provide campuses with clearer planning assumptions, while acknowledging the difficulty of forecasting in a volatile budget environment.

## **VII. External Relations and Communications (ER&C)**

### **o Meredith Turner, Senior Vice President, ER&C**

Senior Vice President Turner reported that ER&C has made federal engagement and advocacy its top priorities in response to ongoing federal threats and policy uncertainty. ER&C also advocates at the state level, where UC is navigating a multi-year state budget deficit, a large cohort of newly elected legislators with limited higher education experience, and the 2026 gubernatorial election cycle.

She described the challenges of operating in a fragmented, digital-first media environment shaped by polarization and misinformation. She also emphasized the strategic importance of faculty expertise and described ER&C's role as a hub connecting faculty research and subject-matter expertise to policymakers, media, and advocacy in Sacramento and Washington. This includes facilitating congressional briefings, testimony, media engagement, and mobilization through the 70,000-member [UC Advocacy Network \(UCAN\)](#). She emphasized the distinction between expert faculty engagement (informing policy through research) and advocacy (urging specific outcomes), noting that both have a role in alignment with UC policy and nonpartisanship.

She discussed ongoing advocacy around the proposed state research bond, describing it as an uphill effort that will require broad coalition-building, including with industry and other higher education partners. She acknowledged legislative and voter-level hurdles. Looking ahead, she emphasized the need to strengthen faculty engagement, enhance coordination across campuses and UCOP, and

expand digital and grassroots outreach and messaging to audiences beyond traditional UC constituencies. She stressed that faculty expertise is a major institutional asset.

### ***Discussion Highlights***

- Members emphasized the value of sustained engagement between faculty and legislators, including structured efforts to build long-term relationships. SVP Turner expressed support for developing more systematic approaches at both the state and federal levels.
- Members asked about leveraging students and alumni to expand outreach and about addressing public concerns related to affordability, perceived political bias, and return on investment. She acknowledged these challenges and described efforts to modernize communications strategies.
- Members discussed how campuses can contribute more effectively to advocacy and the distinction between fundraising, outreach, and policy engagement. SVP Turner encouraged greater coordination around shared institutional goals while preserving campuses flexibility.
- Several questions focused on strategy and messaging related to the research bond, including coalition-building with CSU and other partners and the measure's electoral viability. She noted that coalition-building is underway and that the proposal may evolve.
- Members requested boilerplate language to support faculty engagement with media and policymakers. SVP Turner encouraged coordination with campus communications and governmental relations offices and agreed to explore providing standardized guidance.

## **VIII. UCPB Letter on Core Facilities Inventory**

- **Robert Brosnan, Chair, University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB)**

Chair Brosnan presented a [UCPB](#) recommendation that UC develop a coordinated, systemwide strategy to inventory and share core research facilities, major equipment, and AI tools. The proposal responds to funding instability and aims to preserve research capacity, reduce duplication, and improve efficiency.

UCPB recommends appointing a dedicated UCOP point person to continue current cataloging efforts and develop a searchable, regularly updated database of shared facilities and AI tools. It highlights key strategic questions, including when to duplicate resources locally versus invest in regional or world-class centers, how to fund and sustain infrastructure, and how to reduce financial and administrative barriers to intercampus access. UCPB also calls for a systemwide inventory of instructional and research AI tools, cross-campus and centralized licensing strategies to leverage economies of scale, and new training resources. It endorses continuing the Research Strategy Group's work and integrating these broader objectives into that effort.

### ***Discussion highlights***

- Members expressed support for improved systemwide coordination and agreed that the cataloging effort should be permanent. They noted that while resource sharing is desirable, centralization must be balanced with local needs, including graduate training, hands-on access, and campus-specific research priorities.
- Members identified financial barriers to intercampus use and suggested exploring systemwide recharge or cost-sharing models to improve access and avoid disadvantaging campuses without certain facilities.
- Members emphasized the importance of incentives and strategic investment, including potential competitive funding models to stabilize and prioritize research cores.
- Members noted the proposal's alignment with related [UCAD Plus](#) discussions and agreed it should be transmitted to Provost Newman and relevant UCAD Plus workgroups. It was

suggested that the transmittal letter reference the [Report of the Academic Senate Workgroup on Artificial Intelligence](#), which discusses AI infrastructure needs and investment principles.

**ACTION: Council agreed to transmit the recommendation to Provost Newman and relevant UCAD Plus workgroups.**

**IX. Faculty Concerns about Potential Strike Impacts (Executive Session)**

*No notes were taken.*

**X. Reports from Senate Division Chairs**

**Budget and Financial Transparency:** Budget pressures and reductions remain central concerns across campuses. Several divisions are working to strengthen transparency and faculty consultation through expanded data sharing and structured engagement. UCLA described the dismissal of its CFO, amid concerns about financial transparency, as an opportunity to reset shared governance around budgeting.

**Shared Governance:** Divisions reported both strains and progress in shared governance. There is renewed attention to clarifying consultation expectations, defining appropriate committee roles, and strengthening communication with campus leadership. Some campuses have formalized consultation processes and budget dialogues.

**Immigration Enforcement:** Multiple divisions reported heightened faculty concern regarding immigration enforcement activity on or near campuses and requested clearer systemwide guidance on institutional response and faculty protections.

**Data Privacy and Personally Identifiable Information (PII):** Chairs referenced a recent CSU settlement involving disclosure of faculty PII to federal authorities. There is interest in consistent systemwide UC policies to safeguard faculty data, including clearer commitments regarding when and how the University will respond to external requests for personal information.

**IT Accessibility Compliance:** Compliance with new information technology (IT) accessibility requirements is a widespread concern. Faculty cite significant workload burdens, uneven campus support, and mixed effectiveness of available tools. Chairs encouraged cross-campus sharing of practical implementation resources.

**Admissions Oversight:** UCSD reported additional fallout from a November 2025 UCSD Senate-Administration Workgroup on Admissions [report](#), which raised concerns about undergraduate math preparedness. A California Senator has requested an audit of the report.

**Leadership Transitions:** Divisions with relatively new chancellors reported generally positive engagement and opportunities to strengthen shared governance.

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Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm  
Minutes prepared by Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director  
Attest: Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Chair