



**Academic Council
Minutes of Meeting
November 20, 2024**

I. Consent Calendar

1. Today's agenda items and their priority
2. Minutes of October 23, 2024 meeting
3. December 12 Assembly agenda topics

ACTION: Council approved the consent calendar.

II. Senate Officers' Announcements

- Steven W. Cheung, Academic Council Chair
- Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Council Vice Chair

November Regents Meeting: The Regents approved the UC 2025-26 operating budget. The budget includes a 9.9% increase to undergraduate nonresident supplemental tuition for incoming students and a 3.7% range adjustment to the faculty salary scales. The Regents also approved amendments to Regents Policy 4400 (University of California Diversity Statement), incorporating language about disability. The original statement was developed by the Academic Senate in 2006.

The Regents' Health Services Committee hosted discussions on a community health needs assessment conducted by UC hospitals and a new Medicare Advantage plan to be offered by UCLA Health starting in 2025. Former executive vice president for UC Health, Dr. Carrie Byington, presented an after-action report on UC's COVID-19 response, emphasizing public health outcomes for UC communities.

During a discussion on campus climate, a Regent raised concerns about the perceived inefficiency of disciplinary processes and inadequate sanctions at certain campuses. Chair Cheung proposed collaborating with the Office of Systemwide Academic Personnel to lead a discussion on faculty disciplinary processes at the January 2025 Regents meeting.

Regent Pérez resigned from the Board effective November 15, 2024 and Regent Sherman announced he will step down on November 30, 2024.

Academic Labor Relations: The University reached a tentative agreement with the UAW to extend to January 2026 the collective bargaining agreements for Academic Student Employees (Teaching Assistants, Readers, Tutors) and Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs).

APC Workgroups: Vice Chair Palazoglu is co-chairing an Academic Planning Council (APC) workgroup evaluating the impacts of a potential transition of all UC campuses with undergraduate programs to a common semester-based academic calendar. Another APC workgroup is reviewing Academic Personnel Manual (APM) 015 and 016, both to ensure compliance with statutory requirements established in the State Budget Act and to address faculty concerns about proposed changes to APM 016 covering concurrent academic misconduct investigations and personnel actions.

Academic Congress: In October 2024, there was a systemwide academic congress on UC's role as a system of Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI). Discussions highlighted the

significance of the HSRI designation, the impact of HSI research on student success, leadership pathways, and strategies to enhance faculty diversity.

UC Presidential Search: The Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) for the presidential search met with the Regents' Special Committee to review and finalize the criteria for selecting the next UC president. The approved criteria incorporate recommendations from the Academic Senate.

Chancellor Searches: Vice Chair Palazoglu is serving on the UCSB Chancellor Search Advisory Committee, which has begun candidate evaluations and is hosting virtual town halls with campus constituents. The UCR Chancellor Search Committee will launch in early 2025. Chair Cheung will serve on that committee, and UCOC will solicit additional faculty nominees.

UC Human Resources Studies: Three Senate representatives will serve on each of two UC Systemwide Human Resources workgroups. One will help guide the work of the vendor conducting the employee total remuneration study, and the second will oversee an employee benefits survey.

Systemwide Senate Survey: The 4th UC Faculty and Instructor Experience Survey recently concluded with 4,451 total responses. Senate leaders are conducting an initial analysis of the data, which will inform the Regents about faculty experiences over the past academic year.

During the discussion:

- Council members thanked Chair Cheung for emphasizing in his remarks to the Regents the importance of Senate hearing processes as a cornerstone of the faculty discipline framework.
- A member highlighted the importance of ensuring that the vendor conducting the total remuneration study uses UC's established Comparison 8 group of institutions, in order to maintain consistency with previous studies.

III. Academic Personnel & Academic Labor Relations Issues

- Amy K. Lee, Deputy Provost, Systemwide Academic Personnel
- Douglas Haynes, Interim Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs

Academic Personnel Issues: On November 4–5, UCLA hosted a 40th anniversary celebration of the UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (PPFP). This program supports early-career women and minority scholars pursuing careers in higher education and serves as a model of UC's commitment to inclusive excellence.

APC Workgroup: The Academic Planning Council workgroup reviewing APM 015 and 016 is charged with: 1) examining policies on free expression and community safety to ensure compliance with the state budget act; and 2) considering a pause in the academic personnel review process when a faculty member is simultaneously under investigation for a potential UC policy violation.

APM 710 Revision: Effective January 1, 2025, revisions to APM 710 extend paid sick leave benefits to policy-covered academic appointees who were previously ineligible for such accruals. The updates 1) broaden the circumstances under which paid sick leave may be used; and 2) introduce a six-day paid sick leave bank for eligible faculty.

State/Federal Legislation Updates

- A federal judge blocked new Department of Labor salary thresholds for exempt employees that were set to take effect January 1. This means that part-time academic researchers and postdoctoral scholars at UC will remain salaried employees.
- UCOP has created a toolkit to help campus academic personnel offices implement [Senate Bill 791](#) and [Assembly Bill 810](#). These bills require applicants for UC academic and administrative positions to disclose any allegations or findings of sexual harassment against them within the seven years preceding their application.
- UC is clarifying the implications of Assembly Bill 1905, which: 1) eliminates “retreat rights” for UC and CSU faculty transitioning from administrative roles to faculty positions following allegations of sexual misconduct as administrators; and 2) prohibits administrators from providing recommendation letters for employees found to have committed sexual harassment.
- UC is working to clarify that Senate Bill 339, which prohibits adverse actions against employees who refuse to attend mandatory meetings containing political or religious content, does not apply to classroom content.
- Revised Title II federal regulations will require by April 2026 that all UC web content and mobile applications are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

IV. Consultation with Senior Managers

- Michael V. Drake, President
- Nathan Brostrom, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

U.S. Presidential Election: The University is assessing post-election outcomes and their implications for UC and higher education. This includes monitoring incoming federal agency leadership and policy positions that affect students, education, research, and public health. UC’s priority is to collaborate with higher education colleagues to mitigate any adverse changes. Additionally, the University remains focused on supporting the morale and sense of safety of campus community members, particularly undocumented students.

President Drake reaffirmed UC’s commitment to principles of truth and integrity, emphasizing that knowledge of right and wrong helps create a better world. He praised faculty for their unwavering dedication to delivering high-quality education and research during challenging times.

RASC: UCOP has prioritized service improvements at the Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC) to reduce wait times and increase efficiency. Under the leadership of Executive Director Bernadette Green, the center has seen significant improvements in outcomes.

Labor Strike: Service and patient care workers represented by UPTE and AFSCME unions launched a two-day strike at all UC campuses and medical facilities. The University is focused on maintaining access to health care while working to resolve the labor dispute.

Regents: Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Robert “Bob” Myers to the UC Board of Regents to fill a vacancy left by John Pérez.

Budget and Finance: The Regents approved a 2025-26 budget and a request for one-time capital funding from the state. UC is preparing for a potential net 5.55% State funding reduction next year

and will collaborate with the governor and Legislature to maximize support during the budget process. The Regents also approved student housing projects at UCSB and learned that the UC Retirement Plan funded ratio has grown to 84% on a market basis.

Mortgage Origination Program (MOP): UC Finance plans to propose supplemental funding for MOP in early 2025. The University is also evaluating program changes to enhance its long-term service to faculty.

Discussion highlights:

- Members expressed concern about the nation’s political shift and urged UC to advocate for its values, particularly against potential deportations of undocumented students.
- Members also raised questions about sustaining research amid possible federal funding cuts, retaining a faculty COLA in the budget, addressing rising health care costs, ensuring the upcoming total remuneration study maintains the Comparison 8 group, and protecting the most vulnerable UC campuses from the effect of budget cuts.

Responses from Senior Managers:

- President Drake noted that UC is facing an unprecedented number of investigations related to campus climate. He stressed the importance of thoughtful and strategic advocacy to uphold UC’s values and productive engagement with different viewpoints. He noted that despite political challenges, there remains widespread agreement on the value of science, education, and health care.
- On cost-of-living challenges, President Drake emphasized the priority of paying employees fairly while seeking systemwide efficiencies to restrain expenses. He highlighted efforts to minimize health care cost increases through plan design, scope of benefits, and wellness initiatives aimed at reducing premium costs.
- CFO Brostrom added that the upcoming total remuneration study will guide future decisions on benefits and pay. He noted UC’s financial resilience, supported by strong investment returns and diverse revenue streams that help buffer economic challenges. However, he also acknowledged disparities among campuses in reliance on core funds. Although UC’s budget allocation model is designed to protect more vulnerable campuses, the challenges are serious and UCOP leaders are working with chancellors on solutions. He expressed support for continued use of the Comparison 8 group for consistency, but also suggested a broader Association of American Universities comparison could also be useful.

V. Report of the Academic Planning Council (APC) Workgroup on the Future of Doctoral Programs at UC

- Susannah Scott, Immediate Past UCSB Division Chair and Workgroup Co-Chair
- Gillian R. Hayes, UCI Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Workgroup Co-Chair

The workgroup was established in spring 2023 with a charge to be “bold” and “wise” in evaluating UC’s doctoral education model. The aim was to identify elements to change or retain to sustain UC’s tripartite mission, particularly in light of graduate student unionization. The final report includes six actionable recommendations, and eight bold ideas designed to provoke discussion. The recommendations are not universally applicable across campuses but are grounded in the principle that faculty own the curriculum. The report does not address academic labor or employment issues.

Six Actionable Draft Recommendations:

1. Clearly delineate academic expectations for graduate students, particularly as they are distinct from other roles or relationships with UC.
2. Provide students with stable, competitive funding to support successful and timely degree completion.
3. Actively manage academic graduate enrollments, focusing on student success, discipline-based opportunities and challenges, inclusion, community, and program and applicant quality.
4. Redesign graduate pedagogy to align with the goals of contemporary programs, meet student needs, and address workforce opportunities.
5. Strengthen and diversify advising and mentorship partnerships.
6. Broaden career preparation to include diverse pathways within and beyond academia.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members asked whether faculty should articulate a clear distinction between students' academic and employment roles.

Scott and Hayes noted that while both must be articulated, they should not be addressed in the same document. Faculty should address academic outcomes separately, and employment responsibilities should align with contractual expectations.

- Members noted inconsistencies between the recommendations and existing campus budgetary practices, such as activity-based budgeting and cross-subsidization. They suggested addressing these issues/concerns. They also emphasized the need for the report to recognize faculty contributions to advising, as well as the full range of professional terminal doctoral degree students.
- One bold idea—to require a master's degree for PhD admission—was critiqued for potentially exacerbating inequities and increasing student debt.

Scott and Hayes clarified that the bold ideas are intended to stimulate innovative thinking, acknowledging that some may be impractical or unpopular.

- Council members were invited to submit additional comments and edits via email. The next phase involves incorporating feedback and distributing a revised report for systemwide discussion.

VI. Office of Ethics, Compliance and Audit Services (ECAS)

- Alexander Bustamante, Senior Vice President and Chief Compliance and Audit Officer
- Shanda Hunt, Director of Compliance
- Irene Levintov, Chief of Staff

ECAS is a UCOP unit reporting directly to the Regents. Its responsibilities include investigating misconduct complaints, monitoring compliance requirements, and conducting audits based on risk assessments developed in consultation with the Regents. ECAS also collaborates with federal agencies to advocate for UC's compliance needs and creates tools to improve communication and education around compliance requirements. It works with the Academic Senate to understand how compliance policies impact faculty work and explores ways to enhance education and awareness. Currently the three most important issues for ECAS are cybersecurity, research security, and the clinical environment.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members expressed concerns about the increasing number of mandatory compliance trainings. They emphasized the importance of respecting faculty time, noting that lengthy trainings often include redundancies that may discourage engagement. They also highlighted the lack of relevance in some trainings to the specific work faculty perform. Shorter, more focused trainings could facilitate compliance without incentivizing shortcuts. They encouraged UC to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of trainings and communicate to external agencies the financial and time burdens of such requirements. Members proposed coordinating across UC offices to explore ways to reduce training time.

SVP Bustamante clarified that ECAS oversees employee ethics and compliance training, while other trainings originate from other UC entities. Requirements for some trainings stem from state or federal statutes, as well as Regents’ and presidential policies. He acknowledged the concerns about the volume and efficacy of the trainings and noted efforts to shorten trainings where possible but indicated limited control over trainings managed by other offices.

- Council members suggested that UC develop an inventory of all required trainings to provide a comprehensive view, and explore opportunities to shift more decision-making over trainings to individual campuses.

SVP Bustamante expressed willingness to collaborate with the faculty on these efforts. The discussion concluded with agreement on the need for collaboration in training design to effectively balance compliance requirements with faculty workloads.

VII. UC Central Bank

- Meghan Gutekunst, Associate Vice President, Financial Management

The Office of Capital Markets Finance manages UC’s debt issuance to fund systemwide capital projects. Traditionally, the strategy involved selling bonds on the market and passing on to campuses the prevailing market interest rate. While this approach worked well in a low-interest rate environment, concerns arose about campuses bearing too much long-term interest rate risk.

To address this issue, UCOP introduced a new financing model – the “central bank” – which centralizes interest rate risk at UCOP by providing campuses with internal loans at a fixed, stable rate to support capital projects. The funding pool for these loans is derived from selling tax-exempt bonds to the market based on the University’s creditworthiness rating. Under the central bank model, regardless of the interest rate UC secures on its bonds, campuses receive loans at a stable rate, currently 4.2%. This approach aims to shield campuses from market volatility, providing greater financial stability and predictability for their capital planning efforts. The University regularly reviews its debt capacity and policies to ensure sustainability and a strong credit rating.

VIII. Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC)

- Bernadette Green, Executive Director
- Thomas Carthron, Business Manager

In response to Council’s earlier concerns, Executive Director Green provided an update on RASC’s efforts and outcomes in improving services:

- RASC has broadened its communication options to better support the community. These include a new Tier 1 support team for transactional calls, a Tier 2 team for complex queries, a dedicated survivor intake line, insurance liaisons, and scheduled retirement counseling appointments.
- Average wait times across all tiers have dropped to two minutes or less. Secure messaging is another success area, with 89% of messages resolved within the two-day service level agreement (SLA). Retiree feedback reflects high satisfaction with counseling sessions.
- Retirement application processing times improved to an average of 36 business days in 2024, well below the 45-day SLA. Approximately 78% of applications met the SLA, with notable progress in reducing delays for outliers.
- The No Lapse in Pay and Benefit Continuation program has strong participation among retirees. RASC is exploring ways to expand eligibility to further enhance this initiative.
- The new [RASC portal](#) integrates advanced features such as ADA compliance, multilingual support, and updated content to address member needs.
- Through its participation in CEM Benchmarking, RASC will compare its performance against global standards for large public pension systems, reinforcing its commitment to excellence.
- In closing, Executive Director Green emphasized RASC's goal of becoming a best-in-class service provider by leveraging data-driven insights and maintaining a member-centered approach to delivering exceptional value.

Discussion highlights:

- Council members praised RASC's service improvements but also raised a few ongoing concerns. One member noted that retirement counseling sessions sometimes do not provide comprehensive information about retirement and payout options, potentially due to limited access to data in the Redwood system. The member also raised concerns about a lack of coordination between central and campus offices regarding filing deadlines.
- Executive Director Green acknowledged these concerns and noted that RASC is working to improve counselor training, eliminate discrepancies, and expand communication channels. She clarified that members can run retirement estimates using the At Your Service portal. Additionally, RASC provides members with a checklist before appointments and requests topics of interest to better tailor counseling sessions.

IX. Reports from Senate Division Chairs

Post-Election Concerns: Senate divisions are addressing concerns and challenges stemming from the national election, including the need to support vulnerable populations, safeguard diversity and inclusion efforts, and publicly reaffirm UC's values and principles of community. Individual divisions are hosting seminars on relevant topics.

Budget Challenges: Budget constraints are pressing concerns across campuses. Senates are scrutinizing structural deficits and participating in budget modeling to prepare for cuts. Faculty are frustrated by reductions in research administration and instructional support. Senates are exploring strategies to maintain core academic and research missions while minimizing harm to

education. Discussions include budget trade-offs, how to manage deferred maintenance, reducing costs in specific programs, sustaining faculty growth, and financial pressures from intercollegiate athletics.

Campus Climate: Issues surrounding campus climate and free speech are significant priorities. Efforts include reviewing campus climate action plans, and refining “time, place, and manner” policies on protests and demonstrations to prepare for potential disruptions and support academic freedom and community well-being.

Shared Governance: Senates are working to amplify faculty voices in decision-making during times of political and budgetary uncertainty. They are re-evaluating consultation practices to maximize faculty influence, ensuring shared governance remains robust, and addressing structural changes that impede faculty work. These efforts aim to strengthen advocacy for faculty interests and maintain the faculty’s key role in governance. Campuses are exploring ways to grow the ladder-rank faculty during austerity measures and considering strategies for reforming admissions practices.

Administrative Issues: Several divisions are confronting challenges related to administrative turnover and unfilled leadership positions affecting governance and campus operations. To ensure stability and effectiveness amid ongoing changes, Senates are strengthening internal structures, and building capacity among its committee members. One division is restructuring workflows for the Committee on Academic Personnel to address an unsustainable workload. Additionally, Senates are assessing new teaching evaluation instruments to improve the quality and effectiveness of feedback mechanisms.

Online and International Education: The role of online and international education is evolving across campuses. Individual Senates are revising policies to streamline online course approvals while maintaining high standards to prevent over-expansion. They are also exploring new initiatives, such as dual-degree programs with international institutions, to enhance global engagement and broaden academic opportunities.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm
Minutes prepared by Michael LaBriola, Assistant Director
Attest: Steven W. Cheung, Academic Council Chair