UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Academic Senate

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday, December 10, 2025

I. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes
***Action Taken*: The agenda and minutes were approved as noted 7-0-0.**

II. Chair's Report
Chair Barry O'Neill

The Chair remarked that the last meeting featured considerable discussion regarding the proposed changes to faculty disciplinary procedures and constraints on faculty extramural speech. He updated the committee that the proposed attachments would not be voted on by the Regents. They would serve as policy guidance.

III. UCAF's Views on the General Meaning of Academic Freedom

Members discussed their perceptions and beliefs regarding academic freedom.

IV. UCAF's Response to Federal Government Actions

Members discussed political vetoes on research funding, the position of non-citizen faculty with regard to international travel, UC's provision for legal aid for violations of academic freedom, and faculty input in academic-freedom-related negotiations with the federal government.

V. Response to Federal Demands for Campus Identification of Individuals Named in Complaints

Members commented that they would like to have a commitment from the administration regarding the University's support regarding these types of complaints. The Chair suggested that the committee develop a statement asking that faculty be notified in situations such as these. Professor Wallace (UCB) volunteered to draft a statement.

VI. The Role of the Senate in Cases of Controversial Faculty Classroom Speech (UCB)

The committee discussed complaints about classroom speech that were received after October 7, and remarked that there is growing concern about over regulating classroom speech. A suggestion was put forward for a "Know Your Rights" training for new faculty. The committee discussed the topic at length.

VII. Adding a Legal Scholar to UCAF

The committee voiced an interest in possibly having a consultant from UC Legal sit with the committee on occasion. Analyst Harms will work on securing a UC Legal attorney to come to the next meeting.

(NB: A representative from UC Legal will be at the May meeting.)

VIII. Academic Council's Degree of Consultation with UCAF on Issues Relevant to Academic Freedom/ UCAF's Representation on Academic Council

Chair O'Neill expressed concern that UCAF "rubber stamps" things but is not taken seriously. He raised the issue of UCAF securing a seat on Academic Council. Analyst Harms shared some ideas on how such an effort could be made. The Chair said that UCAF should create a sub-group that would look into this topic.

IX. Consultation with the Academic Senate Leadership

Ahmet Palazoglu, Academic Senate Chair
Susannah Scott, Academic Senate Vice Chair

Chair Palazoglu shared that there had been some good news recently. The Regents met at UCLA and discussed the DOJ matter. There was a positive outcome of a lawsuit. At Council, there was an extensive discussion on the PPFP, and the President emailed a statement regarding the continuation of the program and indicated that sustainability will be taken up in the coming months. This was quite positively received. Council also featured discussion of a statement on gender-affirming care. Council recommended and endorsed the P&T report and recommendations regarding changes to the APM regarding faculty discipline. He thanked UCAF members for working on that report. He noted that the Shiffren/Souceck report was also endorsed. While that work was being done, the Senate Chair and Vice Chair met with the three Regents who were engaging in this effort and informed them about where the Senate was landing. After consultation, the Regents agreed with the creation of a systemwide reserve pool as opposed to a systemwide network. Chair Palazoglu observed that provisions for a reserve pool are already part of the University's bylaws and practices. He shared that the issue of timelines was very "thorny" for the Regents. The original proposal had some unclear language, particularly in regard to the attachments. The new language decouples the policy guidelines after the finding of a policy violation. The determination of when a policy violation occurs will go to an administrative/Senate workgroup which is yet to be formed.

At Regents there was an announcement about the new budget and a discussion of the Tuition Stability Plan. The Chair noted that there is some goodwill from Sacramento, but the state has budget issues that continue to be problematic. Board Chair Reilly announced a new award (the UC Regents' Innovation Award).

The Senate Chair shared some updates regarding the union bargaining process. He also told the group that he is a member of the search advisory committee for the VP of HR. The group has concluded interviews and has advanced a short list to EVP Rachel Nava; the pool was very strong. The Chair closed by updating the committee on the work of UCAD and UCAD Plus.

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Members had questions and there was discussion.

X. Campus Reports

Members discussed items related to academic freedom from their campuses.

XI. Systemwide Information and Items Under Systemwide Review

A. Chair Palazoglu's Remarks to the Board of Regents

B. Systemwide Review of Proposed Presidential Policy on Education Loan Practices

XII. New Business

There was no new business.

XIII. Executive Session

No minutes are taken during Executive Session.

The committee adjourned at 3:06 p.m.