**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**                                    **ACADEMIC SENATE**
**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY**
**Videoconference Minutes**
**Monday, April 15, 2024**

**Attending:** Melanie Cocco, Chair (UCI), A. Katie Harris, Vice Chair (UCD), Darlene Francis (UCB), Gerardo Con Diaz (UCD), Jose Antonio Rodriguez-Lopes (UCI), Catherine Sugar (UCLA), Christopher Viney (UCM), Sara Lapan (UCR alternate), Madeleine Norris (UCSF), Ben Hardekopf (UCSB), David Cuthbert (UCSC), Megan Chung (Undergraduate Student Representative), Todd Greenspan (Executive Advisor, Academic Planning & Policy Development, Institutional Research & Academic Planning (IRAP)), Carmen Corona (Director, Academic Planning & Policy, IRAP), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst, Academic Senate)

**I.        Consent Calendar**

**Action:** The committee approved today's agenda.

**II.       Chair's Updates**

On April 1st, UCEP discussed the possibility of revising Senate Regulation (SR) 634 which establishes the minimum grade point average (GPA) required for graduation. Chair Cocco described the case of a particular UCI student who earned 183 units but whose GPA fell below 2.0. The student got into this situation after receiving bad advising and making poor decisions over the course of several years. The chair confirmed that UCI's regulation permits a dean to do a retroactive withdrawal in cases such as this, and the other campuses have retroactive withdrawal mechanisms that work well.

**Discussion:** A member pointed out that there is a difference between a student who starts in one major and after getting low grades switches to a new major versus the student in Chair Cocco's example. When SR 634 was discussed by the UCLA committee, some members focused on how to help students progress towards their degrees whereas others were concerned about grade inflation and lowering overall performance standards for students. There was consensus about the need for data showing the number of students impacted by this regulation and any patterns for when this occurs. UCB's committee could not identify any students who had been in this situation and suspects that every campus has internal mechanisms to adjudicate these cases.

The UCI registrar's policy states that retroactive withdrawals must occur in the quarter after the class was taken and students should have been enrolled in the wrong course or had a documented health or family emergency. Chair Cocco indicated that the registrar's policy is not consistent with the Senate regulation which does not have a time limit, and UCI needs to address the erroneous information on the registrar's website. Members weighed in on the idea of proposing a revision to SR 634 and there was consensus about getting data before pursuing this. IRAP does not have data on stop-outs, but Executive Advisor Greenspan suggested that the vice provost and deans for undergraduate might have this information. Chair Cocco would like members to gather the following information: how restrictive campus withdrawal policies are; grade inflation based on grades in 2015-2016 versus 2022-2023; and the number of students who have been impacted by SR 634 and how far along they were in their education when this happened. If the number of students is small, this should probably be handled by the campus on a case by case basis. There is a concern about students dropping out after getting into trouble with their grades before anyone has a chance to intervene and help.

### III.  Consultation with Institutional Research & Academic Planning (IRAP)
- *Todd Greenspan, Executive Advisor, Academic Planning & Policy Development, IRAP*
- *Carmen Corona, Director, Academic Planning & Policy, IRAP*

The April 12th Academic Planning Council (APC) meeting was canceled and Chair Cocco's item on excessive units taken during summer session will be on the June agenda. Director Corona conferred with UCI's dean about summer session and learned that students received approval from advisors to take any excess units. The dean plans to work with the registrar to figure out how to prevent this from happening in the future. Chair Cocco explained that campuses have policies that allow students to pay for a certain number of units during summer session and take unlimited courses. However, the summer session directors surveyed by Director Corona indicated that each campus caps the number of units that can be taken, and the director suggested that summer session directors and registrars should work together more closely.

Chair Cocco explained that students take the maximum number of summer session courses allowed at their home campuses as well as at other campuses and transfer those units to their home campus, resulting in excessive units. Therefore, this is a problem across the UC campuses. Director Corona observed that there should be a way to flag excess units before the information is added to a student's transcript by the registrar, but this happens at the end of the quarter. What is needed, from the chair's perspective, is a way to notify students that they cannot sign up for courses when they will be exceeding the campus cap. Students need to be aware of the regulations and policies before signing up for summer courses and the summer session deans have to coordinate. Chair Cocco indicated that there are students at UCI and UCSB who have taken excess units in summer. The problem is not just that students have taken excessive units but they have received As for these courses, calling into question whether the academic rigor is there. Executive Advisor Greenspan indicated that IRAP can provide data on the number of units students take during summer session. The chair asserted that this loophole should be corrected before the number of students exploiting it grows any larger.

Director Corona shared that a high-level update of the Compendium has been completed and will be reviewed at the next APC meeting. The registration link for the May 1st congress on online education has been fixed and members were encouraged to register. Executive Advisor Greenspan reported that last Friday was the deadline or campuses to submit their multi-year enrollment plans. Right now, it looks like UC is on track to reach the enrollment funded by the legislature for this year, and more information will be available after 2023 tax returns are calculated and the May revise is released. Legislative staff and a few Regents have floated the idea of increasing non-resident tuition if the state funding is not available but whether this would apply to all campuses is to be determined, and the cohort tuition policy is a complicating factor.

### IV.  Criteria for Senate Review of Certain UC Online Courses
- *Madeleine Norris (UCSF) & Ben Hardekopf (UCSB)*

UCEP is developing criteria to review UC Online courses because the committee is charged with the approval and review of systemwide courses. Chair Cocco mentioned that there will be a proposal to revise UCEP's bylaw to clarify that the committee is responsible for approving and reviewing systemwide courses and programs that confer credit across the system. Currently, "courses" and "programs" have been used interchangeably so consistency is needed. For example, the UC Washington Center program and the Natural Reserve System California Ecology and Conservation field course are both systemwide. The chair noted that the UC Center Sacramento Center also falls into this category.

The UCSF representative summarized the work on devising the criteria for identifying UC Online courses that should be reviewed based on a point system. Points will be assigned based on the number of students enrolled, completion or failure rate, grade point average (GPA), and student evaluations. Since student evaluations are not standardized across UC Online and can be very subjective, there is a question about utilizing them in the initial review. The criteria might include whether a course is needed for a major, minor, or general education requirement, and courses needed for a major could be prioritized. The goal of UCEP's review is to provide feedback on a course including a recommendation that it be discontinued.

**Discussion:** Finding a sizable amount of course information on cheating websites and other online forums could signal that the instructor is not taking the necessary steps to prevent this from happening. Since determining which courses will be reviewed is going to be an automated process, it might not be viable to include issues related to cheating. There might be times when courses come to the attention of the committee for significant issues that are outside the criteria used for the automated process, so an allowance should be made for this. Because each campus uses a different student evaluation it would not be fair to include these in the criteria for selecting courses to review. Chair Cocco proposes finalizing the criteria after UCEP meets with UC Online's executive director on May 20th and discusses the data that will be requested.

Members discussed the limits of the committee's authority since UCEP does not have the ability to stop a course from being offered. Chair Cocco asserted that a recommendation that the course should not be open for cross-campus enrollment will not prevent it from being offered at the home campus. The committee debated who would have the power to act upon UCEP's recommendation and the chair posited that the deans for undergraduate education should be informed about problem courses so campuses can decide whether they will accept those units for degree requirements. UCEP's recommendations should be sent to Academic Council with a request that they be forwarded to the divisional Undergraduate Councils/Committees on Educational Policy and the Committees on Courses of Instruction.

A member pointed out that the committee may encounter a course with a high GPA that is well-designed and thought-out and taught by a committed instructor. UCEP might want to recognize the instructors who teach good courses thereby providing valuable information about the kinds of activities that work well in online courses. The criteria will need to be reworked to flag not just those courses that are falling short but the ones that are excelling. Executive Advisor Greenspan shared the link to a rubric for designing online course activities that comply with requirements for regular and substantive interaction: https://oscqr.suny.edu/rsi/.

## V. Proposal to Remove "Probation" from Senate Regulations
- *Christopher Viney (UCM)*

The UC Undergraduate Academic Advising Council (UCUAAC) has asked UCEP to consider replacing the word "probation" in systemwide Senate Regulations (SR) 900 and SR 902 because of it is not a constructive term. The word "probation" has a negative connotation, and being put on probation has a stigma that does not reflect the Senate's intention to flag that something needs to be done academically. The UCUAAC acknowledges that while this will not solve everything, it would be a small but meaningful change for students. The representative described the literature cited by the Council to support its position. One paper reports a causal link between academic probation and college outcomes, suggesting that if the purpose of academic probation is to improve students' chances of graduation, it appears to fail at achieving its primary goal.

**Discussion:** There is agreement among the members that "probation" is associated with criminality and replacing it would be a positive move. However, it was noted that being on probation is serious and whatever term is used will ultimately have negative connotations. Removing the word is just a band aid and UCEP should advocate for an examination of the system that could lead to more substantive changes. Students need to understand the gravity of the situation when they are put on probation so they take it seriously. It appears that students do better in the short-term after they are put on probation but this effect goes away, which implies that ongoing support is lacking. The committee's memo could encourage UC to offer the workshops that have been implemented by the California State University system.

A member noted that the UCUAAC is comprised of high-level senior academic advisors across the system who are engaged with and know students the best. UCEP should emphasize that a nomenclature change does not change the issues with the system as a whole and there should be additional thought as to how to help students. Members considered alternatives to "probation" and agreed upon the importance of keeping "academic" in the phrase to point directly to the problem. The committee supports proposing that academic "notice" should replace "probation" and the analyst will confirm that "academic notice" is not currently used in Senate regulations.

**Action:** A motion was made and seconded to replace "academic probation" with "academic notice" in SR 900 and SR 902, and eight members voted in favor and one opposed. The UCM representative will work with Chair Cocco on the committee's memo to Academic Council.

## VI.     Member Items/Campus Reports

**UCLA:** The divisional committee's work on the policy on incompletes is moving along but the campus registrar does not think it can make the changes in their system the Senate wants before 2025. The division's request for a variance will probably be submitted to UCEP next year.

## VII.     New Business/Executive Session

Chair Cocco's goal is to finish UCEP business during the May 6th, May 20th and June 3rd.


Videoconference adjourned at: 12:10 PM
Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams
Attest: Melanie Cocco