



UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA Academic
Senate

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Minutes of Videoconference

Monday, June 1, 2026

In attendance: Catherine Sugar, Chair (UCLA), Jason Duque, Vice Chair (UCSB), Darlene Francis (UCB), Gerardo Con Diaz (UCD), Arvind Rajaraman (UCI alternate), Susan Varnot (UCM), Gene Brewer (UCR), Lily Hoang (UCSD), Giuliana Perrone (UCSB), Carmen Corona (Director, Academic Planning & Policy, Institutional Research & Academic Planning (IRAP)), Ethan Savage (Academic Planning & Policy Analyst, IRAP), Ahmet Palazoglu (Chair, Academic Senate), Susannah Scott (Vice Chair, Academic Senate), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst)

I. Consent Calendar

Action: Today's agenda items and their priority were approved.

II. Chair's Announcements and Updates

Chair Sugar shared highlights from the May 27th Academic Council meeting. The deadline for complying with the federal legislation on digital accessibility of websites has been extended into next year but UC will continue to work towards compliance. Council discussed the open letter from UC faculty in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics calling for UC to bring back standardized tests for admissions. Members of Council expressed concerns about this request being made outside of the regular Senate processes and Senate leadership had already asked the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools to create a roadmap for a holistic re-evaluation over the next few years of the admissions process. Council discussed the UC Education Abroad Program; revision of the bylaw for the University Committee on Preparatory Education; ongoing labor negotiations; and UC's 2026-2027 budget.

III. Student Mental Health and Well-Being

Genie Kim, Director, Student Mental Health & Well-being, UCOP; Nicole Presley, Director, Counseling & Psychological Services, UCLA; & Namrata Deepak, Student Representative

Earlier this academic year, members expressed concerns about student stress and the accessibility of mental health and other services to help students deal with those issues and the committee would like to better understand the services available. According to Director Kim, in 2023 the student mental health oversight committee reviewed the work happening across the system and decided to take a whole campus, whole student approach. The idea was to focus on health equity using a public health framework. Over the years there has been significant support from the State and the Regents to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet student demand, including ongoing State Budget Act allocations of \$21.3M for the UC Equity and Mental Health Initiative and \$19.5M for the Basic Needs Initiative across the system. The funds have gone directly to hiring additional counselors but there has also been investment into longer-term strategies to ensure UC has prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery supports for students.

Director Kim presented cross-sectional research and analysis on the impacts of undergraduate and graduate students' food insecurity and housing insecurity on their mental health using data from UCUES, and noted that the rate of anxiety decreased from 2022 to 2024. However, students with very low food security experience greater depression and UC Health will try to untangle what is behind the mental health challenges with the help of UC faculty researchers. A new holistic well-being model has been created that places the student at the center of the various services being provided which work together. The International Association for Counseling Services recommends a ratio of 1 counselor to 1,500 students. However, while UC has close to a 1:1,000 ratio at some campuses, budget constraints make it difficult to fill vacant counselor positions.

Director Presley reported national data on the mental health of college students post-COVID, using data from the Healthy Minds Study and presenting its implications for UC. She then took a provided a more detailed look at work being done by UCLA's Counseling Center, which is largely preventative in nature. The UCKA Center collaborates with the campus mental health promotion center on a campaign to promote and destigmatize literacy about mental health along with finding ways to ease access to services. This includes efforts to increase faculty and staff participation in crisis and suicide-prevention training and to increase early detection and intervention for mental health problems. The UCLA undergraduate student who participated in the presentation indicated that the services students need are not centralized in one location on campus and there is a lack of awareness of the array of services available to them. Marginalized student groups, including undocumented and international students, are unsure if they are permitted to access services. The student emphasized that faculty and teaching assistants are a primary point of connection to the services students may need and a syllabus can point students toward available resources.

Discussion: In response to a question about how the Senate can pay more attention to this issue, Director Kim suggested that student well-being could be intentionally considered during program review as it could tie in with student success. Chair Sugar proposed that the systemwide Senate could work with Director Kim on creating a central repository of resources for faculty. Additional ideas are for the campus mental health directors to regularly update divisional committees and for UC Health to update its faculty handbook. A member observed that the information shared by the directors did not indicate the effectiveness of UC Health's efforts and it would be valuable to understand UC's commitment to improve the situation for students. Reportedly, psychologists in the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) unit at one campus are encouraged not to provide long-term, individual therapy to students but to instead instruct students to seek out community-based care. While committed to student well-being, this CAPS does not have the resources to see students immediately or provide direct care despite the progress on student-provider ratios cited earlier in the presentation, and the community providers are typically not accessible to first generation students or students who have not sought services before. Director Presley explained that the University designed a short-term model years ago when the profiles of UC's students were different, so the question is how to deliver long-term and trauma care within a model not intended for this.

IV. Consultation with Academic Senate Leadership *Ahmet Palazoglu, Chair, Academic Senate*

Chair Palazoglu reported on a new Department of Justice lawsuit against UCLA; labor issues related to Unit 18 lecturers; and topics discussed by Academic Council on May 27th including the outcome of the systemwide review of the proposal to establish a systemwide committee on climate

change and sustainability. The research bond proposed within Senate Bill 895 was decreased from \$23 billion to \$12 billion by the Senate Appropriations Committee and has now advanced to the Assembly. Chair Palazoglu joined a May 12th videoconference with Senators Perez and Cabaldon, Assemblymembers Alvarez and Fong, California Community College Chancellor Christian, California State University Chancellor Garcia, and UC Vice President Brown regarding proposed legislation related to the Master Plan. The UC Adaptations to Disruptions Plus Task Force steering committee met at UCI on May 7th with UCOP leadership, a number of divisional Senate chairs, and the chairs of the administration's Transformation Initiative Workgroup to consider cross-cutting ideas and to finalize the recommendations. President Milliken recently charged a Senate-administration presidential task force with examining ways for the Health Sciences Clinical faculty to participate in the governance of UC Health. President Milliken also announced the formation of a UC artificial intelligence steering committee.

V. Consultation with Faculty Affairs and Academic Programs

Monica Varsanyi, UC System Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs & Academic Programs

Provost Newman created the Degree Plus initiative to provide students with an add-on to their UC degree by combining job-oriented or skills-focused certificate programs with a paid internship. The initiative is being piloted at UCSB and UCSD, and Vice Provost Varsanyi was invited to report on its implementation. The provost secured grant funding (including from the Lumina and Strata foundations) for the two-year pilot before Vice Provost Varsanyi's arrival. The Extension programs at the pilot campuses are offering non-degree-credit certificates which do not contribute to the units needed for graduation requirements. Provost Newman views real-world experience as giving students a critical leg up in the current competitive labor market, so participating students are provided with paid internships for which they might also receive academic credit. The goal of the internships is to help students start their future jobs with some practical work experience and skills. Employers say they want employees with the skills students attain in their degree programs such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

The plan was for UCSD to enroll 120 students in the pilot, but 140 are participating. This campus focused on three different schools and developed specific certificates: Arts and Humanities has a certificate for arts management; Social Sciences has a data analysis and visualization certificate; and Physical Sciences has a project and process management certificate. Students began taking Extension courses in January and the internship placement process began in the spring. Funding from the Strata Foundation is supporting the pilot at UCSD. UCSB developed certificates for applied artificial intelligence and innovation; agile project management; and applied business essentials. This campus contacted all students graduating within two years and, of the 180 students who initially enrolled, 165 are currently participating. Lumina Foundation funding is supporting the pilot at UCSB and has been used to hire a staff person to support the internship placements. Lumina contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct an evaluation that involves student surveys and focus groups, and this group is compiling an implementation toolkit that can be used if the project expands beyond the pilot campuses. Institutional Research at UCOP will follow students using employment data to track outcomes and evaluate if the initiative has made a difference.

Discussion: Asked what UCOP hopes to see when the pilot ends, Vice Provost Varsanyi indicated that key information will include whether employers valued the internship experience or extension certificates equally and a better sense of what is most beneficial to students. The Degree Plus initiative is an expensive high-touch model and it remains to be seen if it produces positive

outcomes. Provost Newman would like federal financial aid to cover the costs related to the Extension certificates thereby making Degree Plus accessible to more students. The current federal administration has recently announced the Workforce Pell grant program but it is not yet clear if Degree Plus participants will qualify.

In some cases, UC students are studying disciplines that lack an obvious connection to industry-specific needs and practices and faculty may be unprepared to help students develop high demand skills. Vice Provost Varsanyi noted that the Extension programs are able to quickly create courses on new skills desired by employers. The vice provost appreciates the need for an inventory and potential coordination by UCOP of the internship-related activities happening across the system. The Merced area is an internship desert and approximately 60% of UCM students have Pell grants or are Pell eligible. Next year, this campus will pilot a set of certificates that are unit-bearing for degrees, including one for using Spanish in healthcare communications. While UCM has an internship database, students are unfamiliar with the processes they must navigate. It would be valuable if UCOP nurtured a culture of cross-campus communication about campus activities and needs related to internships along with opportunities being fostered at the systemwide level. The evaluation of Degree Plus may reveal whether participating students would have secured internships without the program or if there was a benefit to students who historically have difficulty getting internships.

VI. Debrief on Systemwide Working Groups

Chair Sugar invited members to share their thoughts about the presentations this morning and about the UCOP initiatives discussed this academic year.

Discussion: The degree of oversight divisional Senates have over campus Extension programs varies as do campus policies on certificates and the evaluation of the pilot should assess the quality of the extension courses. Students in the pilot are burdened with taking additional courses for just general academic credit. Faculty at UCSD have expressed skepticism and confusion about different aspects of the pilot, noting the limited opportunities for employment in the arts, so it will be critical for participating students to report on how they have benefited. Student demand for internships is significant, but it is unclear whether the people involved with Degree Plus consulted with faculty in a wide range of majors. Another important question is how UCEP can obtain data about various UCOP-led initiatives and programs.

VII. Member Reports/Campus Updates

This topic was not discussed.

VIII. Executive Session

This topic was not discussed.

The meeting adjourned at: 1:04 PM.

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams, Principal Policy Analyst

Attest: Catherine Sugar, Chair