

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY
Monday, June 12, 2023

Meeting Minutes

I. Academic Senate Leadership Update

Susan Cochran, Academic Council Chair

James Steintrager, Academic Council Vice Chair

Academic Council Chair Susan Cochran and Vice Chair Jim Steintrager joined the meeting to provide an overview of the current activities of the Senate.

Chair Cochran noted that the California state budget is being finalized this week. Meanwhile, the Senate leaders are focused on the effort to streamline transfer from California community colleges to UC and the CSUs. ICAS, the statewide “Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates,” has approved new transfer standards known as CalGETC (see Senate Regulation 479). Cochran reported that there is still more desire in the legislature for alignment in preparation requirements for UC and CSU.

A task force of the Provost’s Academic Planning Council (APC) is reviewing the landscape of doctoral education at UC and is expected to make recommendations for changes in the long run. UCORP Chair Cynthia Schumann is a member of the task force and part of a subcommittee that is looking at distinguishing paid labor from non-paid work in education and training of graduate students. Other subcommittees are looking at budget and enrollment targets.

CCGA, the Academic Senate’s Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs, is working on guidelines for distinguishing academic work from labor, including suggestions for 299 (or 599) courses. Others are looking into whether the pressure on grants can be alleviated by waiving tuition. (This is in the very preliminary stages, and tuition still has to come from somewhere.)

University-wide, it’s not clear whether graduate enrollment has declined across the board, or just in some disciplines. Committee members described the demand for UC graduates in certain STEM fields such as electrical engineering, math, and data science. Some suggested that these schools could operate financially more like the professional school degree programs. UCORP members asked that communication channels be kept as open and transparent as possible. It might help to have a clear statement about what graduate education is. Union reps need to know that not everything that graduate students do falls under the category of labor.

Cochran reported that another APC task force continues to work on guidance for implementing the Senate “ARO” principles for achievements relative to opportunity.

II. Announcements, Approval of Meeting Minutes

The May 8th meeting minutes will be approved via email after members have a chance to review them.

III. Consultation with the Office of the President – Office of Research and Innovation

1. Updates from the Vice President for Research and Innovation

Scott Brandt, Associate Vice President

The Vice Chancellors for Research were recently in Washington, DC, to meet with leaders of federal agencies, legislators, and legislative staff. The discussions focused on four main themes: 1) Budget – there are approximately 50 appropriations bills pending and if no agreement is reached then spending will be kept at 2022 levels; 2) Generative AI and the risk it poses; 3) Research security – specifically relating to China; and 4) the CHIPS Act, for which there is much interest despite the budget concerns. California would benefit from statewide leadership to bring together teams to work on CHIPS Act funded projects.

The government’s concern around generative AI is primarily in the inability to discern real from fake. It would like to have tools and protocols established similar to those for gene editing.

2. Updates from the Office of Research Policy Analysis and Coordination

Deborah Motton Executive Director

Lourdes DeMattos, Director

Agnes Balla, Director

Felice Lu, Research Policy Manager

HELIOS and Open Access - The UCOP Research Policy staff fielded questions on the HELIOS (Higher Education Leadership Initiative for Open Scholarship) survey and on open scholarship resources in general. HELIOS¹ is a member-based organization of more than 60 U.S. colleges and universities working to advance open scholarship within and across their campuses. The HELIOS UCOP cohort is developing a high-level consolidated list of activities and services that UC offers to support open scholarship. Some faculty are aware of open access policies, requirements, and resources, but many are not fully informed. The UC survey was kept at a high level to try to capture all the work being done in this area throughout the system using the HELIOS definition of open scholarship, which is very broad. Committee members suggested that the survey be linked to campus library websites, to capture users as they navigated the sites.

UC has negotiated open access agreements and discounts with publishers, and many scholarly works are eligible for financial support from the UC libraries. Although some prestigious journals charge absurdly high fees, it is possible to deposit at no cost a pre-publication version of the article in UC’s eScholarship open access repository. The humanities landscape is different, but open access still applies. Campus librarians have more information if faculty authors have questions or need help.

Patent Policy – The RPAC staff are reviewing comments on the new draft UC Patent policy, which is likely to come back out for a second systemwide review in August. The revised version will include expanded explanations of the changes made.

3. MRU Reviews and Updates from UC Research Initiatives

Kathleen Erwin, Executive Director, Research Grants Program Office

VP Maldonado will review the Senate’s MRU reports and will send a letter with her own assessment along with UCORP’s report to the MRU directors.

¹ <https://www.heliosopen.org/>

Due to the uncertainty of continuing and future programs planned for UC MEXUS/Alianza MX, the Senate recommends another review of the unit in two or three years. The UCORP chair and vice chair will schedule a time to talk with VP Maldonado and her staff.

4. Animal Research Transparency (ART) Working Group Update

Dragana Alexander, Research Policy Manager

Karen Bales, Professor, UC Davis, and former UCORP Chair

Jennifer Klahn Director of Research Safety and Animal Welfare, UCLA

Committee members asked about how the recommendations would work in practice if there are no specific actions, other than the letter of support from President Drake. The staff noted that the first step is to inform UC administrative leaders about the situation and get resources for moving forward. The Animal Research Transparency Working Group started a couple of years ago and would like to see the topic remain on the research administration's list of priorities. Making demands at this point might backfire, so the intention is to emphasize the challenges that animal researchers face. In response to one of the recommendations, UCORP members suggested that a systemwide task force might be more effective than trying to have task forces on every campus, some of which might not have a lot of animal research. UCORP members also asked about the national landscape and whether the National Primate Centers are involved in any sort of academic or integrated public information campaign.

Animal Research Transparency Working Group members will be invited to the first UCORP meeting of the fall in October for an update.

IV. Items Under Review

Committee members briefly discussed the revisions to "APM - 210, Review and Appraisal Committees: Mentoring," and agreed that the changes were minimal and acceptable. UCORP will not send formal comments.

V. Campus Round-Robin

Campus updates

UC Santa Barbara: UCSB just finished its faculty research grants and the COR has been talking about contracts and grant support across campus. There are significant issues, and it would be helpful to have a UC-wide look at challenges to the research enterprise, including problems with hiring and retaining staff. The cost of housing at many UC locations is a problem not just for graduate students, but for staff as well.

UC Santa Cruz: UCSC finalized its large grant program for the year. It was finally announced that \$1.5 million will be available from the central campus administration for bridge funding for post-docs and GSRs. After a search for a new VC-R, the interim VC-R, John MacMillan, was hired for the role.

UC Merced: After the spring semester ended, COR has mainly been responding to requests for extensions on faculty grants. The committee is starting to draft a new memo about ongoing difficulties with the financial accounting system and looking into how to improve efficiencies on campus.

UC Irvine: Much of the work of UCI's COR this year was reviewing campus ORUs. The COR also discussed concerns around budget and graduate students, mirroring the conversations at other campuses.

UC Riverside: UCR's COR spent some of the winter and spring quarter on assessing the ranking and distribution of faculty grants.

UC San Francisco: UCSF's COR would like to be a part of systemwide discussions of research challenges, including working with local and systemwide administrators on alleviating administrative burdens on faculty.

Notes for next year

In addition to updates from the local committees, UCORP members offered feedback on the past year and made suggestions for next year, including shorter Zoom meetings. Although members expressed appreciation for the ability to meet remotely and the efficiency of the meetings, most noted that 2-3 hours would be better than 4-plus, even if meetings had to be more often. Several members suggested that UCORP discuss the challenges facing UC's research enterprise and gather systemwide input on adapting to major challenges. Members suggested that UCORP continue to pursue opportunities for collaborative research initiatives across the university, providing greater collective strength in bidding for large programs than what can be done at any of the individual campuses. Members hoped for increased communication and transparency from the administration – particularly around graduate students and funding – to aid in making local decisions.

Meeting adjourned 12:10pm
Meeting minutes drafted by: Joanne Miller, UCORP Analyst
Attest: Cynthia Schumann, UCORP Chair