

AAC Meeting Minutes: Academic Assembly Council Meeting – February 5, 2026

Present (via Zoom):

Chris Greer, Steven Worker, Mark Lundy, Tobias Oker, Hope Zabronsky, Krista Marshall, Ashraf El-Kereamy, Rubia Branco Lopes, Joy Hollingsworth, Daniela Bruno, Brian Woodward, Julie Finzel, Kristen Shive, Whitney Brim-DeForest, Annemiek Schilder and Mohammad Yaghmour.

Results from Academic Coordinator survey (Krista Marshall and Hope Zabronsky):

28 out of 43 ACs responded to the survey. 68% of Academic Coordinators (AC) are early in their careers (0 to 5 years) and are involved in a wide range of activities, including supervision, budget management, and serving as PIs or co-PIs on projects.

Concerns:

Onboarding. Many ACs described their onboarding experience as informal and inconsistent. There is a need for standardized onboarding resources, including shared materials, regular training, and office hours and Q&A sessions.

Professional development. Only 38% of ACs reported receiving funding for professional development annually, while 50% indicated that they did not receive funding and 12% were unsure if they received funds.

Funding stability. 85% of AC are supported through soft funding, creating uncertainty and affecting long-term career planning. 38% explored other employment possibilities in the last year.

During discussion, the AAC emphasized the importance of focusing efforts on achievable priorities (such as improving access to professional development funding).

Committee Reports

RULES & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (Julie Finzel):

The committee will begin the election process in late February, with Brian Woodward and Tobias Oker as incoming co-chairs. Julie will transition out of the chair role in June and will support the transition.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE (Daniela Bruno):

The committee recently ranked applications from the latest funding cycle and is preparing to release the call for the final quarter (April–June). Daniela mentioned the Distinguished Service Awards emphasized the need to move quickly to allow time for review and processing before the end of the fiscal year.

WELFARE & BENEFITS COMMITTEE (Joy Hollingsworth and Steven Worker):

The committee met in January and discussed potential webinar topics. The committee has not received the last exit survey (exits since 2024). There was discussion about possibly shifting focus to surveying current employees to better understand concerns (but different than what advisor representative committee does).

MULTIPLE ACADEMIC TITLES REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Annemiek Schilder):

The committee met and has two new members, Edith de Guzman and Prakash Jha. Daniel Obrist is meeting quarterly with this group. Planning a committee meeting for March. Concerns were raised about delays in contract renewal and administrative processes due to leadership transitions. Additional topics included limited access to graduate students for some specialists and the need for improved collaboration opportunities, particularly for project scientists.

ACADEMIC COORDINATOR REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Krista Marshall and Hope Zabronsky):

The committee along with Daniel Obrist is working on updates to Project Board and dossier tables to better reflect the reporting changes on E-book for ACs. Proposed changes include new categories such as academic program planning, partnership development, impact evaluation, and supervision. Then, they will share the changes with the PRC.

UC BERKELEY SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Kristen Shive):

Specialists from Berkeley, Davis, and Riverside submitted letters to ANR leadership citing concerns about collaboration, resources, and recruitment for specialists off-campus. No response has been received.

UC DAVIS SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Mark Lundy):

Mentioned the same letter (signed by specialists from CA&ES). Mark pointed out lack of representation of the veterinary school within AAC (CA&ES and vet school have different Deans). Efforts are underway to update orientation resources and general resources for connectivity between the different units of UC (to make information easier to find). At UC Davis, positions approved in the last round remain unfilled due to MOU.

UC RIVERSIDE SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Ashraf El-Kereamy):

Also mentioned letter. No progress on MOU (probably related to intellectual property agreements between ANR and the campus).

ADVISOR REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Mohammad Yaghmour):

The committee has not met recently. Key concerns from prior discussions include recurring questions from advisors, challenges with county director evaluations when there is limited understanding of advisors' programs, and operational issues such as lack of backup for approvals

during director absences. The committee plans to develop a document addressing frequently asked questions and common concerns.

Leadership Updates (with both Darren Haver; Glenda Humiston):

Darren shared that he is transitioning to the new role. He plans to divide his time between Davis, Oakland, and county visits. Glenda mentioned participation in an international agriculture collaboration between the UC and Mexico, work with CDFA on the international Year of the Woman Farmer.

Glenda mentioned that Program Teams (PT) are functioning well and newer teams are still organizing. Budget constraints for in-person PT meetings were acknowledged, although efforts are being made to maximize participation. Glenda also informed that the upcoming position call will be released soon and that PTs will play an important role in identifying priorities.

Updates on hiring indicated that most advisor and specialist positions from previous calls have been filled or are in progress. However, some positions, particularly at UC Davis and UC Riverside, remain on hold due to MOUs. Leadership noted that continued lack of agreement may result in positions being reassigned to other locations and could also affect participation in future position calls.

The UC ANR Foundation has established its 501(c)(3) status and is preparing for a large, statewide fundraising campaign aimed at raising funds to support facilities, programs, and long-term capacity across ANR. The Policy Institute is being developed to help translate existing research into accessible formats (e.g., webinars) to inform policy, with a focus on connecting scientists to decision-making processes without requiring them to engage in advocacy.

Discussion focused on the need for greater equity in program support funding across academic titles, particularly for AC, who often receive inconsistent support. Leadership acknowledged this issue and noted ongoing efforts to review AC roles, including a salary analysis.

Leadership shared updates on activities at the World Ag Expo, participation in meetings with the CDFA, including events related to the International Year of the Woman Farmer, F3 initiative and SAREP, and UC academics presentations.

Additional discussion included concerns raised by specialists (letters from UC Davis, UC Berkley and UC Riverside). Leadership reiterated that CE positions are intended to serve statewide needs and are not limited to specific campuses.

Bylaws Update (Chris Greer):

Discussion on proposed revisions to the bylaws, including updates to terminology (from Cooperative Extension to UC Division of ANR), and updated language for consistency. Changes included setting one-year terms for President-elect and Past President, two-year term for the Secretary, and removing the Program Council liaison position. The bylaws will be circulated to the broader academic community for review prior to a formal vote.

Others:

The Council discussed the workload associated with merit and promotion review processes. It was noted that the number of dossiers continues to increase, placing a substantial burden on review committee members. Additional discussion highlighted increasing administrative demands, including new accessibility requirements (AAC will organize training).

Additional discussion included the potential creation of a special committee for Early Career Academics (representation across different academic titles).

AAC received an update on ANR publications. The communications advisory board (CAB) has been dissolved and replaced with a new publications editorial board, which will oversee peer review and publication processes. The new structure includes representatives across program areas and aims to improve efficiency and turnaround time.