

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

CLA Building, 98, P2-8

Zoom Link: <https://cpp.zoom.us/j/81432007637>

Zoom ID: **814 3200 7637**

Passcode: **executive**

Attendees: Greg Barding, David Edens, Ghada Gad, Peter Hanink, Rita Kumar, Kelly Min, Brian Newman, Julie Shen, Faye Wachs, and Gerd Welke.

Proxies: Ghada Gad for Aaron Cayer, Rita Kumar for Dennis Quinn

Guests: Helen Yniguez, Keith Forward, and Francis Teves

1) Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2025

There was no discussion.

Senator Edens motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Senator Barding second.

M/s/p to approve the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2025.

2) Chair's Report

Chair Hanink mentioned that Senator Sabrina Toney expressed interest in serving as the Academic Senate Parliamentarian. The Executive Committee agreed to the selection of Senator Toney as parliamentarian for the Academic Senate.

Yesterday, Chair Hanink and Vice Chair Barding met with Provost Gomez to discuss the following topics:

1. Assignment of WTUs for Temporary Faculty in Non-Academic Roles

- Provost Gomez clarified that Cal Poly Pomona assigns significantly more Weighted Teaching Units (WTUs) than required under the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).
- Provost Gomez committed to providing Chair Hanink and Vice Chair Barding with:
 - A detailed breakdown of how WTUs are currently allocated.

- The formal policy governing WTU assignments for temporary faculty performing non-academic duties.

2. Proposed Scheduling Change for Special Topics and Independent Study Courses

- A recent proposal from the scheduling office would require submission of syllabi for all special topics and independent study courses.
- The Academic Senate had not been consulted prior to this proposal.
- Dr. Keith Forward, Interim AVP of Academic Programs, has been invited to speak further on this issue during today's meeting.
- The proposal has since been rescinded and will not be implemented.
- Chair Hanink and Vice Chair Barding raised concerns with Provost Gomez regarding the lack of consultation and transparency in initiating such changes.
- Provost Gomez acknowledged the issue and indicated she would investigate how this situation arose and follow up.

3. Presidential Search Open Forum

- Chair Hanink shared reflections on the Open Forum held Thursday.
- The event was well-attended and generally well-received.
- Attendees expressed aspirations for university improvement while affirming a positive institutional culture.
- The Chancellor appeared pleased with the engagement and feedback from the forum.

Alternate Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Chair Hanink mentioned that the following list of applicants was sent to the Institutional Officer (IO) for the Alternate Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Travis Miller (Psychology/CLASS)
- Cindy Cordoba (Apparel Merchandising & Management/AG)
- Yi (Fionna) Xie (Agribusiness & Food Industry Management/AG)
- Denise Vasquez-Guevara (Communication/CLASS)

3) Vice Chair's Report

No referrals to report.

4) Reports

No reports available.

5) Old Business

The Executive Committee appointed the following Academic Senate Standing Committees "At-Large" Assignments:

- Erik Froyen (AG) to the Elections and Procedures Committee
- Katherine Gasdaglis (CLASS) to the Faculty Affairs Committee
- Fatheema Begum Subhan (AG) to the Academic Programs Committee
- Michelle Soto-Pena (CEIS) to the Budget Committee
- Zeynep Aytug (CBA) to the Faculty Affairs Committee
- Guadalupe Maldonado Andrade (AG) to the Academic Affairs Committee
- Travis Miller (CLASS) to the Academic Affairs Committee
- Rachel Van (CLASS) to the General Education Committee
- Kristin Prins (CLASS) to the General Education Committee

6) New Business

The Executive Committee appointed the following faculty members:

Search Committee | Office of Admissions, Director

- Jeyoung Woo (CE/EGR)
- Xijing Li (URP/ENV)

Service Opportunity | First Year Experience (FYE) Faculty Committee for the College of Business Administration Vacancy:

- Maria Ortiz (IBM/CBA)

Service Opportunity | Faculty Development Academic Advisory Committee:

- Brandy Chappell-Hill (ENV)

7) Discussion

2026 Commencement Plan Presentation

Presenters:

- Helen Yniguez, Executive Director of University Events
- Francis Teves, Vice President for University Advancement
- Keith Forward, Interim AVP for Academic Planning

1. Overview of Commencement 2026 Schedule

- The 2026 commencement will follow the same format as the previous year: ceremonies held over three days—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.
- Each day will include four ceremonies.
- Eligible students will RSVP through the Marching Order system in spring to confirm attendance and claim tickets.
- Each graduate will initially be allotted eight tickets.
- Additional tickets may be released by individual colleges based on venue capacity and availability.

2. Coordination with Final Exam Scheduling

- Friday ceremonies overlap with final exams, requiring adjustments to academic scheduling.
- Finals scheduled in buildings 5, 6, 8, and 9 will be relocated to other campus buildings.
- Dr. Keith Forward is coordinating with departments to identify and reschedule affected classes and exams.
- Approximately 45 in-person and hybrid classes are currently scheduled in impacted buildings.
- Special attention is being given to upper-division courses in CLASS and Collins College, though Collins is not expected to pose scheduling conflicts.

3. Communication and Logistics Planning

- A comprehensive communication plan will be developed to inform students about changes to final exam locations and campus navigation during commencement.
- Students often park at the western end of campus and walk to other buildings, so signage and guidance will be provided to minimize confusion.
- Parking Services will issue guidance on recommended parking areas for each ceremony to help manage traffic flow.
- Ceremony scheduling is strategically planned to balance attendance volume and minimize congestion.

4. Remote Work Recommendation

- To reduce campus traffic on Friday, a remote workday has been recommended to university leadership.
- If approved, an official communication will be issued in spring by the ELR team encouraging departments to allow remote work where feasible.

Meeting Minutes: 2026 Commencement Planning Q&A Session

Participants:

- Helen Yniguez, Executive Director of University Events
- Francis Teves, Vice President for University Advancement
- Julie Shen, Senator
- Gerd Welke, Senator
- Brian Newman, Senator
- Gregory Barding, Vice Chair
- Keith Forward, Interim AVP for Academic Planning

1. Credential Recognition in Commencement

- Senator Shen inquired about the inclusion of credential students in the 2026 Commencement.
- Helen Yniguez confirmed that credential students will be included in the Friday morning CEIS ceremony at 8 a.m.
- The process is still being finalized, but students will be required to wear regalia and will receive communication soon.

- Students earning only a credential will participate in the CEIS ceremony. Those earning both a credential and another degree (e.g., master's) may opt to participate in both ceremonies, with flexibility provided.

2. Remote Workday and Telecommuting Logistics

- Helen addressed questions regarding remote work on the Friday of commencement.
- A special one-day teleworking agreement will be issued to accommodate reduced campus traffic.
- This recommendation has been in place for several years and will be communicated by the ELR team in spring.

3. Commencement Ambassador Support

- Approximately 80–100 volunteers are needed per ceremony to support logistics such as ticketing and graduate line-up.
- A campus-wide call for volunteers will be issued in spring.

4. Ceremony Schedule and College Assignments

- The full commencement schedule will be released publicly following meetings with ASI Senate.
- Breakdown of large colleges between Ceremony 1 and Ceremony 2 will be announced in January, with a target for December.
- Assignments are based on graduate numbers to ensure balanced ceremonies.

5. Honorary Doctorate Committee

- A memo has been sent requesting faculty appointments to the honorary doctorate committee.
- Recipients will speak at the ceremonies aligned with their recognition.

6. Faculty Accommodations and Facilities Coordination

- Water stations will be provided for faculty to address past concerns about hydration during ceremonies.
- Facilities staff will be on-site early with seat blowers and cleaning supplies to prepare venues.
- Weather considerations are actively managed, though unpredictable elements like skunks remain a challenge.

7. Acknowledgments

- The inclusion of credential students was praised, with recognition given to Senators Dennis Quinn and Julie Shen for their advocacy.
- Senator Shen's involvement in an internal program review committee helped initiate this change.

8. Ongoing Concerns About Friday Finals Conflicts

- Faculty expressed continued frustration with commencement overlapping Friday final exams.

- Specific concerns included locked classrooms and scheduling conflicts, especially for 7 a.m. finals.
- Helen acknowledged the issue and committed to working with Dr. Keith Forward and Facilities to ensure classrooms are unlocked and accessible.
- Facilities staff will begin operations at 5 a.m. on Friday to support this effort.
- Helen will submit room request forms to guarantee access to designated classrooms.

9. Consideration of Monday Ceremonies

- A suggestion was raised to move commencement to Monday to avoid academic conflicts.
- Helen noted that while Monday ceremonies have been used in the past, the current Friday–Sunday format is maintained due to budget constraints and logistical efficiency.
- The cost difference between a three-day and four-day event is significant, particularly regarding equipment and staffing.
- Helen emphasized openness to feedback and suggested reassessing the schedule after this year’s commencement to explore improvements.

10. Graduation Roster Cross-Check

- Helen proposed a new strategy: cross-referencing students who have applied for graduation with those enrolled in Friday classes.
- This would help identify and mitigate potential conflicts, especially for upper-division courses.
- Lower-division courses had not previously been flagged, but this new approach may help address overlooked issues.

11. Facilities and Infrastructure Challenges

- A recurring issue with malfunctioning sliding doors in certain science buildings was discussed.
- Helen acknowledged the problem and noted it affects multiple campus events, not just

12. Departmental Seating and Faculty-Student Interaction

- Faculty raised concerns about the lack of clear departmental grouping during ceremonies, leading to awkward moments where faculty were shaking hands with students they had not taught.
- Helen explained that logistical constraints—particularly timing and seat counts—have made precise departmental seating more difficult.
- In previous years, teams manually counted and placed students by department, but this process proved time-consuming and challenging to manage during live ceremony flow.
- The current system has students entering in pairs by department, but variations in line lengths and excitement among graduates can cause disorganization.

13. Ceremony Timing and Traffic Management

- Ceremonies run from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, with significant logistical activity between ceremonies.
- Parking and traffic flow are major challenges, especially during high-attendance events like the College of Business, which saw up to 7,000 vehicles per ceremony.
- Timing is tightly managed to accommodate both ceremony flow and external logistics.

14. Enhancing the Graduate Experience

- Helen emphasized the importance of creating meaningful moments for graduates, including personalized name announcements and screen displays—often referred to as the “Instagram moment.”
- These enhancements have been a priority for the past two years and continue to shape ceremony planning.

15. Faculty Seating and Comfort

- In response to faculty feedback, the handshake aisle was widened last year and will be maintained.
- Additional space is being considered—potentially adding three more inches to seating rows—to improve mobility and comfort for both faculty and graduates.
- Safety remains a top priority, with efforts to prevent tripping and ensure smooth movement during the ceremony.

16. Suggestions for Improvement

- A suggestion was made to include identifying badges for each department to help faculty recognize their students.
- Faculty noted that handshaking should be meaningful and reserved for students they have taught, especially in large ceremonies with 600–800 graduates.
- Helen acknowledged the feedback and reiterated her commitment to refining the experience while balancing logistical realities.

17. Closing Remarks

- Helen thanked attendees for their thoughtful questions and continued feedback.
- The handshaking tradition was highlighted as a valued part of the ceremony, with positive feedback and memorable photos from last year.
- Helen reaffirmed her dedication to continuous improvement and collaboration with faculty and staff.

Oversight and Scheduling of Independent Study and Special Topic Courses

Presenter: Dr. Keith Forward, Interim AVP for Academic Planning

1. Background and Purpose

- Dr. Forward provided context on the scheduling and oversight of independent study and special topic courses, specifically those numbered 2000, 4000, 2990, and 4990.
- These courses are often variable-unit offerings and are scheduled at the discretion of instructors and departments.

- The discussion was prompted by concerns raised by ECU members and faculty regarding lack of consultation and oversight in course implementation.

2. Scheduling Challenges

- Variable-unit courses (2000s and 4000s) frequently require rescheduling when unit changes occur after student registration, leading to administrative disruptions.
- Approximately 80 such cases are seen annually, though not all are considered problematic.

3. Concerns with Special Topic Courses (2990 and 4990)

- Originally introduced during semester conversion to fill curricular gaps and pilot new coursework.
- These courses often persist across multiple semesters without undergoing formal curriculum approval or peer review.
- In some cases, they are used as substitutions for major-required courses without proper vetting, causing issues with prerequisites and degree progress.
 - Example: A 2990 course offered in place of CE2140 (Statics) in Civil Engineering led to students being ineligible for subsequent courses without petitioning.

4. Administrative and Academic Impacts

- Advisors face increased paperwork and confusion when substitution courses are not properly documented.
- Lack of oversight results in inconsistent learning outcomes, unclear grading expectations, and inequitable unit assignments.
- Some departments reportedly use these courses to reserve classroom space, limiting availability for other scheduled courses and contributing to inefficient space utilization.

5. Proposed Solutions

- Dr. Forward and Aaron DeRosa (Faculty Director for Undergraduate Studies and GE) recommend requiring syllabi submission for all special topic and independent study courses.
- This would ensure:
 - Clear documentation of course expectations and unit justification.
 - Transparency for students regarding grading and learning outcomes.
 - A foundation for equitable academic standards across departments.

6. College-Level Practices

- A senator from the College of Business noted that their department already requires curriculum approval and ECO documentation for 2990 and 4990 courses.
- Dr. Forward acknowledged this as a model of good practice and emphasized the importance of broader implementation across colleges.

7. Next Steps

- Continued dialogue with departments and academic programs to establish consistent policies.

- Exploration of mechanisms to ensure consultation and oversight in course scheduling and substitution practices.
- Consideration of a centralized repository for syllabi to support transparency and accountability.

8. Syllabi Collection and Oversight

- While 2990 and 4990 courses have a generic ECO, they often lack a formal syllabus, raising concerns about transparency and consistency.
- Some colleges, such as CLASS, require syllabi for every course, but this is not a universal practice across all departments.
- Dr. Forward emphasized that the absence of a centralized mechanism to enforce syllabus submission contributes to inequities in course expectations and unit assignments.

9. Operational vs. Educational Concerns

- The issue spans both operational and educational domains:
 - **Operationally**, variable-unit courses complicate scheduling and student registration.
 - **Educationally**, inconsistent expectations and lack of oversight can undermine learning outcomes and student equity.
- Policy 1200 requires syllabi for all courses, but enforcement is inconsistent, especially for courses without formal ECOs.

10. Decentralized Scheduling Culture

- With 42 departments operating independently, scheduling practices vary widely.
- Students often take courses across departments, leading to inconsistent experiences and expectations.
- This decentralization contributes to confusion and administrative burden for students and advisors, especially when dealing with course substitutions.

11. Unit Limitations and Departmental Adjustments

- Departments like Computer Science have seen rapid growth in both faculty and student populations.
- Special topic courses offer early-career faculty a platform to teach specialized content, but overuse has led to concerns.
- A cap of six units for 2990/4990 courses has been implemented to prevent students from accumulating excessive unapproved coursework.
- Computer Science has begun limiting the number of special topic offerings to reduce the need for petitions and manual degree progress reviews.

12. Intent Behind Syllabi Collection

- The proposal to collect syllabi is not punitive but aims to raise awareness and gather data to inform future policy.
- It seeks to ensure that students receive clear expectations and equitable learning experiences.

- The initiative may lead to the development of guidelines and best practices for departments offering special topic and independent study courses.

13. Implementation Challenges

- Many of these courses are scheduled close to the start of the term to meet student demand, complicating efforts to collect syllabi in advance.
- Additional labor may be required from ASCs to manage scheduling and documentation.
- Dr. Forward acknowledged these challenges and emphasized the importance of balancing administrative feasibility with academic integrity.

14. Use of Special Topics as Substitutions

- Some departments have used 2990 and 4990 courses as informal substitutions for major requirements, though they are not official prerequisites listed in the catalog.
- A recent case involved a department attempting to formalize a 2990/4990 course as a major requirement, but the ECO lacked sufficient learning outcomes and was rejected by the curriculum committee.
- Despite this, multiple sections of such courses continue to be offered, raising concerns about consistency and oversight.

15. Lack of Limits on Repeated Offerings

- There is currently no formal policy limiting the number of semesters a 2990 or 4990 course can be offered.
- This practice, rooted in the semester conversion era, has persisted and contributed to a culture of repeated special topic offerings without formal review.
- Dr. Forward suggested that this may need to be addressed to ensure proper vetting and curricular integrity.

16. Policy vs. Practice and Consultation

- The issue raised broader questions about whether a universal policy is appropriate for a problem that may be limited to a few departments.
- Dr. Forward acknowledged that the proposed changes had not yet gone into effect and were intended to be part of the summer 2026 scheduling guide.
- He apologized for the lack of prior consultation and committed to re-engaging stakeholders through shared governance mechanisms, particularly the University Curriculum Committee.

17. Institutional Trust and Shared Governance

- Dr. Forward emphasized the importance of institutional trust, shared governance, and consistent consultation in academic decision-making.
- He reiterated that the proposal to collect syllabi is not a formal policy, but a scheduling practice aligned with existing Policy 1200, which requires syllabi for all courses.
- The goal is to promote transparency and consistency, not to penalize departments.

18. Departmental Autonomy and Concerns

- Faculty expressed concern about the potential for centralized oversight to infringe on departmental autonomy.
- While departments are responsible for maintaining their curriculum, there is hesitation about submitting syllabi for exploratory courses that may be judged against unclear standards.
- The conversation highlighted the need for balance between institutional consistency and academic freedom.

19. Next Steps

- Dr. Forward committed to delaying implementation of the proposed practice and initiating a formal consultation process.
- The University Curriculum Committee will serve as a key venue for continued dialogue and review.
- The administration will work collaboratively with departments to refine expectations and ensure that any changes are well-informed and broadly supported.

20. Clarifying the Intent Behind Syllabi Collection

- Dr. Forward clarified that the intent of collecting syllabi is to ensure compliance with Policy 1200, which requires a syllabus for every course.
- The goal is not to evaluate content or learning outcomes, but to confirm that a syllabus exists and is accessible to students.
- Suggestions were made to route syllabi verification through department chairs or associate deans to maintain departmental autonomy.

21. Concerns About Oversight and Curriculum Ownership

- Faculty expressed concern that syllabi collection could lead to administrative overreach and undermine the exploratory nature of special topic courses.
- Dr. Forward acknowledged the risk of a “slippery slope” and emphasized that any review would be conducted by faculty through the University Curriculum Committee—not by administration.
- The review process would be retrospective, offering guidance for future iterations rather than restricting current offers.

22. Timing and Contractual Limitations

- Faculty raised logistical concerns about submitting syllabi during summer months when many are off contract.
- Dr. Forward clarified that syllabi submitted for fall offerings would be reviewed during the following academic year, allowing departments to maintain their teaching schedules while enabling future consultation.

23. Data Collection and Future Policy Development

- The university currently lacks comprehensive data on special topic courses and their syllabi.
- Collecting syllabi would help build a repository to inform future decision-making and potentially guide policy development.

- The initiative is framed as a step toward transparency and equity, not as a restriction on academic freedom.

24. Final Remarks and Open Questions

- Dr. Forward reiterated that the university does not intend to prevent departments from offering special topic courses.
- The proposed process aims to support shared governance and informed curriculum planning.
- Senator Welke raised a final question regarding how such courses could be taught without approval from a department curriculum committee, underscoring the need for clearer internal protocols.

25. Faculty Examples and Concerns

- Senator Welke shared a personal example of offering a 4990 course to help a student graduate on time, emphasizing the department's culture of supporting student success.
- The course was taught independently without a formal syllabus, raising questions about informal practices and departmental discretion.
- This example highlighted the tension between flexibility for student support and the need for consistent documentation.

26. Review Structure and Referral Process

- Chair Hanink expressed concern that creating a formal review structure for syllabi should go through a referral process and broader consultation.
- Dr. Forward acknowledged the lack of initial consultation and agreed to revisit the proposal, emphasizing the intent was to gather information, not impose oversight.

27. Equity and Visibility Across Departments

- Participants agreed that inconsistencies exist across colleges in how special topic courses are scheduled and documented.
- Concerns were raised about unit discrepancies, especially in courses like competition teams in engineering, which vary in size and workload.
- There was consensus on the need for greater visibility and equity in how these courses are structured and credited.

28. Proposal to Table Syllabi Collection

- Considering the concerns, the group agreed to table the proposal to collect syllabi for special topic courses.
- Dr. Forward suggested exploring alternative mechanisms to address the underlying issues without creating undue administrative burden.

29. Next Steps

- The Executive Committee will continue discussions to identify more effective and equitable solutions.
- Future efforts may focus on:
 - Establishing clearer guidelines for unit assignment and course expectations.
 - Enhancing transparency in scheduling practices.

- Promoting shared governance and consultation in policy development.

30. Consultation and Governance

- Dr. Forward raised the question of which body would be best suited for continued consultation—Academic Affairs or the University Curriculum Committee.
- It was noted that Dr. Aaron DeRosa has been working with the University Curriculum Committee, which regularly reviews non-GE courses and is well-positioned to lead further discussions.
- Participants emphasized the importance of engaging department chairs to understand how special topic courses are used across colleges and to gather a baseline census.

31. Balancing Flexibility and Accountability

- While many departments use 2990 and 4990 courses appropriately, there is concern that standardization may reduce flexibility.
- Faculty acknowledged that flexibility is valued, but accountability and equity across departments are equally important.
- The group agreed that any policy or process should be developed collaboratively to avoid unnecessary resistance and preserve departmental autonomy.

32. Data-Driven Decision Making

- Collecting data on how special topic courses are used, whether for competition teams, exploratory classes, or classroom space management, was identified as a critical step.
- With better visibility, the university can make informed decisions and tailor solutions to specific issues rather than applying blanket policies.

33. Referral Process and Faculty Involvement

- It was recommended that any future policy be developed through a formal referral process led by faculty in partnership with administration.
- This approach would ensure shared governance, transparency, and broader buy-in across departments.

34. Commitment to Institutional Trust

- Dr. Forward reiterated his commitment to shared governance and institutional trust.
- He acknowledged the concerns raised and expressed willingness to withdraw the current proposal in favor of a more collaborative path forward.

35. Action Items

- **Dr. Forward will:**
 - Withdraw the current syllabi collection proposal.
 - Engage Dr. Aaron DeRosa and the University Curriculum Committee to initiate a referral process.
 - Support the development of a structured, faculty-led approach to address inconsistencies and improve accountability in special topic course offerings.

Adjourned @ 4:44 PM