

AAC Meeting Minutes
Academic Assembly Council Meeting – November 6, 2025

Present (via Zoom): Chris Greer, Joy Hollingsworth, Steven Worker, Ashraf El-kereamy, Daniela Bruno, Whitney Brim-DeForest, Julie Finzel, Frank Mitloehner, Kristen Shive, Mark Bolda, Annemiek Schilder, and Rubia Branco Lopes.

- **Committee Reports**

RULES & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (Julie Finzel):

The Welfare & Benefits Committee replaced an inactive member.

Julie will rotate off as chair in June and is discussing succession with the committee.

The committee includes mostly newer advisors

Suggested that for Special Committee for Early Career Academics: call later this year and appointments early next year.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE (Daniela Bruno):

Reviewed professional travel funds usage from the past three years:

- majority of applicants continue to be advisors; increased participation from academic coordinators.
- not all approved applicants used 100% of the award.

Committee is revising the travel award survey to clarify eligibility (e.g., academic titles).

Temporary increase of travel award to \$750 will remain in place for the remainder of the fiscal year.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (Mark Bolda):

Updates to the E-book include clearer guidance for academic coordinators and clarification that tables are encouraged but not required.

Academics may include a Statement of Special Circumstances (e.g., funding disruptions).

Discussion of new tables from Contracts & Grants:

- tables may not fully reflect academic engagement (e.g., unfunded projects, donations).
- academics should be transparent and explain discrepancies in their dossiers.
- the intent is verification and transparency.

Emphasized the importance of serving on ad hoc and peer review committees

WELFARE & BENEFITS COMMITTEE (Steven Worker & Joy Hollingsworth)

One inactive member was replaced.

Planning future webinars (e.g., work–life balance), building on prior consulting and sabbatical sessions.

Past webinar recordings and slides were posted in the AAC website.

No new updates on exit interview data; HR capacity constraints noted.

Discussed promoting the UC wellness reimbursement program more clearly to academics.

MULTIPLE ACADEMIC TITLES REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Annemiek Schilder)

Two new members officially joined the committee.

Committee has not met recently but plans to convene soon.

New email list is probably more inclusive with other academic titles.

UC BERKELEY SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Kristen Shive)

No updates but noted that a letter of concerns from CE specialists off-campus was being drafted to UC ANR.

UC Berkeley signed MOU.

UC DAVIS SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Frank Mitloehner)

New dean in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (UC Davis), and she is very enthusiastic about extension.

Provided more details on the letter cited by Kristen: they are drafting a joint letter to UC ANR leadership outlining concerns CE specialists off-campus (isolation, limited access to students, labs, and academic collaborators). Letter planned to be sent before end of 2025.

UC RIVERSIDE SPECIALIST REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE (Ashraf El-kereamy)

Also mentioned the previous letter; positive feedback from UC Riverside specialists.

Meeting in-person with new dean of College of Natural and Agriculture Sciences (11/21/2025).

Other points discussed:

- Concern was raised that some specialist positions were placed without an request from academics resulting in professional isolation.
- New automated academic email distribution lists are now available and updated nightly from payroll data. Guidelines will be established to prevent overuse.
- Discussion of improving the AAC website and potentially using a blog-style format for announcements.

- Proposal to host short presentations (15 min) by new specialists to improve visibility and connection across ANR.
- Proposal to create a Special Committee for Early Career Academics. Likely eligibility: first 3–4 years in position. Committee membership should reflect diversity in program area, geography, and academic title. Committee would report to AAC; chair or co-chair may attend AAC meetings (non-voting). Committee’s purpose:
 - o identify challenges faced by early career academics.
 - o improve onboarding, mentoring, and access to service opportunities.
 - o provide feedback to AAC (not directly to leadership).

Brent Hales - Associate Vice President - Research and Cooperative Extension

- **Program Areas and Program Teams:** The new Program Area and Program Team structure is functioning well overall. Established teams transitioned smoothly; newer teams are still organizing. Requiring a Plan of Work has helped clarify priorities and expectations. Program Teams have flexibility in defining success and timelines. All Program Teams are expected to meet in 2026. Emphasis was placed on engaging AES faculty and external partners (e.g., NRCS) to broaden participation and capacity.
- **Contracts & Grants tables:** Clarified that the Contracts & Grants tables are intended as a transparency tool. Academics should continue to cite unfunded or donation-supported work with explanation. No external verification beyond narrative explanation is required.
- **Hiring and visas:** UC ANRs unable to sponsor new H-1B visas due to cost. Applicants already authorized to work in the U.S. may still be eligible. HR, not search committees, is responsible for visa verification. Anticipated reduction in international applicant pools. Position applications will state that UC ANR cannot sponsor H-1B visas for new hires.
- Brent confirmed that Janine Woods (from Virginia State University) has been hired as the new Director of County Cooperative Extension.

Glenda Humiston Vice President UC ANR

- **New Director of County Cooperative Extension:** Janine Woods begins January 2. Lynn Schmitt-McQuitty will help with onboarding.
- **SNAP-Ed:** Federal funding ends Sept. 30, 2025; UC ANR will retain affected employees through Nov. 30, 2025.
- **Position Call:** Likely early 2026; approximately 20 positions anticipated, prioritizing advisors (2/3) and specialists (1/3).

- **MOUs with Campuses:** UC Berkeley MOU signed; others pending. Positions may be reassigned if MOUs are not finalized.
- Glenda wants area/county directors to:
 - o Focus on behavioral/operational issues (office presence, vehicle use, timecards, collegiality).
 - o Avoid judging academic performance (which should be left to PRC, ad hoc reviewers).
- Templates for supervisor letters will be revised so they no longer ask CDs/ADs to rate research quality they are not qualified to evaluate.
- Priorities for Academic Assembly Council (AAC):
 - o Strategic Plan Implementation: When the ANR strategic plan is released, AAC should help operationalize the parts relevant to academics and identify where AAC can engage.
 - o Program Teams & Program Areas: Support new and existing program teams and encourage participation.
 - o Merit & Promotion / Early-Career Support: Glenda strongly encouraged AAC to:
 - Help clarify differences between “meets expectations” vs. “exceeds”.
 - Work with Daniel Obrist on training for PRC/ad hoc reviewers.
 - Discourage accelerations.
 - Help develop FAQ-style guidance for recurring gray areas on eBook.