Policy for Administrative Review at UC Merced – *Approved January 20, 2026*

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to establish a comprehensive framework for conducting reviews of administrative services within the University of California, Merced (UC Merced). This policy supersedes the 2012 Policy for Annual Assessment and Periodic Review of Administrative Units, shifting the focus from reviews of organizational units to the review of administrative services, including those that span divisions. Priority areas for review will be those that support the university's core mission of teaching, research, and service. In alignment with UC Merced's mission, the university promotes and celebrates the diversity of all members of its community. Reviews will be conducted in the spirit of inclusive excellence, areas for improvement, identify metrics and measures to improve service quality over time, build staff capacity through their engagement in the process, and follow up through continuous process improvement and service implementation.

Definition and Scope:
Administrative review is defined as a systematic evaluation of administrative services assessing their efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment with institutional goals and priorities. The Policy for Administrative Review at UC Merced applies to all administrative services that are critical to the university's mission and support academic and operational functions, including those that span divisions, those with service-level agreements,[1] and those without service-level agreements (e.g., post-award administration, undergraduate first-year advising, transfer course articulation, lab renovations, hiring/onboarding employees). Administrative reviews include a thorough examination of processes and policies, identification of areas for improvement, creating action plans and metrics for monitoring, and as appropriate, improving service delivery.

Governance and Oversight:
Governance for the administrative review process will be provided by the Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC), with oversight from an executive sponsor for each process under review. The review process will involve collaboration between various governance bodies, including Deans' Council, the Chancellor's Cabinet, representation from Staff Assembly, and the Senate Chair and Vice-Chair, to ensure broad buy-in and stakeholder involvement. PROC will provide oversight to ensure reviews are progressing, and are conducted in a manner that promotes transparency, consistency, and objectivity, including in instances where potential conflicts of interest may arise. Executive sponsors will provide regular updates to PROC on the status of reviews. PROC will ensure that reviews are conducted effectively, approve action plans, and report review outcomes to the Academic Senate.

Roles and Responsibilities:

1. **Executive Sponsor(s):** The individual(s) responsible for oversight of the administrative service to be reviewed. The executive sponsor is responsible for ensuring that the administrative review is initiated, carried out, and brought to close, including completion of the self-study, review activities, and development of action plans. This also includes ensuring the service aligns with university needs and goals and that it adheres to relevant policies and standards, as well as assessing service operations within their area of responsibility. Most typically, the executive sponsor(s) will be a Vice Chancellor or member of Dean's Council.

One executive sponsor will be responsible for each review. For services that span multiple units, the sponsor may ask partners in other units to provide leadership and assume responsibilities in their areas. When appropriate, additional oversight or shared sponsorship may be used to mitigate potential conflicts of interest. At the outset of the review process, the executive sponsor will propose key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets, including metrics for service effectiveness, efficiency, and adherence to policies. During the review, the executive sponsor is

responsible for engaging stakeholders in generating a self-study and, if appropriate, coordinating an external review as part of the administrative review process. Following the review, the executive sponsor is responsible and accountable for ensuring the implementation of any action items and tracking progress on relevant KPIs and metrics.

2. **Stakeholders:** The relevant administrators, staff, and faculty who participate in annual needs assessment (see below), self-study, and providing feedback during the review process.

3. **Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE)/Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Strategy (VPAAS) staff:** Available to facilitate self-study meetings, provide personnel and software support for process mapping, collect metric/measurement data, and create dashboards to track effectiveness of action plan implementation.

Process:

1. **Annual Needs Assessment:**
The PROC co-chairs will convene an annual facilitated joint session of Dean's Council, Chancellor's Cabinet, representation from Staff Assembly, and the Senate Chair and Vice-Chair (who also serves as PROC Co-Chair) will be held to identify areas for review. This process provides a structured opportunity for faculty and staff perspectives to inform the identification of services in need of review. Prospective executive sponsors, the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost and Chief Financial Officer will use recommendations from the facilitated joint session to determine the process to be reviewed, pending the capacity of the Vice Chancellors involved to devote staff time. The needs assessment sessions will also identify metrics/indicators highlighting why a process should be selected for review and ascertain these metrics/indicators will be tracked following review to ensure process improvement is taking place and administrative review is achieving the intended improvement outcomes. Processes/Services that were selected will undergo review at the following years' annual needs assessment workshop to assess progress and inform prioritization.

2. **Self-Study:**
The executive sponsor is responsible for preparing a self-study of the service(s) under review. The self-study serves as the primary document of the review and should: outline the history and current structure of the service, address KPIs and targets identified by the executive sponsor at the outset of the review, engage stakeholders in an analyses of the effectiveness of the service under review (e.g. success and areas for improvement), and propose actions to improve outcomes. Well-functioning elements of the process will be recognized and featured in discussions of opportunities for improvement. The self-study is often prepared by the executive sponsor's designee in collaboration with stakeholders. The executive sponsor is encouraged to discuss methods, templates, examples, and guidelines with the PROC Co-Chairs prior to embarking on the self-study. To promote consistency and reduce administrative burden, PROC, in collaboration with CIE, may develop and provide templates, examples, or reporting formats to guide the preparation of self-studies and related review materials.

3. **External Review (if applicable):**
When necessary, the executive sponsor may engage external consultants or professional organizations to provide additional insight into the service under review. This may include engaging external consultants or professional organizations. In planning the review, the executive sponsor will evaluate, in consultation with the Provost, whether external review is

necessary to provide additional insight into the service under review. External review may be used to enhance objectivity for complex, cross-cutting, or specialized services. Support from the Center of Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) will **support** data collection and metrics definition/refinement. This external review will include interviews with stakeholders and generate a report outlining findings and recommendations. The report will highlight the methods used during the site visit to assess strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, along with recommendations for service improvements. An external review team may be composed of individuals/consultants or subject matter experts from other UCs, other universities, national associations, or other relevant entities. Occasionally, subject matter experts internal to UC Merced may serve as external review team members.

4.   **Action Plans and Follow-Through:**
After completing the self-study and/or external review, the executive sponsor(s) will review the recommendations with service stakeholders (i.e., staff executing the process, internal clients) and develop an action plan. The plan should identify KPIs and target metrics/measures, steps to be taken to achieve those targets/metrics, and milestones and timelines. The executive sponsor(s) and their teams will submit action plans for PROC to review for completeness. PROC may return action plans that do not include all required elements to the executive sponsor for revision. Otherwise, the review will be closed, and implementation will be tracked through annual updates and metrics/measures using dashboards developed by IRDS.

5.   **Annual Reporting and Progress Updates:**
Executive sponsors will submit annual progress reports to PROC at the start of the academic year (September/October) until the targeted metrics/measures are achieved. This ensures that the review process remains accountable and transparent. Annually, updates on prior years' active reviews will be prepared and supported by CIE. The progress reports will include KPI's, metrics/measures, progress, and, if needed, the executive sponsor's plan for ongoing continuous improvement. Executive sponsors will also share review outcomes, including key findings and action items, with stakeholders involved in the review process to support transparency, accountability, and shared understanding of progress. At least one PROC meeting per year will be dedicated to administrative review and the tracking of administrative review items, allowing Senate constituents to partake in discussions and share perspectives.

Resources and Support Structures:

The executive sponsor will be responsible for supporting the review process with necessary resources, including staffing, workshops and, as needed, external consultants. The executive sponsor's unit is responsible for project funding, including travel and consultation fees for external reviewers, as applicable. For reviews of cross-cutting services, they may seek contributions from other units.

Measures and Metrics:

The success of an individual review will be measured through both qualitative and quantitative data. As noted in #1 above, the executive sponsor will propose key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets at the outset of the review process that will include metrics/measures for service effectiveness and efficiency, and adherence to institutional policies. These metrics will be tracked over time using dashboards created by CIE/IRDS to assess the progress ofimprovements.

Measures for Policy Effectiveness and Review Process Oversight:

Effectiveness of the policy will be determined by whether the identification/prioritization process happens annually, whether reviews are carried out, whether reviews result in action plans as per policy,

and whether action plans are implemented and lead to improvement in metrics overtime. PROC will obtain feedback on whether the policy is meeting the stated goals at the annual needs assessment meeting, and as appropriate, may develop a rubric articulating the expectations for the review process to guide units in preparing self-studies, action plans, and progress reports, and to track overall effectiveness. This policy will be reviewed for possible necessary revisions by PROC after at least three reviews are completed.