

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)  
ANNUAL REPORT  
AY 2024-2025**

**To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:**

In AY 2024-2025, FWAF held a total of 8 regularly scheduled meetings and one special meeting, as well as conducted some business via email with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's [Senate Bylaw II.IV.6](#).

**Areas of Focus**

*1. Sponsored Projects Office (SPO)*

On September 24, 2024, Chair Beaster-Jones met with CoR Chair Ye, Executive Director of Research Administration Sun, Associate Director of Research Administration Alvarez, Senate Executive Director Paul, and CoR Analyst Takhar to discuss concerns related to the grant proposal awarding process. Chair Beaster-Jones provided an update to FWAF members at their October 10, 2024 meeting. At a subsequent meeting on November 22, 2024, Chair Beaster-Jones met with Senate Committee Chairs, School Executive Committee Chairs, and Senate Executive Director Paul to further discuss these issues and shared an update at the December 5 FWAF meeting.

*2. Splitting the Committee*

On November 18, 2024, FWAF (and DivCo) endorsed a proposal to split the committee into two separate committees: The Committee on Faculty Welfare (CFW) and the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF). This will allow each committee to focus on a more specialized set of tasks. In particular, academic freedom issues have not received the time and attention that they need. Members of FWAF proposed the addition of a graduate student in the membership of the new Committee on Academic Freedom, and this change automatically resulted in the need to expand sections II. III.6 and II. IV.1 of the Divisional Bylaws.

On April 4, 2025, Voting members of FWAF held a special meeting where they voted and unanimously approved the proposed revisions to the current FWAF Bylaws to reflect the formal establishment of a distinct Faculty Welfare Committee, the adoption of newly proposed Bylaws for the creation of a separate Academic Freedom Committee, and the proposed revisions to Titles II.III.6 and II.IV.1 of the Divisional Bylaws. All three votes passed with a tally of 8 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, underscoring FWAF's strong support for this restructuring.

The Bylaws for each committee were voted on and approved at the May 7, 2025 Meeting of the Division, effective June 17, 2025.

*3. Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship*

The FWAF awards subcommittee reviewed the nominations for the annual Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship and selected a recipient to receive the award. The AY 24-25 Award recipients are available [here](#).

## **Systemwide Committee Updates**

### *University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW)*

FWAF Chair Jason Beaster-Jones was the UC Merced representative to UCFW, and kept FWAF members informed of the major items of discussion this academic year:

- The possibility of up to three labor strikes involving graduate students and Unit 18 employees, such as lecturers and other academic staff.
- The potential systemwide shift from the quarter to the semester system, which would significantly affect the eight UC campuses currently operating on the quarter calendar.
- Responses to the spring protests, including disciplinary actions on some campuses that have raised concerns about fairness and the potential misuse of disciplinary processes.
- The pause of the UC Mortgage Origination Program (MOP) on several campuses due to overwhelming demand. This program helps employees obtain low-cost mortgages.
- The practice of UC campuses purchasing military-grade weapons for the University of California Police Department (UCPD). UCPD explained that the purchases were for less-lethal options, intended for specific circumstances, and that the budget request for these items had been made prior to the spring protests. This timing seemed to raise concerns but was described as coincidental.
- Rising healthcare premiums and the growing financial burden on employees.
- Ongoing concerns regarding UC's default pension plan, particularly for employees under the 2013 and 2017 plans. The 403b savings plan may be more beneficial, and there is growing frustration over UC's lack of communication and advertising.
- Difficulty in recruiting faculty for Senate service, as it lacks tangible benefits.
- The shortage of UC Care Tier 1 providers in Merced.
- California legislative bills, AB 810 and SB 791, which are focused on requiring background checks for hires to ensure they have no history of sexual harassment or violence. However, there are complications with international faculty whose institutions may not provide a response or the necessary information.
- Extensive commentary on UCM's implementation of a policy on expressive activities, in the context of different campuses taking varied approaches.
- Ongoing budget challenges, including the impact of the recent LA fires and reduced funding allocation by the California Legislature
- Nationwide student visa revocations impacted hundreds across UC, including at least three UC Merced graduate students. With limited legal recourse, affected students were forced to leave the U.S. A systemwide Rapid Response Task Force was established to address urgent federal policy changes.
- In collaboration with the Systemwide Senate, the Regents devised a revised mechanism for faculty discipline that still involves the Privilege and Tenure (P&T) Committees.
- The noticeable decline in both the number of incoming grants and the number of National Institutes of Health (NIH) solicitations due to the current federal funding situation.

### *University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF)*

FWAF Member Jennifer Lu represented FWAF on UCAF and updated FWAF members on the following major topics of discussion:

- The issue of administrative salaries being substantially higher than faculty salaries.
- Diversity and inclusion in merit and promotion cases.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) statements in faculty hiring, with the emphasis that

faculty, not administrators, should determine how to present their contributions, in alignment with academic freedom and departmental context.

- A UC Santa Cruz faculty initiative to create a pamphlet aimed at educating UC faculty on academic freedom, faculty welfare, and issues related to privilege & tenure.

### **Consultation**

FWAF consulted with the following campus constituents:

- VPAP Tom Hansford - Assembly Bill 810 and Senate Bill 791.
- CoR Chair Tao Ye, Executive Director of Research Administration Jue Sun, and Associate Director of Research Administration Fernando Alvarez – Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) and grant proposal awarding.
- AVC of Public Safety and Chief of Police, Protective Services Chou Her – the purchase of military-grade weapons.
- Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) Director Danielle Waite – ECEC issues related to faculty who have been placed on the waitlist for several years, as well as utilization of ECEC classrooms, etc.
- UC Merced Faculty Association representative Lindsay Crawford - advocacy efforts, including state-level lobbying for increased funding, as well as representing faculty interests, particularly labor rights and employment issues.

### **Review Items**

FWAF reviewed and offered comments on the following systemwide review items:

- Policy on Vaccination Programs (9/20)
- Presidential Policy on the Use of Animals in Research, Teaching, and Testing (1/28)
- Proposed Revisions to APM 675 – Veterinary Medicine Salary Administration (2/11)
- Proposed Revisions to APM 036 – Employment (2/24)
- Proposed Amendments to APM 500-Recruitment (4/10)
- Systemwide Academic Calendar Workgroup Draft Report (4/16)

FWAF reviewed and offered comments on the following campus wide review items:

- MAPP Revisions (10/25)
- Interim Policy on Expressive Activities and Assembly: Protests, Demonstrations, Non-University Speakers and Signage on Campus and in University Facilities (11/18)
- Interim Policy on Consensual Relationships (2/24)
- Policy on Assurance of Safety Standards (3/19)
- Interim Policy on Withdrawal of Consent to Remain on University Property (4/16)

### *Other*

- FWAF offered comments on EDI's proposal regarding hate speech and bias in student evaluations (11/18)

*Respectfully submitted,*

### **FWAF Members:**

Jayson Beaster-Jones; Chair, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts; UCFW representative

Yanbao Ma; Vice Chair, School of Engineering  
Kinjal Dasbiswas; School of Natural Sciences  
Amelia Farid; School of Natural Sciences  
Jennifer Lu; School of Engineering; UCAF representative  
Kit Myers; School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts  
Beth Nowadnick; School of Engineering  
Jack Vevea; School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

**Ex officio, non-voting member:**

Tom Hansford, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel

**Staff:**

Fatima Paul, Senate Executive Director  
Melanie Snyder, Senior Senate Analyst  
Petra Martins, Senate Analyst