



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND ARTS  
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Dear Colleagues,

As Chair of the UC Merced Academic Senate, I am delighted to welcome both the new and the returning faculty to what we hope will be a productive academic year 2015-2016. First, I would like to thank all my colleagues who served on Senate Committees last academic year. I also want to thank former senate chair Jian-Qiao Sun for his leadership, dedication, and enthusiasm. His efforts toward strengthening shared governance and clarifying governance processes in our Schools and Graduate Groups has helped create a foundation on which to build this year. This academic year, we hope to continue improving the communication among the members of the Academic Senate, the campus administration, and the Schools Executive Committees, by fostering a culture of mutual respect and open exchange. Keeping in mind the **2020 Project**, which will provide a significant amount of new teaching and research facilities, housing, athletics and support space for UC Merced, I am very much looking forward to further collaboration with Provost/EVC Tom Peterson and Chancellor Dorothy Leland to consolidate a vibrant, collaborative and sustainable campus for 10,000 students.

As a legislative body run by the faculty, the Academic Senate will not only make decisions and recommendations on academic matters but will also advise the administration on faculty appointments and promotions as well as on budget, space, and financial planning. Thus, it is a venue through which the faculty can make sure that shared governance continues to be observed. By sharing the management and government of the University, UC Merced's faculty will have the opportunity and responsibility to build an even better campus for our 6000 plus students. For this reason, the Senate leadership thanks all the colleagues who have agreed to serve on Committees and encourages others to follow in their footsteps in the upcoming years.

My priority this year includes all matters concerning the restructure of General Education. Therefore, I will work closely with the General Education Subcommittee, the Undergraduate Council and Vice Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Education Elizabeth Whitt in order to help provide a structure to support the efforts that will be invested in reshaping our General Education program.

As a personal goal, I would like to work closely with the Education Abroad Program, making sure all courses taken abroad by our students are endorsed. I am going to be the first UCEAP Director coming from Merced during 2016-2018 (Chile-Argentina), so I will spend most of my non-research, non-Senate time encouraging UCM students to study abroad. I am very much interested in showing the importance of education abroad to students in the Schools of Natural Science and Engineering.

With ongoing open dialogue with our administrative leadership, the Academic Senate will help develop a new strategic plan for our campus, one of the keys to our continued success and growth as a research university. We will try to increase our graduate student recruitment (with an adequate number of advisers) as we aim for 530 faculty, 1,000 graduate students, and 9,000 undergraduates by 2020. In order to achieve this goal, our campus will have to rebalance its tenured and tenure-track faculty to lecturers' ratio. The Academic Senate will also try to find solutions to address our well-known space limitations. Certainly, with the acquisition of new buildings in downtown Merced, Chancellor Leland and her team are consolidating the relocation of administrative personnel off campus in order to create a higher density and a smaller footprint for our campus that will help reduce the cost of expanding infrastructure. At the same time, Chancellor Leland is pitching an innovative strategy to fund the expansion. She wants the private sector to finance, design, build and even operate the new buildings, and lease them to the campus, which will help offset their cost over time.

Provost Peterson has proposed a six-year ladder-rank faculty hiring plan detailing the percentage of hires placed into six foundational and strategic areas:

- Towards a Sustainable Planet
- Computational Science and Data Analytics
- Chemical and Biological Materials and Matter
- Entrepreneurship and Management
- Human Health Science
- Inequality, Power and Social Justice

We will continue our work with Dr. Peterson on the following areas:

- School-defined priorities for recruiting in foundational areas
- Institutional priorities for allocating positions across the six signature themes
- Post-recruitment success in achieving the hiring objectives of the previous year, and potential needs for adjustments to the plan in future years.

I would like to welcome Dr. Jill Robbins, chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas at Austin, as our next dean of the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. She succeeds Mark Aldenderfer, who is returning to the professoriate after five and a half years as SSHA's senior administrative officer. Dr. Robbins will begin full-time service in that capacity on January 1, 2016.

With the help of our interim Senate Director, Fatima Paul, and her outstanding team, we will try our best to serve the University by representing your interests and by communicating your concerns, always making sure that decision-making processes are transparent. At the same time, we will welcome your participation, input, and feedback in Senate surveys and requests. The engaged participation of our faculty will lead our campus in the right direction, serving the academic mission of the University of California. More importantly, it will help us serve our students. We will continue to recognize and celebrate diversity. As you know, Merced is the most diverse campus in the University of California, with a student population that is 45.6% Hispanic, 25.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 14.1% White, 5.7% African-American, 1.0% Native American, and 1.0% International/Non Resident. Nearly 60% of our undergraduates are first-generation college students.

In these and all our endeavors, it is our goal to make sure that the Academic Senate represents the voice of the faculty in our campus. We therefore hope that you feel confident in communicating your concerns to your respective School Executive Committee, the Chairs and members of the Senate's [Standing Committees](#), or directly to me. I will hold office hours in the Senate Office four times a week

in the afternoon. For more information on Senate activities, please visit the [Academic Senate website](#). Please feel free to give us feedback ([senatechair@ucmerced.edu](mailto:senatechair@ucmerced.edu)) on ways to improve our communication and efficiency. It is with this spirit of shared governance and a culture of dialogue that the Senate and Administrative leaderships can join efforts toward achieving one common goal: the success of our students and our campus, as a higher education institution.

Fiat Lux,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cristián H. Ricci', written in a cursive style.

Cristián H. Ricci, Chair

Merced Division of the Academic Senate

Cc: Division Council