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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to give you an update on the Senate's work. First of all, I'd like to thank everyone who has served on Senate committees this year. Most of what's interesting about UC Merced and what makes us a university passes through the Senate at some point. The faculty have an opportunity to shape a growing university that is available nowhere else. You will soon receive a survey from the Committee on Committees (Tom Hansford, Chair) asking about your areas of interest (e.g., research, general education, personnel) so that when you are asked to serve on Senate committees, there will be a closer match to your interests. I hope you will complete this survey, and indeed, I hope you will say yes when are asked to participate in the Senate's work next year, so that the faculty are broadly represented.

The Senate is heavily involved in consultation with the Administration on budget issues. For example, on February 11 I will be traveling with Chancellor Kang, EVC/Provost Alley, and Vice Chancellor for Administration Miller to meet President Yudof in Oakland. The topic for discussion will be Merced's budget for next year. It will be a tough financial year for the UC system, but our successes at Merced are recognized by the UC Office of the President and we do have their support.

Recently, Vice Provost for Academic Planning Hans Bjornsson gave a presentation to CAPRA (Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation; Shawn Kantor, Chair) on school instructional budgets. Instructional budgets pay for lecturers, TAs, and teaching laboratory needs. The purpose of the presentation was to compare the instructional budgets for the three schools: Engineering, Natural Sciences, and SSHA. Data on discipline-specific costs from other institutions were used to evaluate the adequacy of each school's instructional budget. While such estimates are necessarily approximate, the conclusion was that the current distribution of campus instructional funds is roughly appropriate for each school's instructional needs. In other words, no school is advantaged or disadvantaged relative to the others. However, it is a separate matter how schools spend their instructional budgets. This is a matter for the Deans, hopefully in close consultation with school faculty, who have expertise on pedagogy and needs of graduate students. One of my goals as Senate Chair this year is to promote shared governance at the school level. I hope that school executive committees and curriculum committees will raise the issue of how each school optimizes the use of its instructional budget.

I'd like to mention the upcoming February 15 deadline for two important competitions. One is to propose faculty lines as Strategic Investment Hires, in one of five research themes identified in the campus's Strategic Academic Vision. These proposals will first be reviewed by ad hoc committees named by our own Committee on Committees, with rankings passed on the Administration, who will make final decisions. The other is the competition for faculty research awards <<http://senate.ucmerced.edu/sites/senate/files/public/2011-2012GRCCallforProposals.pdf>>, in which faculty may apply for up to \$5000 in research funds, to be awarded by the Graduate and Research Council (Chris Kello, Chair).

Finally, I am pleased to report that the Senate has completed its review of the four proposed Bylaw 55 units in SSHA. The Senate recommended approval to the Administration, which would take the final steps in the review process.

In conclusion, please feel free to contact me or any member of DivCo to raise issues of importance.

Sincerely,



Evan Heit, Chair
Merced Division of the Academic Senate
<http://senate.ucmerced.edu/>

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