

Dear Colleagues,

As we launch the new Senate website, I want to share the comments I made at the Assembly spring meeting. They are a good summary of the highlights of the past academic year and an indicator of some of the challenges for the next year. It has been an honor to serve as the Senate Chair for the past two academic years, but I am also happy to pass the baton to Evan Heit.

Sincerely,

Martha Conklin

**Comments Spring 2010 Merced Division Assembly Meeting**

1. **Welcome everyone.** And thank all for committee service. (40 faculty members serve on senate committees – one third of the faculty – surprisingly not that different than on other UC campuses). We realize we cannot have Merced representatives on all system committees, so our strategy has been to focus on the most important committees.
2. **Introductions.** I would like to introduce Dr. Susan Sims, our new Senate Executive Director. She joined Merced March 1. There is a reception immediately after this meeting to officially welcome her. I also want to acknowledge the promotions of Fatima Paul and Simrin Tahkar. They worked tirelessly, helping to run the senate office until a replacement for Nancy Clarke was found. I also want to congratulate Evan Heit, he will be your faculty chair for 2010-2011. Over the short time Susan has been here, we streamlined senate processes and one of our goals is to increase the visibility and status of the senate office.
3. **2010-2011 Budget.** We all know about the shortfalls in the UC budget. Furloughs and increased student fees were the short-term solution this year. President Yudof is terminating the furlough program this summer. To make up for any new budget shortfalls next fiscal year, he is going to distribute cuts to campuses and let the campuses decide how to make up the shortfall. We will know more once the budget is passed. Meanwhile the liability of the UC retirement system makes the Merced budget shortfalls seem small. Proposals to reduce the pension funds liability will be made by the end of the summer—please respond to any surveys. Already you will note that UC has restarted contributions to the retirement plan on your behalf as of April 15.
4. **Merced funding.** Due to the California financial crisis, the number of state-funded UC student numbers have been frozen. For Merced, the Regents request funds for 2000 student ftes, by the fall of 2010 we will be 100% overenrolled. UCOP has made up the shortfall by taxing other campuses. For the next three years they have offered to provide \$6m, \$12m and \$18m, sequentially, to cover our student growth. They are asking for state funding/bonding to build an additional \$40m "academic building" to provide classrooms in the 90 to 200 student size range, faculty and staff offices and research space to house graduate

students. If the state falls through, UCOP will provide us with \$20m to build a smaller building. DivCo is working with the administration on determining how many faculty can be hired to teach these additional students. Currently our student to ladder ranked faculty ratio is 30:1 and it projected to rise to 35:1 (a historic high for UC). Hiring more faculty is a DivCo priority. We see this is as the essence of building a UC quality campus.

5. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** The funds from OP do not come without strings. President Yudof has asked the campus to develop the financial implications for 3 scenarios after the 3-year period: no student growth, 300 per year and 600 per year. He has also asked us to inform him how we plan to grow (i.e. how we will "grow" student enrollment in the "less expensive" majors). UCOP would like me to sign the MOU as a representative of the faculty. I have indicated that cannot happen without faculty buy-in.
6. **Commission on the Future (COF).** Preliminary recommendations have been made and all divisions have been asked to comment before the end of May. They have been distributed to the standing committees and to the school chairs, along with a recommended template for responses. These are recommendations that will shape the future UC (i.e., "improving faculty efficiency", coming up with alternative ways to pay faculty salaries). Please take the time to review and comment. Up to this date, UC has thrived by being in a constant growth mode. It is clear that is not sustainable, but we need to work out how Merced will grow in this time of limited resources. Merced division is on record about being opposed to differential campus fees.
7. **Academics.** We have initiated our first program review this year, Applied Mathematics. We have instituted SACA, a senate-administrative committee on assessment co-chaired by Evan Heit and Dean Pallavicini to evaluate support for assessment. Currently LOA (learning outcome assessments) has fallen on the laps of the FAO (faculty assessment officer) with no additional support. We need these reports as the WASC steering committee prepares the educational effectiveness report for WASC, due this summer.
8. **Shared governance.** DivCo and its standing committees have worked hard this year to have more consistent procedures. The faculty (you) are on the verge of voting on a more comprehensive set of bylaws and DivCo is on launching a new website with improved functionality so that Senate Office can easily post new information. In December I noted that although shared governance is working well for many aspects of the academic mission of the university, but we still needed improvement in budget consultation. That is still true, the budget committee has not met yet this year (although it is scheduled to meet later this month). There are outstanding issues where we have made little progress (tracking of research grants, fate of ICR, budget committee review of instructional budgets), I am sure the next chair will continue to work for transparency on those issues. I have been assured that timely tracking of research grants is a high priority. We have not yet met with the administration on the MOU. DivCo has been diligent on following up with formal consultation to the EVC (i.e., written communications).

9. **Meeting agenda.** The main topics of the meeting today are proposed bylaw changes and the COF recommendations. We will keep you posted on the budget and MOU news. But first we will hear other remarks and the standing committee yearly reports.