

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • MERCED • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

OFFICE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE, MERCED DIVISION  
ROBIN DELUGAN, CHAIR  
[senatechair@ucmerced.edu](mailto:senatechair@ucmerced.edu)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED  
5200 NORTH LAKE ROAD  
MERCED, CA 95343

**August 19, 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

As the incoming Chair of the UC Merced Academic Senate, let me welcome you to the new school year! Warm greetings to returning colleagues and to our new faculty members. For those who may be new to the UC Merced community, the Academic Senate is a legislative body run by faculty that makes decisions on academic matters and also advises the administration on faculty appointments and promotions, budget and space planning, approves curriculum, advises on student admissions, and advocates for faculty welfare, academic freedom, diversity, and equity. It is a forum through which the faculty make sure that shared governance with administration is observed.

Before addressing the upcoming year, a special thank-you to last year's Senate Chair Tom Hansford for his excellent leadership during extraordinary conditions, as well as recognition of the herculean efforts of the Senate Committees and Divisional Council (the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate). Last spring, with the startling arrival of the coronavirus, our Senate immediately sprang into action: emergency instructional policies were developed by Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council; the Committee on Academic Personnel [acknowledged faculty concerns](#) that the pandemic was affecting their research and teaching; the Committee on Research worked with campus leadership and responded to state and county Public Health mandates to halt research and to create a process for its relaunch; Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom raised awareness of the extra challenges posed by the virus for faculty family caretakers, as well as the sudden stresses of teaching online and working from remote locations. The Academic Senate worked alongside administration to adapt to a new reality, and there was continued coordination with the system-wide UC Academic Senate. Our Senate committees and leadership were outstanding! Thank you!

Concurrent with the pandemic was the nation's outrage over the police killings of yet more Black Americans. As we collectively reached a boiling point, the foundational racism from which the United States was born is being confronted in a movement that brings more of us together to demand that we address anti-black racism and structural racism. UC Merced students, staff, and faculty reminded us that changes are also needed here on campus and in our community. Protests and solidarity, anguish and hope...we usher in a transformative moment that speaks to our highest values and ideals. In response, new and still-emerging campus actions are taking place. This year the Academic Senate is a partner with the campus-wide Valuing Black Lives Task Force, charged by the Chancellor and the EVC/Provost to make

recommendations about additional concrete steps to address persistent structural racism within our institution. In addition, with attention to the Academic Senate's realm of responsibilities, an action plan is tasking members of the Academic Senate to identify areas for improvement.

These two events, COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement, continue to influence us. The Academic Senate has a responsibility to help lead our campus through these historic times, and I invite you to engage with us so that we can best represent the voice and concerns of the faculty.

As Chair, my priorities for the Senate this year are to aid our campus as we navigate through the current health crisis, recognizing that our people's well-being is of primary concern; we will demonstrate that we value Black lives and identify barriers that reproduce structural racism; we'll reinforce our goal of achieving R1 status; and we'll advance the ongoing strategic academic planning that will chart our ambitions. In addition, I want to promote Senate service. The University of California's system of shared governance is a unique system that contributes to our world-class excellence. Through Senate service, faculty have the privilege of shaping the future of the university. I encourage you to learn more about the Academic Senate and am happy to share my perspective on the value and importance of Senate service. The Academic Senate website (<https://senate.ucmerced.edu>) provides much helpful information, including regular updates on matters [being addressed by the Senate](#) and monthly Senate newsletters. We will also be attentive to outgoing Chair Hansford's encouragement that we work on strengthening the Senate's relationship with the Regents and making the case for the value of faculty contributions to governance.

On July 1 the Senate welcomed our new Chancellor, Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz. It was gratifying to hear Chancellor Muñoz reaffirm commitments to the health and well-being of our campus community during this pandemic, and to re-launching faculty research so that we can progress with our shared goal of achieving R1 status. In the spirit of strengthening shared governance at UC Merced, the Academic Senate will continue to work closely with Chancellor Muñoz, Provost Camfield and campus leadership.

In closing, these are challenging times. Yet, I firmly believe that challenges beget opportunities. As we pursue our teaching, research, and service, we will inspire and be inspired. Problems will be confronted and resolved; goals will be advanced. Together we will demonstrate the excellence of the faculty of the University of California, Merced and we will continue to build community. I hope that you will feel confident in communicating your concerns to your School's Executive Committee, the Chairs and members of the Senate's Standing Committees, the Divisional Council's Vice Chair, LeRoy Westerling, or me. We want to hear from you. Please feel free to reach out to me at [senatechair@ucmerced.edu](mailto:senatechair@ucmerced.edu).

Wishing you a healthy and successful new academic year.

Robin Maria DeLugan  
Chair, Merced Division of the Academic Senate