

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

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OFFICE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE  
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Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are all enjoying the summer, resting and finding time to think about your research! The Senate has just sent off the last major memos for the year, so we're about to slow down and think about the bigger picture. I thought I'd take this opportunity to report on the highlights of the work your colleagues have undertaken this year.

In fall, the Senate approved a new degree title, the Master of Management, and a new master's program Management of Innovation, Sustainability, and Technology (MIST), which is currently under review at CCGA. If approved, it will become our first Master's program under the PDST program (Professional Degree-Supplemental Tuition).

This spring, Undergraduate Council (UGC) approved, and Divisional Council (DivCo) endorsed, a new major, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, an interdisciplinary program across SSHA. We also approved a minor in World Heritage, and an Honors program in English.

In May, DivCo also approved five new bylaw units in Engineering, Bioengineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Management of Complex Systems, Mechanical Engineering, Materials Science and Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering. The School of Engineering is calling these departments, making this another step in our development as a campus.

Last in time, but not least in significance or contentiousness, UGC approved, and DivCo endorsed, the proposal for a new General Education Program. This followed a close faculty vote. The General Education Subcommittee (GESC), UGC and DivCo are all aware of the anxieties, particularly relating to resources, regarding the implementation of this program. As a result, in [DivCo's transmittal memo](#) to Dean Whitt, we outlined the need for clear governance, collaboration with units, and academic planning to ensure programs have the necessary resources to contribute to the program. GESC is already planning to work with programs in this way, and to streamline the process for approving courses that meet new GE requirements. UGC and GESC have also begun consulting with the Office of Undergraduate Education and the Division of Student Affairs to ensure that the administrative side of things runs smoothly.

In addition to all these items, various committees reviewed a wide range of both campus and system proposals, on subjects from lab safety to open access publication to the Peer Review Committee to be used in discipline cases related to Sexual Violence/Sexual Harassment. Some of these, like the Peer Review Committee, are local solutions to systemwide policies.

Senate faculty were also appointed to the various teams involved in [workforce planning](#). In that process, faculty have played a key role in thinking about what is important to us, and how to meet our central needs in a resource poor environment.

Finally, this spring the Senate Office underwent Periodic Review. The site visit and [the report](#) (which we have just received) helped us reflect both on shared governance in general and the nitty gritty of Senate practice. We will be working over the summer with the administration on how best to implement the recommendations on shared governance, and to revise Senate Office practice in ways to simplify our work.

In my welcome letter last September, I noted that my general goal for the year was, “to make sure that the faculty, through the academic Senate, are involved as appropriate in the many decisions that will shape the University in the years to come. And to make sure that everyone knows what we’re doing.” We have done well, I think, in the first area, though there are still times when consultation comes too late. We haven’t done as well at the second: everyone on campus is stretched thin, and communication is often the thing that gets dropped.

Implicit in this, and in the Senate Office review, is a reminder that shared governance is hard, and it takes time. Those of us who argue for the importance of shared governance, however, believe that shared governance – which at its best brings the faculty in as policies and programs are being developed, not at the end – leads to stronger and more resilient institutions, and better education for our students. In reviews of proposals, I learn from the comments of my colleagues, who often see things that I hadn’t noticed. As a historian, I know that different accounts of events are helpful because different observers see different things; the same is true for policy.

Looking forward to next year, several committees which reviewed the General Education proposal mentioned the need for academic planning as we hire the last 100 or so faculty for 2020. Vice Chair Schnier and I will be discussing this with members of the administration over the summer. This process will only work through shared governance: it cannot be done either by the Senate or the Administration on its own.

Finally, I’d like to offer thanks: to all the members of DivCo for their diligent work this year, and all those who served on Senate committees, including School Executive Committees. Every item I have noted here – and many others that I have not listed separately – has engaged faculty in work that leads to a proposal, and many others in the process of review. I want to give special thanks to Vice Chair Schnier, who has been an outstanding partner in the Senate’s work; and to the staff of the Senate Office: Laura Martin, our Executive Director, Fatima Paul, the Associate Director, and Simrin Takhar, Principal Analyst.

Fiat Lux,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Amussen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Susan Amussen, Chair  
Merced Division of the Academic Senate

