

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM  
(FWAF) ANNUAL REPORT  
AY 2021-2022**

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

In AY 2021-2022, FWAF held a total of 8 regularly scheduled meetings in order to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's Senate Bylaw [II.IV.6](#).

**Areas of Focus**

*Post-Pandemic Faculty Welfare Concerns*

FWAF held several discussions on this subject. The committee was assured that the EVC/Provost and Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAP) are aware of the concerns, and both expressed confidence that existing policies provide sufficient coverage for extenuating circumstances beyond the faculty's control. However, the FWAF chair and members attended department level meetings in fall 2021 to collect feedback from faculty on COVID-related, and other, faculty welfare issues including the consideration of extenuating circumstances in merit and promotion.

Three main concerns emerged from those departmental meetings between FWAF members and faculty:

- Concerns about child-care issues, including the shortened hours and reduced services of the ECEC.
- Concerns about how the pandemic will affect faculty's advancements and promotions, specifically, requests to stop the clock and getting their research back on track. Faculty also spoke to FWAF members about how the Oracle financial system has hindered their research.
- Concerns about online instruction. While faculty had the option of not including student evaluations from a particular semester early in the pandemic, faculty are still concerned.

FWAF consulted with the CAP chair in fall 2021. CAP is aware of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty's performance and is working on how to address Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) which has been discussed at UCFW. In the last academic year, a campus working group produced guidelines ("Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts on Faculty Working group Preliminary Report") that are posted on the APO website. In addition, in consultation with the VPAP and APO, CAP drafted an FAQ document which was issued to department chairs and Divisional Council. The FAQ document was also shared with FWAF members.

After meeting with faculty members and consulting with the CAP chair, FWAF members agreed on the following:

- systemwide information and guidance on the impacts of the pandemic on faculty advancement and promotion should be more widely shared

- faculty need guidance on how to articulate their personal challenges in their self-statements and if they choose not to include such information, then review committees and department chairs should be made aware of the challenges through a different mechanism

In spring 2022, FWAF agreed to wait for the systemwide report on mitigating COVID-19 pandemic impacts. Once the report is issued UC-wide, FWAF Chair Jennings will draft an endorsement memo from FWAF for review and approval by committee members. In that memo, he will recommend that UC Merced distribute the report broadly.

### *Family-Friendly Campus Policies*

A major concern for FWAF in AY 21-22 was the lack of information about the limited operation of the ECEC and lack of clarity on why outsourcing was considered (on hold for two years).

FWAF met with the Chancellor and Interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in fall 2021 and provided a presentation at that meeting about the problems caused by the ECEC closure during the pandemic; lack of leadership, oversight and accountability with respect to the ECEC; lack of clarity and communication; and the lack of perceived value of the ECEC as a public good. FWAF also emphasized that the limited availability of childcare affects faculty retention and hinders UC Merced's goal of becoming an R1 institution. FWAF did not receive feedback from the administration.

In spring 2022, FWAF agreed it would be prudent to frame the subject as a larger concern about family-friendly policies in general rather than confine the issue to just the ECEC. FWAF formed a subcommittee on family-friendly policies and this subcommittee met twice in spring 2022 to draft an action plan. The draft action plan articulates the various issues to be addressed including sufficient care options for family members of all ages, COVID-related concerns including barriers to productivity, and implications for advancement and tenure. The draft action plan also suggests specific actions to be taken including mapping out care availability in Merced, researching the offerings of Bright Horizons, advocating for the formation of a campuswide family-friendly policy committee, and advocating for equitable communication towards faculty about their options. FWAF agreed that stakeholders across the campus should be consulted on the formation of a potential campuswide committee on family friendly policies.

The FWAF vice chair – and chair of the subcommittee – will continue to work with campus stakeholders in fall 2022 and consult with other UC campuses. After the AY 22-23 FWAF membership discusses all the information the FWAF vice chair has gathered, FWAF plans to draft a proposal to the UC Merced administration to formally request the creation of a campuswide committee on family friendly policies.

## *Other*

As one of the two Senate Committees that, in AY 19-20, made the initial request for the development of faculty-graduate student conflict resolution infrastructure, FWAF actively participated in the creation of the conflict resolution guidelines and the flowchart in AY 20-21. At the request of the Graduate Council and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education in AY 21-22, FWAF reviewed the guidelines and flowchart in fall 2021. FWAF generally supported the proposed guidelines and flowchart and made further suggestions for improvement.

In spring 2022, it came to FWAF's attention that, under the direction of the Sustainability Office and Physical Operations, Planning and Development, Campus Facilities is prohibiting the custodial staff from emptying the trash bins in faculty offices and the faculty are now responsible for emptying their own trash. The policy is apparently meant to help reduce costs and support the zero-waste initiative on campus. FWAF issued a memo to the Senate Chair in spring 2022 that stated that while sustainability goals and cost reduction are important, emptying trash is not an efficient use of faculty time and expertise and added that the campus should find another way to reduce costs and waste that better appreciate these valuable resources.

## *Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship*

FWAF is responsible for reviewing the nominations for the annual Senate award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship. FWAF was pleased to carry out this responsibility again this year and the name of their selected awardee was announced along with the other winners of the annual Senate awards at the spring Meeting of the Division on May 12, 2022.

## **Consultation**

### *Consultation with Associate Vice Provost for the Faculty (AVPF)*

FWAF consulted with ex-officio (non-voting) committee member AVPF Zulema Valdez on an array of topics:

- She extended an invitation to FWAF and the Senate Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) to attend a faculty workshop on bystander/anti-bullying.
- Faculty Equity Advisors (FEA)
  - UC Merced FEAs currently take mandatory training at UC Irvine or UC Davis, but AVPF Valdez planned a training at UC Merced that was well-received.
  - There is a lack of sufficient information in the FEA appointment process. AVPF Valdez proposed revisions to the process to clarify which individuals are responsible for which piece of the process so that the FEA appointment process is smoother next year and FEAs can receive training in a timely manner. FWAF members suggested that current FEAs can simply be

reappointed rather than having EDI seek a new group of FEAs each cycle. AVPF Valdez will consult with EDI on FWAF's suggestion.

- Contribution to Diversity Statements in faculty recruitment. This is the second year of using these statements in the first round of recruitment. Six other UC campuses are utilizing the same statements.
- UCOP awarded \$200,000 to each UC campus in order to scale up faculty professional development, improve faculty cultural competency for teaching and learning, and to support UC's participation in the STEMM Equity Achievement (SEA Change) program. SEA Change helps the campuses synthesize and streamline their relevant activities and provide guidance on improving them.

#### *Consultation with Chancellor and Interim CFO*

As mentioned earlier in this report, in fall 2021, FWAF held a meeting with the Chancellor and Interim CFO about the importance of, and challenges surrounding, the ECEC.

### **Systemwide Committee Updates**

#### *University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW)*

FWAF member Jayson Beaster-Jones was the UC Merced representative to UCFW, and kept FWAF members informed of the major items of discussion this academic year:

- implementation of instructional modalities across campuses
- access to mental healthcare
- Oracle financial system challenges at UC Merced and other campuses
- discussion about a one-time cost of living increase for UC retirees given the rapid rise in inflation
- student loan forgiveness
- 4% increase to faculty salaries (base salary only, not the scales) plus an extra 1.5% increase to the campuses to use at their discretion
- UCFW Task Force on Investment and Retirement discussed allowing UC employees under the 2013 retirement plan to shift away from the 403B option back to the pension option.
- UC employees' difficulties with the UC pharmacy benefits provider
- UCFW sent a memo to Academic Council about providing fertility benefits.
- In the context of an ARO discussion, UCFW plans to take the lead in proposing revisions to the APM, recognizing that this will be a multi-year process requiring a full systemwide review. The sentiment is that the criteria for advancement and promotion in the APM were written in a different era and do not reflect the current UC

workforce.

- COVID-19 mitigation measures
- UC Health affiliation with external healthcare providers. Concerns about possible discrimination stemming from such affiliation, especially against women and the LGBTQ+ community.

#### *University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF)*

FWAF Chair Jennings represented FWAF on UCAF and updated FWAF members on the following major topics of discussion:

- UCAF Recommendations on Departmental Statements
- Protection of academic freedom on online platforms
- Use of DEI statements in faculty appointment and promotion decisions

#### **Systemwide Review Items**

##### FWAF reviewed and commented on:

- Proposed revised Presidential Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment
- Proposed revisions to APM -759, Leaves of Absence/Other Leaves Without Pay
- Proposed Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct/Bullying in the Workplace
- Presidential Policy on Affiliations with Certain Healthcare Organizations
- Second Systemwide Review of Proposed Presidential Policy on University of California Research Data
- UCAF Recommendations on Departmental Statements
- Report from the Negotiated Salary Trial Program Phase 2 Taskforce

#### **Campus Review Items**

##### FWAF reviewed and commented on:

- Proposed Presidential Policy on Integrated Pest Management
- Proposed MAPP 283
- Proposed Policy on the Use of the University of California and UC Merced Names, Network, Electronic and Online Sites and Accounts, and Responses to Media Inquiries
- Revised pre-proposal for the establishment of the E&J Gallo School of Management

Respectfully submitted:

##### ***FWAF members:***

David Jennings (SSHA), Chair, UCAF representative  
Tea Lempiälä (SOE), Vice Chair, PROC representative  
Jayson Beaster-Jones (SSHA), UCFW representative  
Henry Forman (SNS), Professor Emeritus  
Carolin Frank (SNS)

Sarah Loebman (SNS)  
Daisy Reyes (SSHA)

***Ex officio, non-voting member:***

Zulema Valdez, Associate Vice Provost for the Faculty

***Staff:***

Simrin Takhar  
Naoko Kada