

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM  
(FWAF) ANNUAL REPORT  
AY 2022-2023**

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

In AY 2022-2023, 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**

*Professional Development Grants Competition*

In the last academic year, the Chancellor allocated \$1 million from the \$20 million MacKenzie Scott campus gift to the Academic Senate to use for faculty research. Divisional Council agreed that several Senate committees would administer the allocation of the funds and that FWAF would be tasked with allocating funds for faculty professional development. After several discussions in which the committee agreed on the review criteria, FWAF issued a call for proposals to Senate faculty on March 14, 2023 with a submission deadline of April 14, 2023. After reviewing the proposals, FWAF issued notification letters to faculty applicants on April 24, 2023. FWAF funded 17 of the 18 proposals received.

*COVID Mitigation Funds*

In fall 2022, EVC/Provost Camfield and Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAP) Hansford invited a proposal from the Senate Committee on Research (CoR) on the allocation of potential COVID mitigation funds that would be awarded to the Senate. CoR submitted its proposal to the VPAP which was ultimately reviewed favorably by the EVC/Provost. The EVC/Provost informed CoR that he will award the Senate \$50,000 to allocate to the faculty to mitigate COVID impacts. CoR then requested that FWAF take the lead on drafting a call for proposals whereupon the two committees would issue a joint call for proposals to Senate faculty. FWAF held several discussions on the possible review criteria, researched the costs of course buy-outs, and drafted a call for proposals. However, due to a plethora of competing, time-sensitive issues, FWAF was unable to finalize the call. The VPAP informed FWAF at the end of the spring 2023 semester that the EVC/Provost is willing to roll over the funds to next year. The next year's FWAF should be in a good position to send out the call in the early fall.

*Campus Research Infrastructure*

FWAF held discussions on the ongoing problems with the campus financial systems and grant accounting. FWAF Member Yeakel took the lead on this issue and shared with FWAF a draft document of data and anecdotes from faculty on the severe problems with procurement and grant accounting. FWAF also discussed possibly collaborating with CoR in drafting a joint memo to the

administration using CoR's 2021 and 2022 memos as a basis. FWAF Chair Jennings and Member Yeakel attended a CoR meeting in spring 2023 to discuss with CoR the ongoing campus infrastructure issues.

## **Consultation**

### *Consultation with Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (VPAP)*

FWAF consulted with VPAP Hansford on an array of topics:

- He held a workshop for department chairs on the new abusive conduct policy.
- He is restarting the faculty mentoring program after it was on hiatus for a few years. Faculty in the program will receive funding to travel to their external mentor's campus and their external mentor will be compensated for their travel to UC Merced.
- Some improvements have been made with regard to postdoc hiring.
- At the request of the Senate Committee for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), the VPAP conducted an analysis of faculty academic personnel actions last year to assess if there was any bias in decision making. He presented his findings to EDI and the Deans Council. His analysis of last year's data revealed that there is no evidence of bias and that women of color were advanced more than any other group during that year. The VPAP will continue collecting and assessing this information each year.

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

FWAF consulted with AVPF Anna Song on the following topics:

- Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct in the Workplace
- She directed FWAF members to the website for the campus Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD) <https://ophd.ucmerced.edu/> as a reference.
- General campus climate problems

### *Consultation with Interim VC/CFO*

In the spring 2023 semester, Interim VC/CFO Schnier met with FWAF to discuss the ongoing issues with the campus financial systems. He clarified that there are two different workstreams: contracts and grants (managed through ORED) and non-contract and grants (Schools). He added that his data integrity project cleaned up a lot of issues last year and asked what additional training he needs to do with staff. His office meets with School staff weekly to ascertain their needs. He asserted that the software is working – what is not working is the campus's use of the system and the lack of partnerships between the relevant parties on campus.

## **Systemwide Committee Updates**

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

FWAF Chair David Jennings was the UC Merced representative to UCFW, and kept FWAF members informed of the major items of discussion this academic year:

- UCFW is determining how to advise the UC administration on implementing the recommendations in the COVID Task Force report. The report was previously distributed to all UC faculty. UCFW is also beginning the process of proposing revisions to the APM to reflect the principles of Achievement Relative to Opportunity.
- UCFW is aware of the problems with Oracle and is advocating for the systemwide administration to provide support. UCFW has also raised Oracle issues to the systemwide Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Programs.
- A request by UC clinical faculty to have representation in the Academic Senate.
- UCFW discussed the proposed Presidential Policy on Anti-Discrimination and believed that the policy does not fill its intended purpose, gives undue powers to certain individuals with no checks and balances, and removes Senate control.

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

FWAF Member Justin Yeakel represented FWAF on UCAF and updated FWAF members on the following major topics of discussion:

- Presidential Policy on Abusive Conduct in the Workplace
- Strike resolution difficulties
- Appointment of postdocs
- Questions about whether each UC campus Academic Freedom committee bylaws should be as uniform as possible across the system
- Civility statements issued by some campus Chancellors. UCAF discussed the need for each campus Academic Freedom committee to have a definition/statement of academic freedom is on their webpages.

## **Systemwide Review Items**

FWAF reviewed and commented on:

- Presidential Policy on Vaccination Programs
- Presidential Policy – Immigration Enforcement Issues Involving Patients in UC Health Facilities
- Presidential Policy – Clery Act Policy
- Presidential Policy – Abusive Conduct in the Workplace
- Presidential Policy on Sustainable Practices
- Presidential Policy – Anti-Discrimination
- Proposed revisions to APM 210
- Proposed revisions to APM 710

## **Campus Review Items**

### FWAF reviewed and commented on:

- Interim Procedure on Assurance of Laboratory Safety Compliance

Respectfully submitted:

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

David Jennings (SSHA), Chair, UCFW representative

Tea Lempiälä (SOE), Vice Chair

Mai-Linh Hong (SSHA)

Beth Scaffidi (SSHA)

Justin Yeakel (SNS), UCAF representative

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

Tom Hansford, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel

#### ***Staff:***

Simrin Takhar