

**COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE & ACADEMIC FREEDOM (FWAF)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2023-2024**

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

In AY 2023-2024, FWAF held a total of 9 regularly scheduled meetings and conducted some business via email with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's [Senate Bylaw II.IV.6](#).

Areas of Focus

Financial System Issues

FWAF recognized and discussed the ongoing problems with the campus financial system. In their memo to the Administrative and Senate leads, FWAF noted concerns with inaccurate expense reporting, trouble purchasing items, not receiving financial reports, how faculty's ability to conduct research has been negatively affected, and concerns with the campus leadership's response. FWAF also invited a Research Administrator to a meeting to discuss and gain insight as to how the system is functioning for someone who works with the system directly.

Staffing Issues and Budget Allocations

In their memo to the Administrative and Senate leads, FWAF noted concerns with inadequate staffing and how staff duties are being divested onto faculty in a multitude of ways. FWAF then met with Vice Chancellor CFO Kurt Schnier and Interim EVC/P Marjorie Zatz to voice their concerns and gain additional information on the campus budget allocations. FWAF also provided a memo to Senate leadership echoing the concerns raised by the MCS Department Chair on the current Instructional Budget Model.

Healthcare Costs and Access

FWAF members held multiple discussions regarding the inadequacy of healthcare access in the Merced area, its costs, and the lack of Tier 1 providers in the UC Care plan and recognized it as an important factor when considering faculty retention. FWAF addressed this in their memo to the Administrative and Senate leads where they noted concerns with the increase in healthcare plan prices, the limited number of providers that accept UC healthcare plans, and the difficulty when working with third party providers. Also, FWAF invited a UC Merced Health Care Facilitator to a meeting to discuss these concerns and gain insight as to how to elevate these issues. FWAF Chair and UCFW representative Jayson Beaster-Jones also consulted with the UCFW Healthcare Task Force regarding FWAF's healthcare concerns.

Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship

The FWAF awards subcommittee reviewed the nominations for the annual Senate Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentorship and selected a recipient to receive the award.

Systemwide Committee Updates

University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW)

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

- UCFW members discussed how UC is working to reduce the time to graduation for graduate students.

- UCFW members discussed their concerns with the Oracle financial system.
- Chair Beaster-Jones served as UCFW lead reviewer for the systemwide review of the proposed amendments to Senate Bylaw 55 – Departmental Voting Rights.
- UCFW reported that UC Retirement at Your Service (UCRAYs) is being phased out.
- UCFW members discussed the methodology of the Total Remuneration Study to determine whether UC employees are being compensated at the same level of comparative institutions.
- The UCFW Retirement Task Force recommended that the default retirement option should shift from the Pension Choice Plan to the Savings Choice Plan.
- The UCFW Health Care Task Force reported that the contract with Anthem is currently being renegotiated, and also that dental providers are leaving the Delta Dental network.

University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF)

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

- UCAF has fewer meeting hours than other systemwide committees and also does not have a seat on Academic Council. UCAF discussed ways in which to advocate for a change.
- UCAF held a consultation with the Academic Senate Chair and Vice Chair. A few items of noted concern that were discussed in the consultation were the President’s viewpoint neutrality statement, the push for UC Online, and efforts to allow transfer students admission to any UC of their choice.
- UCAF decided to oppose the revisions to Senate Bylaw 55 which would give Teaching Professors equitable voting rights in their departments.
- UCAF discussed the importance of Academic Freedom as it applies to UC employees who are not Senate faculty.
- UCAF members discussed their concerns regarding the President’s statement about setting aside some funding for viewpoint neutral programs.
- UCAF members discussed the UC Regents Policy on Use of University Administrative Websites and the UC Regents Policy on Public and Discretionary Statements by Academic Units.

Consultation

FWAF consulted with the following campus constituents:

- VPAP Tom Hansford
- AVPAP Anna Song
- The Schools Department Chairs
- The Schools Executive Committees
- EDI Chair Marcos García-Ojeda
- Research Administrator Pranathi Dasari
- Vice Chancellor CFO Kurt Schnier
- Interim EVC/P Marjorie Zatz
- UC Merced Health Care Facilitator Sana Ramzan
- UC Merced Faculty Association Board Members Charlie Eaton and Maria-Elena Young

Review Items

FWAF reviewed and offered comments on the following systemwide review items:

- Presidential Policy on Affiliations with Certain Health Care Organizations
- Proposed Amendments to Senate Bylaw 55 – Departmental Voting Rights
- Presidential Policy on Vaccination Programs
- Interim Report of the Academic Planning Council (APC) Working Group on the Future of Doctoral Education
- Proposed Revisions to APM 285 – LSOEs
- Presidential Policy BFB-BUS-50: Controlled Substances Use in Research and Teaching
- Regents Policy on Use of Administrative Websites
- Proposed Academic Senate Statement on UC Quality
- UC Regents Policy on Public and Discretionary Statements by Academic Units
- Proposed Revisions to APM 016 – University Policy on Faculty Conduct and the Administration of Discipline

FWAF reviewed and offered comments on the following campus wide review items:

- Policy on Transmission of Documents to the University Archive
- Interim Implementing Procedures for Abusive Conduct in the Workplace
- Five-Year Planning Perspectives 2024-2029

Respectfully submitted,

FWAF Members:

Jayson Beaster-Jones (SSHA), Chair, UCFW representative

Yanbao Ma (SOE), Vice Chair

Eva De Alba (SOE)

Kyle Dodson (SSHA)

David Jennings (SSHA), UCAF representative

Beth Nowadnick (SOE)

Daisy Reyes (SSHA), Fall 2023

Mayya Tokman (SNS)

Ex officio, non-voting member:

Tom Hansford, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel

Staff:

Fatima Paul, Executive Director

Petra Martins, Senate Analyst