

**UC Merced Staff Assembly  
Annual Report  
2021-2022**

The focus of the Staff Assembly Board this year was to continue to advocate for staff needs, share, and address the findings of the 2021 CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey, create opportunities for staff engagement and development, and work with campus partners and administration to ensure that staff have a voice at the discussion table. The COVID pandemic and returning to work in a variety of modalities meant that staff were looking for opportunities to reconnect, voice opinions and thoughts about work modes and productivity, and ensure the safety of our campus community. Staff Assembly made special efforts towards to address and advocate on these topics on behalf of UC Merced Staff in addition to continuing our work to recognize, celebrate, advocate, and build our bobcat community together.

**Summary of Activities:**

This past year, Staff Assembly hosted or participated in various programs, initiatives, committees, and activities

***Staff Assembly Events and Engagement Opportunities:***

- Staff and Faculty Fall Welcome
  - Over 300 staff and faculty attendees
  - Awarded 7 Staff Excellence Awards for 2020-21
- October – Costume Contest
- November – Pumpkin Decorating Contest
- November – Fall Desk Decorating Contest
- December – Ugly Sweater Contest
- December – Holiday Toy Drive
- Staff Appreciation Week
  - Kickoff Breakfast – 390 attendees
  - UC Merced Walks – 75 participants
  - Ice Cone Social with Kona Ice – 240 attendees
  - Do It Yourself Wood Sign Painting – 50 participants
  - Service/Excellence Awards and SAW Picnic – 425 attendees
    - Awarded 7 Staff Excellence Awards for 2021-22

***Monthly General Meetings which covered the following topics and guest speakers (11):***

- Mental Health Resources - Jay Lomeli, Human Resources
- COVID Response Center Updates – Ashlee McNeill, Risk Services
- CARE Office Resources – Yesenia Curiel, CARE Office
- UC Merced Giving and Giving Tuesday – Amer Flores, Philanthropy & Strategic Partnerships
- Inclusive Excellence Institution – Hala Alnagar, Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Office of the Ombuds Annual Report – Chanelle Reese, Office of the Ombuds
- UC Experience Conversations – Yazil Navarro, Human Resources
- What is CUCSA – Dennis McIver, UC Riverside, Derek DeMarco, UC Santa Cruz
- Job Classification and Compensation – Human Resource Classification and Compensation Team

**Staff Assembly Virtual Leadership Chats (3) on the topic of:**

- 2021 Staff Engagement Survey and Human Resources – Shenethia Manuel, Fabiola Elizalde, David Ellington
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – Cecil Howard
- Academic Leadership – Gregg Camfield, Teenie Matlock

**Representation on Search Advisory Committees (11):**

- Associate Vice Chancellor and Controller – Soceek Tchouboukjian
- Associate Vice Chancellor, Fiscal Innovation and Operations – Ian Cooke
- Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resource Officer – Austyn Smith Jones
- Dean for the School of Engineering – Christina Mayo
- Police Officer – Yesenia Curiel
- Public Safety Dispatcher – Lorena Magana Aguilar
- Vice Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer – Alvin Cha
- Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer – Austyn Smith Jones
- Vice Chancellor of Research, Innovation and Economic Development – Maggie Saunders
- Vice Provost and Dean for Graduate Education – Jackie Shay
- University Ombuds – Megan Topete

**Highlights of Initiatives and Program Development:**

**2021 CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey**

In September of this year, the 2021 CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey data for UC Merced was shared with campus leaders and the Staff Assembly Board. Shortly after receiving the data, the Staff Assembly Board leadership team scheduled a meeting with the Interim Chief Human Resource Officer, Shenethia Manuel, to discuss the data and strategize how Staff Assembly and Human Resource could share the data with the campus and utilize the information to improve the campus moving forward.

Throughout the fall 2021 semester, in collaboration with Human Resources, Staff Assembly met and presented the results to the following individuals and/or groups:

- Chancellor's Cabinet
- Charles Nies, Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs
- Council of University of California Staff Assemblies
- Dean's Council
- Division of External Relations
- Marjorie Zatz, Interim Vice Chancellor, Office of Research and Economic Development
- Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- School of Social Science Humanities and Arts
- Staff and Faculty of Color
- Staff at Large during a Virtual Leadership Chat
- UC Merced Library

There were many similar responses received during these meeting which included concerns of UC Merced's response compared to our sister campuses, questions on whether the data and population surveyed was a good representation of UC Merced, and suggestions to host a more specific UC Merced survey that could provide more details than the general questions asked on a systemwide survey.

A full summary of work and details of the survey can be found [HERE](#).

### ***CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey Workgroup***

In addition to bringing the results of the 2021 Staff Engagement Survey back to UC Merced to share results and develop action plans, our CUCSA Delegates (President Alvin Cha and Vice President Austyn Smith Jones) were placed on CUCSA workgroup for the survey. This workgroup has developed a library of templates to be used across all UC campuses for future CUCSA Delegations and Staff Assemblies surrounding the CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey. The team worked to identify what resources might have been most helpful to them in preparing for the survey, when the results were released, and how to report results back to campus leadership. The group then worked together to gather and develop template documents. These templates include timelines, marketing materials, template presentations for sharing results, frequently asked questions, and more. The toolkit is in the final stages of development and will live on the CUCSA website.

### ***Winter Strategic Planning***

Staff Assembly held a two-part virtual Winter Strategic Planning meeting in January to discuss the opportunities and programs presented to the Board as well as strategizing how we plan to proceed forward in alignment with UC Merced's Strategic Plan. Discussions included revising the Staff Excellence Award criteria and rubric, funding priorities, plans for the spring 2022 term, and planning for an in-person Staff Appreciation Week. We also discussed formation of workgroups and programs that arose from the CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey and invited guest, including Luanna Putney, De Aker and Cynthia Cortez, to join and provide guidance during our discussions.

The outcome of the meeting provided an outline and goals for the Staff Assembly Board as well as recommendations of partnership with other individuals and departments across campus that could support and advise on what a Speak Up Campaign might look like and advocate for what a vibrant campus can be considering remote, hybrid and in-person work.

### ***Scott-Jewett Gift Fund***

In the fall 2021 semester, Staff Assembly was very honored to be allocated \$1 million from the Chancellor, part of the MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett Gift to the campus, to support innovative and transformative programming for staff. This is the largest gift and allocation of funds that UC Merced Staff Assembly has ever received since its formation during the early years of the campus, and perhaps the largest gift to any Staff Assembly in the UC system. As such, the Staff Assembly Board began to reach out to campus partners to plan proper and effective usage of the funds. A [webpage](#) was also created to solicit programming ideas from any staff who had an idea to share.

The first item of business was the formation of an [External Advisory Council](#) to provide their comments and guidance on usage of the \$1 million gift. The council was officially formed in early spring and consisted of 1 member in the each of the following areas.

- Division of Equity, Justice, and Inclusive Excellence
- Division of Finance and Administration
- Former Staff Assembly Board Member
- Human Resources
- Non-Represented Staff at large
- Represented Staff at large
- Staff Supervisor/Manager at large

The Staff Assembly Board also voted to start the implementation process for a Staff Scholarship for Continued Education and Sponsorship of Professional Development Programs. The Staff Assembly Scholarship for Continued Education will provide a scholarship for staff who are working on expanding their educational growth in certification programs, earning an associate degree, obtaining their bachelor's degree, or expanding their breadth of knowledge in a master or doctoral program. The Staff Assembly Sponsorship for Professional Development Program is being created to encourage, sponsor and support staff in seeking professional opportunities that may be related to their current role and responsibilities or related to an area of growth that the staff is seeking to obtain as part of their career trajectory. Awards may range between \$500 to \$2,000 depending on which of the two programs a staff has applied for and the funding available. Working with campus partners to iron out the details and criteria, Staff Assembly hopes to be able to pilot the program as early as the end of fall 2022 with award distribution beginning in spring 2023.

As of June 2022, Staff Assembly has expended or earmarked funds from the Scott-Jewett gift for the following programs supporting staff, faculty, and students.

- \$5,000 has been allocated as seed funding for the Staff Emergency Fund.
- \$5,000 was used to sponsor the [UC Berkeley Next Opportunity at Work](#) (NOW) conference. As part of this sponsorship, UC Merced was able to provide 50 seats to UC Merced staff to participate in the conference.
- \$500 was used to co-sponsor, with the CARE Office, a Ramadan Iftar dinner for students, staff, and faculty.
- \$15,000 has been allocated to support the [UC Women's Initiative for Professional Development](#) (UCWI) program each year for the length of the gift agreement, three years, starting with the 2022-23 cohort. Cohorts for the program consist of a maximum of 12 staff or faculty members.
- \$15,000 was approved to support the [UC-Coro Systemwide Leadership Collaborative](#) program for the 2022-23 cohort. The sponsorship covers the program fees for two staff and one administrator.
- \$17,500 was used to support Staff Appreciation Week 2022 (SAW2022). Funding from this gift was used to support the large events throughout the week, bringing in between 200 attendees for smaller staff engagement activities to around 400 attendees for larger gatherings of recognition and appreciation.

In addition to programs supporting staff, a portion of the gift fund was also used to hire a full-time Staff Assembly Coordinator who provide administrative and event support to the Staff Assembly, assisting the Staff Assembly Board to achieve its program objectives and goals. The Staff Assembly Coordinator also develop, review, and/or edit communications, web distribution to internal and external audiences, including advertisements, newsletters, articles, reports, proposals, and service descriptions. They also assist with event planning, budget monitoring, and logistical arrangements in support of all Staff Assembly Board members.

### ***Workgroups and Planning Teams***

Through many different discussions and utilizing the CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey data, two main workgroups or planning teams were form.

#### ***Speak Up, Listen Up, and Follow Up: Imagining a speak up culture campaign for UC Merced***

The first resulted directly from the recommendations provided by Willis Towers Watson from the CUCSA Staff Engagement Survey for UC Merced which identified 1) promoting a healthy work environment, 2) providing employees with the information they need to manage their careers effectively and 3) ensuring that employees feel safe voicing their thoughts and opinions. The workgroup consists of individuals from Staff Assembly, Human Resources, Office of the Ombuds, Academic Personnel, Office of Legal Affairs and Ethics and Compliance and it aims to:

1. Provide capacity building resources and training around giving and receiving **actionable feedback for both staff, supervisors/managers, and campus leadership**
2. Asks all UC Merced staff members to commit to promoting a positive speak up culture in alignment with our strategic plan goal to show **“Respect for All”**
3. Reach out to staff through various forums to **assess the current culture with the goal of tracking improvements** (trainings/workshops, listening sessions/circles, newsletters, resource pages, feedback forms, surveys)
4. Improve **employee morale** and **psychological safety** at UC Merced

Continued discussion within the workgroup is planned to continue into the 2022-23 year with potential activities and campaign ideas such as:

- Encouraging more Stay Interviews – engage in career dev. Conversations (outside of evaluations)
- “Why I stay” or “UC Merced for me because...” videos from staff
- 360 Debrief session with supervisors
- Support system of supervisors
- Career development training for supervisors – how do you develop staff?
- Tools for department leads to implement: suggestion box feedback, etc.
- Information resources in newsletters like Monday memo, etc.
- Development around psychological safety for staff
- Branding programs that support, encourage, or demonstrate what a positive speak up culture is and/or looks like



Special thanks to Emanuel Alfaro for the initial branding design.

### *Future of Work / Enabling Our Vibrant Workforce*

As a result of the concerns, challenges, and confusions staff have had about return to in-person campus/location specific work, Human Resources and Staff Assembly met with campus administration to advocate and provide suggestions on ways that UC Merced can continue to be a vibrant institution, while allowing flexibility based on the type of work an individual performs. Recommendations provided were:

#### Phase 1:

- Chancellor's Office, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Staff Assembly, Academic Senate, Non-Senate Faculty Council, ASUCM and GSA will explore co-sponsorship of a campus-wide survey
- Formal campus leadership communications to the campus endorsing remote and hybrid work under special circumstances when the mission or operational integrity of the university is not jeopardized
- Staff continue to work with their supervisors on remote/hybrid schedules, documented in the UC Merced's Telework Agreement, reviewed, and revised every 6 months (managed by the employee/supervisor)
- Contemporaneous determinations of positions for remote work as they are prepared for posting, with consultation from Human Resources

#### Phase 2:

- An independent (external) and thorough examination of current UC Merced classifications to determine their feasibility for possible remote or hybrid work modality
  - o With significant input from managers/supervisors and Human Resources
  - o Develop widely published criteria for determining feasibility for sustained remote or hybrid work
- Comprehensive plan for flexible work options for positions that are not suitable for remote work

With the leadership and guidance from Jessica Duffy, Program Manager – Capital Projects, and Cinnamon Danube, Principal Analyst, from the Center of Institutional Effectiveness, the Enabling our Vibrant Workforce planning team, comprised of individuals in the Center of Institutional Effectiveness Staff Assembly, Human Resources, Division of Equity, Justice and Inclusive Excellence, Office of Legal Affairs and Chancellor's Office, was formed to create and distribute a survey for all UC Merced staff which can then be to administration as information to help guide future decision making for the institution. Currently, the How We Work Feedback Tool, a survey for staff, is being distributed and has a closing deadline of June 13, 2022, with an interactive dashboard of the data results schedule to be released June 30, 2022. The [Help Shape How We Work at UC Merced](#) webpage was also created to

provide additional context for the survey. The planning team continues to work together to encourage staff to participate in completing the survey so that the data is a strong representation of staff across different departments and roles at UC Merced.

### **In Summary**

The Staff Assembly Executive Board has provided the campus with an open-door place for staff voices to be heard. Our programs and initiatives are aimed to make UC Merced an employer of choice, and excellence, within and beyond the University of California. We serve as volunteers elected to these roles but each of us carries the spirit and commitment to see our peers and colleagues thrive. All of this would not be possible without leaders who champion staff voices and concerns, and for all this support we offer our thanks.

Respectfully submitted,

#### **Staff Assembly Board Members:**

Alvin Cha – President

Austyn Smith Jones – Vice President

Yesenia Curiel – Past President

Molly Elazier – Secretary

Jennifer Heinrich – Finance Officer

Ian Cooke – Co-Chair for Communications

Vanessa Hauser – Co-Chair for Communications

Lizbeth Lupi – Co-Chair for Programs, Events and Outreach

Soceek Tchouboukjian – Co-Chair for Programs, Events and Outreach

#### **Staff Assembly Coordinator:**

Jamia Garett

#### **Acknowledgment of Support:**

Cinnamon Danube, Principal Analyst, Center of Institutional Effectiveness

David Ellington, Director of Total Rewards, Human Resources

De Aker, Director of Program Development, Office of Legal Affairs

Fabiola Elizalde, Director of Talent, Learning and HR Services, Human Resources

Jessica Duffy, Program Manager – Capital Projects, Center of Institutional Effectiveness

Luanna Putney, Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor

Shenethia Manuel, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resource Officer