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5200 NORTH LAKE ROAD | MERCED, CA 95343  
TEL: 209-228-4417

August 17, 2020

TO: Dr. Maria Martin

FR: Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz, Chancellor  
Dr. Gregg Camfield, Executive Vice President and Provost

SUBJECT: Response to “We Charge Anti-Blackness” Petition

As a commitment to continue the dialogue and transform UCM toward a more inclusive, responsible, and social justice-centric university, the following responds to the concerns and recommendations that were shared with UCM leadership by faculty and others in the June 3, 2020 “We Charge Anti-Blackness” Petition.

### 1. Hire More Counselors of Color in CAPS

#### **Context:**

Students have demanded this time and again. While individual psychological approaches cannot fix structural racism, mental health services are important for students to help survive racist encounters, institutions, and society. The partnering of CAPS with the Office of Social Justice Initiatives and Identity Programs is a start, but UCM needs more counselors of color, a Black counselor in particular. Five years ago, Black students were told that counselors of color who are culturally competent could not be recruited to UCM because qualified candidates would find better pay at the nearby prisons. This rationale is unacceptable. In the interim, we demand resources be allocated to telehealth services that can be used by Black students.

#### **Response (aligned with response to UCM Associate Black Student Leaders)**

We acknowledge the consequence of racism that have contributed to the destruction of the lives of people in the Black and African-American community and the dire psychological and physical consequences resulting from these systemic, long standing injustices. CAPS is committed to listening and responding to the mental health needs of our African American and Black student community. Additionally, CAPS staff is prepared and ready to provide same day mental health support to our scholars impacted by these recent and historically traumatic events. Thus, CAPS remains determined to continue building a mental health program that includes partnerships with our students of color, as well as campus stakeholders, to develop initiatives and resources to promote broad and inclusive wellness.



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**Fall (2020)**

- Revised current Job Description for Staff Psychologist to include “Candidates with experience working with under-represented populations and/or marginalized communities in academia strongly preferred.”
- Will revise to include “Candidates must demonstrate a strong commitment to serving Black, African-American, other underrepresented or marginalized populations, and LGBTQ+ communities in academia.”
- Job Postings currently advertised through The Association for Black Psychologists.
- The Chancellor and Provost will provide additional resources to more broadly disseminate this employment opportunity to diverse applicants.
- Develop link/tab on CAPS website for Black student mental health and wellness resources.

**Short-term (2020-2021)**

- CAPS will invite a representative from the Diversity Equity Board (DEB) to participate in the interview process for candidates who have applied to clinical staffing positions.
- Collaborate with student representatives (DEB and/or Pan-Afrikan Council) and campus/system-wide stakeholders to continue developing CAPS website to reflect mental health and wellness resources specifically for Black student community.
- Cultivate Community & Resilience: Community Mental Health Check-In for Black Students with CAPS representatives.
- Support Group for Students of Color facilitated by CAPS clinician.

**Long-term (2021+)**

- Collaborate with campus stakeholders and student representatives to provide workshop/outreach/presentations specifically in support of Black student mental health.
- In conjunction with campus stakeholders, re-establish and develop a Mental Health Advisory Committee to include student representation (D.E.B. and/or Pan-Afrikan Council).
- Collaborate with campus stakeholders to develop a position within CAPS that coordinates Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts within the mental health systems framework.
- Continue to require CAPS clinical staff to complete continuing education credits inclusive of ongoing cultural diversity training.



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**From Dr. Tania Gonzales, Interim Associate Director, UCM Counseling and Psychological Services:**

- “Combating Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy in Organizations” is full of points for critical conversations and recommendations that I plan to review and utilize as a reference guide for our own practices within CAPS. I also plan to have an in-service training for CAPS staff with regards to this document.
- The Resources page is a compilation of resources pulled together with the assistance of our Health Promotions team that will be going up on our CAPS website. It will be positioned under a new link designed to provide specific mental health resources for our African American and Black scholars. This link is currently being constructed and I have a follow up meeting with Health Promotions on Tuesday morning to finish (hopefully) the remaining details.
- We have updated our recruitment advertisement for Staff Psychologist.
- Dr. Shao Li and Amanda Peterson, LMFT will co-facilitate a weekly support group for our African American and Black Scholars beginning 9/14/2020. The group will be held on Mondays from 11:00-12:00. If this day/time is not preferable, please let me know and we can reschedule to better accommodate our scholars’ needs.
- We are working with Dr. Taisha Caldwell-Harvey to discuss opportunities to support our African American and Black scholar’s mental health support options/outreach opportunities. We will use part of her network to potentially contract for telehealth services for our scholars.

**2. Create a Student Union, including a Staffed Black Cultural Resource Center**

**Context:**

Students should have a place where they can develop a sense of community necessary to endure, and hopefully thrive in the institutionalized racism that is endemic to the United States. Such spaces, in order to function, must be staffed. Therefore, at minimum, a full-time staff position for a Black Cultural Resource Center is needed. This position should be afforded the title, authority, mandate, resources, budget, and facilities to adequately service the multiple needs of Black students at UC Merced and serve as a proxy between the Black student population and the administration, faculty, staff and community. For examples of this kind of position, look across the UC campuses and other major universities.



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### **Response: (specific and related action items aligned with response to UCM Associate Black Student Leaders)**

We are committed to expanding services and resources to support Black student success. The Office of Social Justice Initiatives & Identity Program's (OSJIIP), for example, aims to enhance the retention of our historically underserved scholars and to foster an inclusive campus environment for all by providing opportunities for holistic development, intersectional community building, and student agency.

#### **Fall (2020)**

- The Dean of Students Office and the Office of Social Justice Initiatives & Identity Program's (OSJIIP) co-sponsored a Radical Healing Workshop (Sharon Johnson, June 5<sup>th</sup>).
- OSJIIP continues to have Virtual Healing Talks (will be ongoing through 2020-2021).
- Funding Support for all Cultural Clubs and Organizations
  - o OSJIIP has received additional funding from the Chancellor's office to allocate to student clubs/organizations addressing social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion efforts; implementation in the form of EDI grants with specific application criteria to build coalition and community is in progress.
- The Office of Social Justice Initiatives & Identity Program's (OSJIIP) increased student staff to support EDI work (already allocated in 2020-2021 budget)
- Received funding for six (6) student employees to assist with outreach, engagement and collection of data related to student experiences and success.
  - o Implementation of a Cultural/Resource Center Advisory Board to facilitate ongoing outreach with student leaders and multicultural student clubs/organizations, gather information and provide recommendations.
- Black Book website development (OSJIIP graphic designer has been working directly with Vice Chancellor, Charles Nies).
- Continue to provide healing/community circles, caucus/identity spaces for student scholars.
- Actively support AFRO Hall Living Learning Community and collaborate with AFRO student club, and Residential Education ensuring concerns and needs are being addressed.

#### **Short-term (2020-2021)**

- Implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Student Advisory Board for the Office of Social Justice Initiatives & Identity Programs (OSJIIP) to include scholars, staff and faculty members. This advisory board will inform different approaches and provide recommendations to advance a social justice, equity and inclusion framework consistent with the pillars and priorities of OSJIIP.



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- Reactivate the Multicultural Student Council within Associated Students of UC Merced-ASUCM as one option, another is to create a student-led equity and diversity advisory board and:
  - o Create Focus groups to identify:
    - Mission & Vision
    - Committee make up
    - Advisory Board's role
- OSJIIP Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Grants-EDI (already allocated in 2020-2021 budget) are available for all multicultural student organizations to apply and collaborate with other student organizations that can address ways of coalition building and promote campus climate and social justice. The process and application criteria will be finalized for the grants to be available for Fall 2020.
- OSJIIP has received additional funding for AFRO Hall Living Learning Community providing additional resources for programming, professional development and community/coalition building.
- OSJIIP collaboration with Leadership, Career and Service providing leadership training and development for all the Black/African American organizations. In the past, such trainings and workshops were provided for each organization such as AFRO Hall retreat, BSU executive board leadership workshops, and consistent outreach.
- OSJIIP is committed to community engagement and providing space for ongoing meetings with our Black/African American scholars and leaders for continued assessment of current needs and experiences.
- The Office of Student Involvement will be initiating grants (that clubs and organizations can apply for) to help clubs and organizations with professional development, community engagement, and leadership.
- With a focus on equity and access, Student Affairs will continue to build/strengthen community partnerships and expand K-12 outreach (Summer Youth Academy, Bright Success Center, Community Engagement Center, Enrollment Management, etc.).
- Dr. Mari Harris has accepted a new position, Director of Extension Education Programs. Dr. Mari Harris's current work around retention and recruitment of Black students at UC Merced will be continuously supported and expanded by Student Affairs (Black student admit receptions, initiatives, staffing, etc.).
- The Pan-Afrikan Council will be consulted with any future conversations about space moves at they relate to the Black Student Resource Center. Dr. Nies will notify students when these conversations begin.

**Long-term (2021+)**

- Create a Black Student Resource Center as a Retention Center (ongoing conversations stakeholders such as the Dean of Students and Bright Success Center). Students will play



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a pivotal role in the construction of this. Retention initiatives in cultural/affinity spaces are critical as a campus committed to the holistic development of the student scholar. Cultural/affinity spaces moving forward will look at best practices such as the “Geometric Model of Student Persistence and Achievement.”

- Cognitive Factors
- Institutional/Systemic Factors
- Social Factors
- Cultural/Resource Advisory Boards
  - Create Multicultural Center, LGBTQ+/Pride Center, Graduate Cultural Resource Center & Black Student Resource Center (Pan African Council) advisory boards by Jan 2021
- Social Justice Quad located between Kolligian Library and COB2- As part of the 2020 Project and input from previous focus groups with multicultural student organizations and graduate students, this area of campus can focus on programming, community building, multicultural events and tabling; e.g.: Cultural Night showcases our multicultural student clubs and organizations and provides scholars opportunities to share their culture, socialize and connect.
- Hiring of a Full Time Employee-FTE Professional Staff member serving as a resource to the Black/African American student population
  - In OSJIIP, Lorene Fisher as the Coordinator of Womxn’s Programs and Social Justice Initiatives and Onar Primitivo as the Director of OSJIIP are both committed to Black Excellence

### 3. Immediate Disarming of the UCM Police Department

#### Context:

The UCM PD prides itself on being a different kind of police department, yet it has already killed one student on campus in 2015. There are other less lethal options that police officers can use for engaging threats.

#### Response:

The UCM Police Department has had very few [use of force](#) incidents in its 15-year history. Most involved the arrest of non-affiliates on and off campus. “Use of force” is broadly defined under UC regulations to include any action involving application of force such as handcuffing or restraining an individual.

We do not believe that disarming the UC Merced Police is the appropriate measure to address the safety of our community. While we have very few instances where the use of force is necessary, the UC Merced Police are sworn law enforcement officers who respond, as needed,



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on campus and within the community during acts of violence. Moreover, there have been instances on and near all UC campuses in which officers were confronted by armed individuals, including some whose intent was to attack students and faculty. Given these responsibilities, UC Merced Police officers are trained and equipped to deal with a multitude of situations. The University of California Police Department as a whole operates under statutory authority and department policy that authorizes which specific equipment is allowed. Per the Robinson-Edley Report recommendations, the UC Council of Police Chiefs annually authorize the type of equipment that is acceptable. Finally, there are legal requirements and Cal OSHA regulations that necessitate that officers be properly equipped.

As discussed in the July 2020 Regents' meeting on the University of California Presidential Task Force on University wide Policing there are additional consequences associated with disarming campus police departments. If our campus does not employ sworn police officers who carry authorized weapons, the County Sheriff, who has concurrent jurisdiction with the UC Merced Police Department, will be the primary law enforcement agency to respond to incidents on campus that pose a threat to the campus (such as an armed assailant), resulting in longer response times and risk to the safety and property of students, staff, faculty and the University. We believe that the local city police or Sheriff's interactions with our student population will not be grounded in our educational mission and community policing principles.

We do agree that the training of sworn police officers across the nation, including UC Merced Police Officers, should include clearly articulated de-escalation techniques and non-lethal forms of engaging assailants. The UC Merced Police Department currently participates in a variety of training and professional development programs. These include de-escalation training, diversity training, and implicit bias training. The training requirements for the UC Merced Police Department staff exceed state guidelines and exceed those of average law enforcement departments. These trainings are listed on-line at:

<https://police.ucmerced.edu/about/professional-development>.

- Should students, staff or faculty become aware of training that would be effective for our police officers, we encourage these suggestions to be submitted to the UC Merced Police Advisory Board. We commit to reviewing and implementing recommended improvements to our officer training program (Fall 2020).

Overall, the UC Merced Police Department has received few community complaints about its policing. All external complaint investigations not arising from within the department (*i.e.* personnel actions) are listed on the UCMPD website:

<https://police.ucmerced.edu/Commendations-Complaints>.



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Recent results from the annual [AY19-20 UCMPD Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, conducted in March of 2020](#), indicates overall positive interactions with the UC Merced Police Department. The results of an independent ASUCM led survey in February 2020 are consistent with these results (data available upon request). Some signatories of the faculty petition have pointed to long-standing complaints of racist behavior by the UC Merced Police Department. We are committed to developing a means for individuals to bring forward their concerns outside of the formal complaint process to allow individuals that do not want to bring a complaint to nonetheless have a means of identifying these issues. We support additional visibility, discussion and accountability around these issues.

- We will initiate an independent, well-publicized anonymous hotline for the entire community so these concerns can be shared safely and addressed promptly (Fall 2020).

[We encourage individuals to file any formal complaints about individual police officers through the complaint form on the Police Department website or the new system-wide complaint hotline to ensure formal investigation as potential violations of UC policy.](#) These complaints may also be filed anonymously.

Finally, although the [UC Merced Police Advisory Board](#) (PAB) is organized and operates in a manner consistent with the report of the [University of California Presidential Task Force on University wide Policing](#), our campus PAB has suffered from lack of engagement by faculty and the perception that our PAB has less independence than is needed to fulfill its mission and effect change.

- As outlined in the recent [Memorandum of Understanding](#) developed between the University and various student groups, we are committed to reviewing the structure/function of the PAB to ensure it is a meaningful and effective board that can recommend necessary changes that will enhance public safety for all members of our campus community. Should students, staff or faculty have immediate suggestions that would make the PAB more effective, we encourage these suggestions to be submitted to the PAB and leadership. (Summer 2020)
- The MOU also commits to an external review of the UC Merced Police Department to be conducted from an equity and justice framework. (Short-term Spring 2021)

Because the petition specifically mentions the one fatal use of police force on our campus, we would like to address the circumstances in that instance. In November 2015, a student armed with a large hunting knife entered a classroom after the class had commenced and attacked in an attempt to kill one of his classmates. After his plan was disrupted by other students, he proceeded out of the classroom building to return to his dormitory where he had planned to





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attack and kill two additional students. He attacked a worker in the hallway and two individuals in the plaza outside of the Lantern, including one person who suffered life-threatening injuries from a knife wound that punctured her lung. Two police officers intervened as the student was headed over to Scholar's Lane Bridge while students were walking up Scholar's Lane to classes. When confronted by the officers, he turned and approached them with the knife raised, ignoring numerous orders to drop the knife. When he was within 8 to 10 feet with his knife raised he was shot in the side. He continued to move toward the officers and was shot a second time and killed. The witness accounts from the individuals on the Bridge at the time confirm this account. These accounts are publicly available.

The level of force used against the student assailant was found by an independent review board to be appropriate given the facts of the incident, and was consistent with training provided to sworn police officers. We disagree that this incident constituted an inappropriate use of force. The police officer followed the training he had received and acted in a manner consistent with the level of threat to the students and employees on the Bridge, as well as his own safety.

The records of the November 2015 use of force incident were provided to the family of the student and subsequently made publicly available under the Public Records Act. The records, including the witness statements and information about the intended targets, substantiate the circumstances of the use of force. The University has not previously discussed the incident publicly given the sensitive information about the student that the records contain. The student's family took legal action to prevent certain of this information from being made public, given the negative public reaction to their son's action and the harassment they subsequently endured. The University worked with the family's legal representatives and the family itself during the period after the incident, and during their attempt to protect the records of their son's actions. Moreover, to avoid re-traumatizing the victims of the crime, the University has refrained from discussing the details of the attack; however, the records may be reviewed by anyone interested in assessing the circumstances of the use of force.

#### **4. Transition the UCM PD from a Police Department to Community Service Model Replacing Necessary Police Department Functions in Cooperation with the Campus Community**

##### **Context:**

We need to seriously consider what functions of the UCM PD are actually necessary and whether they can be better embodied in civilian organizations not rooted in a long history of institutionalized violence against the people of color who make up the vast majority of our student body. Reflexive reliance on police powers to deal with problems in our community is an outdated and dangerous approach, and UC Merced can and should do better.



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**Response:**

The UC Merced Police Department currently operates under a community service model as demonstrated in the department's work with the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT), Student Response Team (SRT), event planning, safety education, connection with students who are in need (resources, shelter, food, and jobs), support for students that have been victimized or assaulted, and the department's community service work through its youth mentoring program.

- We agree that there are functions that we could shift away from the UC Merced Police Department. Actions in this regard that have already been identified are outlined in the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the University and various student groups, including reviewing current polices/practices and making recommendations for alternative approaches to specific activities (*e.g.*, RA training, faculty processes, 5150s, mutual aid, and reliance on UCMPD in Housing and classroom incidents) (Summer 2020)

The UC Merced Police Department currently operates under the Department of Public Safety umbrella. The UC Merced Police Department currently has the minimum standard staffing, that has two officers per shift to cover the campus, Castle, Promenade, the Downtown Center, the Olive Warehouse, the Fresno building, and off- campus events.

- As part of a shift away from the use of sworn officers in non-policing situations, we will continue to hire additional unarmed personnel as our campus grows. (Fall 2020)
- We will explore additional funding sources to increase the number of non-sworn community service and safety employees outside the Police Department, under the Public Safety umbrella. (Fall 2020)
- We also recognize the need for a resource within the UC Merced Police Department with a background in social work/social justice/counseling to help liaison with campus and community stakeholders and develop/implement effective training programs for police officers. With new funding from the Chancellor's office, we commit to a new position in the UC Merced Police Department to meet this need and will invite students, staff and faculty to serve on the search committee. (Fall 2020)

## **5. Pressure the Merced PD and Merced County Sheriff's Office to Demilitarize and the Merced Public School District to Eliminate Resource Officers**



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All of these law enforcement entities interface with and impact not only members of the campus community but also their children who attend local schools. The shift toward militarization has indicated that law enforcement interprets citizens, Black citizens in particular, as enemy threats. Police should not be militarized and schools should not feel like prisons.

**Response:**

The UC Merced Police Department has no statutory or jurisdictional standing to direct change in these areas, but it provides assistance, as requested, by the City and County law enforcement agencies in the development and implementation of diversity training/education programs, including implicit bias, sensitive training, issues related to the Black Lives Matter movement and improved community engagement. Law enforcement agencies in the Merced area do not have extensive experience dealing directly with these issues. Engagement by the UC Merced Police Department coupled with perspectives from the campus community could be a powerful way to influence change (Immediate Summer 2020).

We recognize the need to identify additional programs that might be successful in the larger community to address anti-Blackness.

- The UC Merced Police Department and campus leadership are committed to enhanced engagement with local law enforcement to support dialogue and action (Summer 2020).
- We will encourage our campus community to become more engaged with local community decision-makers including actively speaking out at City and County forums to stress the importance of community policing in a University community. We commit to providing advocacy training in this area for interested campus community members (Fall 2020).
- Finally, we propose the creation of the first-ever Merced Law Enforcement Symposium to highlight best practices for community policing across law enforcement agencies and will seek student, faculty and staff input as we develop the format and focus of the Symposium (Short-term Spring 2021).

**6. Host a Joint Campus and Community Black Lives Matter Forum****Context:**

The recently released UCM administrative statement, "In Solidarity," mentions the Police Advisory Board. To date, it has hosted only one meaningful public forum on concerns about policing and Black Lives Matter. We demand it do more to get campus and community input on how to address anti-Blackness and police violence.



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A forum has been scheduled for the week of August 24, 2020 as a beginning point with a commitment to support and sponsor ongoing campus community engagement activities in the future.

**7. Build a Reciprocal Relationship with the Black Community in Merced****Context:**

While our students are our priority, we must not be so narrowly focused on them to the exclusion of the local Black community. UCM has yet to demonstrate in actions its words of being committed to supporting the Greater Merced and Central Valley areas.

**Response:**

We are committed to building a strong, lasting and reciprocal relationship with the local Black community. Last week we met with several community members organizing “Conversations on Race, through Art, Literature, Theatre and Music” and pledged to work to promote events and line up faculty and other speakers. We are also scheduled to meet with leadership of the local Merced chapter of NAACP. Important to note is UC Merced’s participation along with other community groups of a United Way - NAACP Black Lives Matter street art project. And, we have already begun planning with community partners for Black History Month activities that will include an art exhibit at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center and a community concert, with funding from the Levitt Foundation.

Annually we sponsor one or two tables at the NAACP fundraiser banquet, with one table being set aside for UC Merced students. And we participated in the NAACP’s townhall on education in the face of COVID this spring.

Related, faculty are interested in partnering with individuals and groups in the Merced community in order to address challenging issues that confront our at-risk populations. We will continue to support community-engaged research and community-campus efforts, or programming focused on Black lives, refugee communities, undocumented families, and other populations that make up our diverse community. For instance, our recently acquired Pirkle Jones Photography Collection, which includes photographs that chronicle rural-urban life in the Central Valley, will be exhibited in the community, and the curation will involve community partners.



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## 8. Provide Compensation for Members of Anti-Blackness Task Force

### Context:

We support the collaborative approach to addressing anti-Blackness and anti-Black violence.

We believe

members of this task force (made up of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members) should be compensated rather than asked to do more free labor for the University.

This task force would report directly to the Chancellor and Provost.

### Response:

The Valuing Black Lives Task Force at UC Merced has been charged and the subcommittee conveners have been identified. Assigning task force members will continue as the new academic year begins later this month. We will consider compensation as we assess the scope and duration of the work. Compensation could include stipend, release time, academic credit and service credit.

## 9. Recruit More Black Undergraduate and Graduate Students, and Provide Resources to Facilitate Their Retention.

### Context:

Increase recruitment efforts of Black graduate and undergraduate students. The gradual decline in Black student enrollment represents a failure to proactively recruit and retain Black students on our campus.

### Response:

#### Undergraduate Outreach and Recruitment Efforts

Current outreach:

- The Willie Lewis Brown Jr. Youth Leadership Development Program (BYA) – BYA serves sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students with an in-residence experience.
- UC Merced Admissions staff chair the System-Wide Umoja-UC Transfer Admissions Planner Committee (UCTAP). UMOJA is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African-American and Black students. The UCTAP enhancements will support a need in the Umoja (a Kiswahili word meaning unity) community to better track student educational outcomes and support UC efforts in providing outreach and recruitment to African/Black students. There are over 50+ California Community Colleges that have Umoja programs.



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- Provide leadership training for admissions student ambassadors and tour guides who want to do outreach specifically targeting the African/Black community.
- Sponsored advertisement in NAACP regional and state conferences.
- We have hired a dedicated staff member who works with Black outreach community-based Organizations, i.e. NAACP, Merced County's Council on African American Student Success (CAASS), Fresno County's African American Student Initiatives, Sacramento's Black Achievers Creating Change (BACC), and sat on the Board of Black Students of California United (BSCU) a collection of BSU high schools in Northern California.

## Current recruitment strategies:

- Provide specific recruitment and yield programming for Black Students in our fall and spring webinar series
- Visit, sponsor, and participate in Black student recruitment events statewide, such as the Black College Expo fairs.
- Created flyers, and presentations for the recruitment of Black Students
- License the names of students specifically from Black communities in California for outreach and recruitment.
- Hosted a weeklong residential program for 300 Umoja students from across California.
- Hosted Umoja Day at UC Merced for local community colleges
- Black Student Admit Reception: Interim Chancellor Brostrom committed to providing one-time funding last year. Due to COVID-19, we moved to a virtual format. While admitted students said through the chat that they found the reception helpful, it may be good to do some assessment next year (if we have this again) to see if the reception has any influence on a student's decision to submit their SIR. Even if funding is not available for this moving forward, the virtual format worked well and came at no additional cost.
- Participates in UC Systemwide Community Based Organization (CBO) initiative aimed at increasing underrepresented minority students
- UCM Admissions team attendance at Black College Expos throughout the state: Los Angeles, Sacramento, Oakland, and San Diego.
- UCM Black Faculty were guest speakers at Black Students of California United (BSCU) a Leadership Conference which includes BSU High School Student Leaders from high schools throughout the state.
- UCM Black Faculty spoke to African American middle school students and their families from Fresno Unified School District during the virtual Willie Lewis Brown Jr. Youth Leadership Development Summer Program 2020 (BYA).
- UCM has a new club organization that has joined the Black Organizations on campus, A College Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This organization was developed to align all UCM Black Orgs with a National Organization that has a history of Civil Rights & Social Justice.



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**Current admissions:**

- From 2018-2020 the number of first year Black students admitted to UC Merced has increased by 40% from 899 in 2018 to 1259 students in 2020.

**Undergraduate Retention Efforts****In Progress Project**

- Establishment of a Black Book to share with prospective Black students and their supporters (highlighting resources, initiatives, clubs and organizations, etc. specific to Black student success). <https://theblackbook.ucmerced.edu>

**Expansion of Living Learning Communities:**

- AFRO Hall (current)
- Social Justice Living Learning Communities (current)
- The Office of Social Justice Initiatives will be working with Residence Education to think about future living learning communities focused on identity development, racial justice, etc.

**Establishment of Black Fraternities and Sororities (National Pan-Hellenic Council):**

- The Office of Student Involvement is working to establish Black Fraternities and Sororities at UCM.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority will be the first and will be recruiting students Fall 2020 for a Spring 2021 line.

**Intentional Programming, Initiatives, and Support for Black Student Leaders:**

- The Office of Social Justice Initiatives, Dean of Students Office, Counseling and Psychological Services, the Office of Leadership, Career, and Service, etc. work to ensure culturally relevant resources and opportunities are executed (retreats, conferences, professional development, workshops, etc.)

**Time to graduation:**

- Encouraging to note, our Black students' 6-year graduation rate is slightly above the overall campus average



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## Undergraduate Recommendations

### Recruitment:

- An admissions area specialist will be assigned to help coordinate recruitment efforts focused on increasing Black student enrollment.
- Admissions will seek funding to continue to support the Black student outreach specialist position.

### Retention:

- Black Excellence Leadership Retreat (Chancellor Munoz is funding this through OSJIIP)
- Student Led Equity, Justice, and Inclusive Excellence Board (Chancellor Munoz is funding this through OSJIIP)
- Expansion of Living Learning Communities (focused on racial justice, anti-blackness, etc.)

## Graduate Student Outreach and Recruitment Efforts:

### Currently:

- Continue to develop and implement targeted recruiting efforts to diversity-oriented undergraduate research programs.
- Active participation in ABRCMS, ERN, SACNAS and the Atlanta Consortium conferences
- Established a graduate application fee waiver program

Still, we have work to do in recruiting and admitting Black graduate students. During our most recent admission cycle (Fall 2020), we had 896 applicants and of these, 2.3% (21) identified as Black/African-American. The graduate programs with the most Black applicants were Applied Mathematics (4) and Quantitative and Systems Biology (3). From the group of 21 applicants, 42.8% (9) were admitted and of this group three individuals SIR'd. And of these three incoming Black students, only one is a PhD student. (Source: Slate Admission Data, Graduate Division).

### Future and Ongoing Recruitment Efforts:

- While we have not been successful to date, we will continue to submit UC-HBCU proposals that will establish long term partnerships with students and faculty from HBCUs. Other UCs that have been supported by this initiative can attest to its value.
- We are currently working on a proposal to Google X for UC Merced to be a hub in a network of feeder schools designed to enhance diversity in STEM training and workforce. The plan specifically includes efforts to recruit and provide professional development and training of Black graduate students.





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### Graduate Student Retention Efforts:

- We recognize that it feels isolating and challenging to be the only Black PhD student in a program. We will work on ways to help strengthen our mentorship of Black PhD students (focus on both student and faculty resources). We will also continue to reinforce the goal of recruiting more Black tenure track faculty to UC Merced.
- We support the Graduate Division's interest in developing a program where graduate students mentor Black undergraduate students.
- We support the newly formed Afrikan-Black Graduate Student Association. We will work towards identifying resources, both financial and administrative, that can help support the continued development of this peer support structure.

### 10. Hire More UCM Black Senior Administrators.

#### Context:

We are encouraged by the work of Chief Diversity Officer Dania Matos and Dean Jonathan Grady. Their hires were integral to changing UCM, but it would be an unconscionable mistake to think that they can do the work alone.

#### Response:

We acknowledge that the representation of senior administrators of color, including Black/African American senior administrators, should be increased. When vacancies and new opportunities are anticipated, we will invest the necessary resources to increase access for potential leaders. Examples of efforts include but are not limited to: focused outreach to professional associations and networks; engaging current colleagues of color to assist with outreach and networking planning and efforts; and listing position announcements in specific publications that have demonstrated success in connecting with senior administrators of color.

In addition, we will assess our current recruitment and hiring practices with the goal of minimizing bias in hiring processes, mandating training for search committees, and ensuring that committees and review teams are more diverse and representative of our community's diverse population.

Applicant pools for positions will be more carefully screened to ensure that they offer increased gender and ethnic diversity. The office of equity, diversity, and inclusion will develop enhanced



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trainings, resources and modules to assist search committees in identifying applicants that represent greater gender and ethnic diversity.

Moreover, the Office Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will be asked to develop an assessment strategy to better track and measure outcomes and progress related to this expectation. To that end, a new Deputy Diversity Officer position has been approved and will be tasked with monitoring this general area for opportunities and improvements.

### **11. Hire More Black Faculty.**

#### **Context:**

Black faculty are woefully underrepresented or nonexistent in the vast majority of departments on campus. In addition to important and innovative research, Black faculty do the heavy lifting of recruiting, mentoring, and retaining Black students. They are also tasked to disproportionately serve on diversity related committees. In order to promote the well-being of and retain Black faculty and students, UCM needs to hire a critical mass of Black faculty. The absence of Black faculty has allowed white supremacy to creep and fester into curriculum, policy, and even architecture.

#### **Response:**

Our desire to hire Black faculty remains a priority, and we acknowledge that we need and want more Black faculty at UC Merced.

We are gathering data specific to faculty diversity hires over time and will share once we have it.

The Provost, with support from the Chancellor, will commit to supporting additional opportunity hires that will endeavor to increase the percentage of Black faculty.

Related to the hiring process, we are taking active steps to ensure that Affirmative Action reporting occurs at the department level. Our Senate Diversity and Equity (D&E) Committee has crafted useful guidelines for departmental affirmative action (AA) reporting that go beyond tallying number of hires and separations. D&E asks for reporting about departmental climate as well as efforts to retain diverse faculty; we will ensure that such efforts center anti-racism to affect systemic change. These guidelines will sharpen or augment current efforts.

The Vice Provost for Faculty (VPF) office, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) office and school deans will work with the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost to advise departments on how to



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implement AA guidelines in academic year 2020-21. Each department is already developing a set of diversity goals in the context of departmental missions and strategic planning efforts. These will align with federal AA policies and with Academic Personnel Manual guidelines on maintaining departments that are “hospitable to creativity, diversity and innovation.” In the end, this collective effort will result in AA as an integral part of departmental operations.

Because retaining Black faculty is as important as hiring them, we will continue to collaborate with the Academic Senate, including Divisional Council, D&E and Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF) to promote an inclusive climate for all faculty, in keeping with our [Principles of Community](#). We already have some initiatives, such as the faculty peer mediation program, to help address climate issues and are working with campus partners to help inform faculty of services we provide to resolve conflicts in departments or classrooms before they escalate. The VPF Office will continue offering workshops and events to support under-represented faculty, including mentoring programs and faculty learning communities.

## **12. Acknowledge the Metropolis of Prisons that Surround Campus and Subsequent Action to Divest from the Prison Industrial Complex.**

### **Context:**

UCM can no longer be silent about the presence of tens of prisons and other carceral facilities within a 50-mile radius of the campus. This lack of acknowledgement is tantamount to complicity in the act of the disproportionate U.S. hyper-incarceration of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. We know these prisons weigh heavily on our students psychologically because we read the terror in their written work, hear the terror in class discussions. We demand divestment in the prison industrial complex (PIC) by, for example, preventing prison agencies from recruiting at UCM job fairs on “Scholar’s Lane.” In order to dismantle the PIC and imagine otherwise, UCM should provide funding for a Center for the Study of Prison Abolition.

### **Response:**

While certainly acknowledged, more information is needed to better understand the specific concerns of this issue and how the university can potentially be formally engaged.



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### **13. Highlight and Celebrate Solidarity Among Black and Brown People with Generously Funded-Programming and Inter-cultural Opportunities**

#### **Context:**

Use programming and inter-cultural opportunities to create solidarity and address issues that inevitably stem from living in a white supremacist, individualistic market-driven culture. Socio-economic and cultural factors lead hip-hop derived variations of the N-word to be regularly used by people who are not Black on the UCM campus. Additionally, the university's failure to explicitly acknowledge and celebrate its diversity within diversity has led to conflicts of colorism and the subjectivity of Black descendants vis-à-vis the Black Diaspora. Address these issues by celebrating the true diversity, solidarity and community of Black and Brown people.

#### **Response:**

We acknowledge the important value and contributions that Black and Brown lives have and offer this world, country, state, local and regional community, and especially UC Merced. We also acknowledge the struggle and pain that is experienced by Black and Brown people. As such, we agree to the recommendation to celebrate the true diversity, solidarity and community of Black and Brown people. Some (not only) initiatives and programs include:

- The Chancellor will provide new funding to develop a leadership program for faculty and staff of color through the Office of EDI
- Establish an Equity and Justice Board for the university
- The Chancellor's office will provide funding for a Black Lecture Series for the university and in conjunction with the local community and the Office of EDI.
- Similarly, the Chancellor's office will provide new funding to establish a Latinx Lecture series for the university and in conjunction with the local community
- Explore opportunities to establish physical spaces on campus that honor and value Black lives as well as pronounce our commitment to social justice and equity (e.g. Social Justice Plaza)
- Develop a leadership program for faculty and staff of color
- Establish an Equity and Justice Board for the university
- Initiate a Black Lecture Series for the university and in conjunction with the local community
- Similarly, establish a Latinx Lecture series for the university and in conjunction with the local community
- Explore opportunities to establish physical spaces on campus that honor and value Black lives as well as pronounce our commitment to social justice and equity (e.g. Social Justice Plaza)



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## ADDENDUM

In addition, we support the principles and important considerations consistent with our response to UCM Associate Black Student Leaders) and we will reinforce, add to, and help lead the following:

- We should not focus simply on creating new programs. Rather, we should focus on modifying our existing work and services to be more equitable, and to include important conversations about race in all of our work. We should aim to imbed policies/structural changes into our work.
- We must not “other” the problem. Too often OSJIP and the EDI office are tasked with addressing these issues. We should expect that the entire university is called to action. Too often we create specific DEI programs, rather than imbedding into everything we do.
- We can BOTH create spaces specifically for Black students AND make sure all students are engaging in these conversations. We can and should take both approaches.
- We should address racial inequities overall, AND specifically talk about anti-Black racism.
- Student Affairs units should not just align our individual work, but truly collaborate.
- We should ensure transparency in decision-making. Keep both students and all staff informed and involved. Truly make students part of the process and conversation rather than the recipients.
- Students, as well as staff, should be empowered to take the reins on any resulting initiatives.
- We should talk about issues at all levels: on campus, issues in Merced, and on the national and global scale.



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### Potential Programs, Initiatives, and Structural Changes (aligned with response to UCM Associate Black Student Leaders)

- Train SA staff (including student staff and volunteers) to have an Asset-Mindset (rather than a deficit mindset) and create curriculum that develops this mindset in students.
  - o There is too often a narrative around underrepresented students, particularly our Black students, that implies that they are less capable than their peers, and that they need extra help. That is not the case. They bring great value to the University and are just as capable as any other student. It is the system needs help. We must focus on the system of support, and we must empower our students.
  - o “Asset Inventory Exercise” (Fujimoto, Fujimoto & Huang, 2016; Referenced in Pendakur 2020). Facilitate this exercise with students to help them identify the numerous capacities and experiences they bring to campus that can help them drive their own success, rather than the deficit-mindset.
  - o Example of harmful messaging due to deficit-mindset: "They are disadvantaged, so they need help." The students may hear this, internalize this, and as a result feel less capable than their peers. They may begin to believe that they bring no value to the campus community, and that they are a burden to the University.
  
- Rather than a Common Book for all incoming students like you see at many universities, identify required short readings (articles, book excerpts, etc. available online) that highlight racial inequalities and empower ALL students to find ways to address such issues while at UC Merced and beyond.
  - o Challenge all Student Affairs units to agree to incorporate these 2-3 articles into their broad curriculum (All SA Student Staff, RA trainings, leadership trainings, orientation student staff, new students participating in orientation, residential programming, leadership development, career development, UC Merced-run internships, Community Engagement training, etc.).
  - o During a SA Meeting in May/June, facilitate breakout groups in which SA staff have conversations about these articles, and share ideas regarding how the articles can be incorporated into programming and initiatives.
  - o Choose a new set of articles each year, and ensure exposure for all students, from first-years and new transfers, to continuing undergrads and graduate students.
  - o With every unit incorporating all article into their curriculum each year, many students will be exposed to such conversation multiple times throughout the year, in various capacities of their involvement, and in every year of their tenure at UC Merced.



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- USTU-10 Classes taught by Student Affairs professionals (potential SPARK courses as well) could incorporate discussions on systematic racial inequalities both in society, but also acknowledge our own systematic contributions to the problem at UC Merced, helping students understand it is everyone’s problem, and we can all contribute to the solution.
- This work often exists as “extra work,” or “unrecognized work”. Prioritize this work by specifically including it in job descriptions.
- An Equity and Inclusion statement isn’t enough. We must outline specific programs and policies within SA that directly address these issues and ensure these are published right along with our equity statements, so that all members of the community may review, ensuring transparency.
  - o Deeply reviewing and revising policies that disproportionately impact different student populations. Examples: policies designed for traditional age students, how does this impact nontraditional
  - o Establish diversity and equity as a philosophical commitment, truly imbed it into the DNA of Student Affairs at UC Merced. Incorporate these discussions into every part of work including, budget decisions, policy changes, etc. in the way we make budget decisions, policy decisions, etc.
- Community Awareness:
  - o Racial Inequities in Merced. We are all a part of this community. It is our responsibility to understand it. We should include in new student curriculum a thorough review of the city of Merced history, the city demographics, the cultures that make up the diversity of Merced, and the issues related to racial and systematic inequities in Merced.
  - o Awareness of Merced Community: Break down the “Diversity” at UC Merced.
    - Incorporate discussions that highlight the population demographics of students, faculty, and also staff.
    - We often praise our diversity, but we don’t break it down to understand that this diverse environment feels different to different populations, particularly our Black population which has a percentage similar to most PWIs.



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- Work with faculty to potentially encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that provide opportunities to engage in the opportunities that Student Affairs puts forth as a result of this initiative.
  - o How do we help faculty and other units outside of SA better understand our resources?
  - o How do we make faculty aware of impactful extra credit opportunities relevant to classroom content?
- Compose a permanent committee for accountability: Racial & Systematic Equity in Extracurricular Review Committee:
  - o Designate representatives from all units in Student Affairs to meet three times a year: (Fall, Spring, Summer), to review Division-wide initiatives to ensure accountability and cohesiveness among efforts to imbed opportunities for conversations on these important issues into our curriculum. This committee would also make sure our programs are equitable and that we are indeed facilitating these important conversations with students.
  - o Students of all racial backgrounds and underrepresented populations should be invited to the committee.
- Additional Ideas
  - o Require diversity training for staff and faculty, rather offering them as optional.
  - o Faculty Hiring: Create a commitment to diversity statement.
  - o Create more voting initiatives to equalize whose voices are heard at the polls.
  - o Create a Resource Center for supporting this process.

### Black Student Success within OSJIIP

Please keep in mind that the Office of Social Justice Initiatives and Identity Programs started January 1, 2020. Prior to this date, social justice initiatives and identity programs were a part of the former, Office of Student Life. We expanded this work by creating a standalone office.

2019-2020 Black Student Success Initiatives:

*\*Multiple units continue to contribute to Black Student Success*

- Black Student Healing & Wellness Workshop: \$7,500 (one-time funding)
  - o \$6,000 speaker fee (Funded by Chancellor's Office)
  - o \$1,500 for food and supplies (Funded by SJIP, VCSA, and the Office of Student Involvement [OSI])
- Inaugural Black Excellence Retreat: \$8,800 (one-time funding)





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- Funded by the former Office of Student Life and VCSA
- Black Student Resource Center: \$1,000 (supplies, initiatives, etc.)
  - All cultural centers/affinity spaces had \$1,000 allocated to them
  - Keep in mind students typically go through ASUCM and the ICC for major funding support (ASUCM for example, provided over \$60,000 to BSU to help with the ABC conference at UCM)
- BSU ABC Conference attendance support: \$5,000
  - Typically, each UC VCSA provides \$2,000 to support students.
  - VCSA provided additional funds this year to support transportation, housing, etc.
  - Students also go through ASUCM and other sources for monetary support.
- Black Lives Matter Healing Workshop: \$500 (one-time funding)
  - Funded by SJIP and OSI
- Black Graduation: \$800 for program printing and food support
  - Funded by SJIP
- Black Student Admit Reception: \$2,500 for food (in-person reception did not happen due to COVID-19 so these funds were not utilized but we did host a virtual Black student admit reception)
  - Funded by Chancellor's Office (one-time funding)
- TOTAL: \$26,000

## 2020-2021 Black Student Success Initiatives/Support:

\*Please keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list. These are the confirmed programs/initiatives thus far. This list will continue to grow as we continue conversations with our Black community.

- AFRO Hall Programmatic Support: \$5,000
- Social Justice Initiatives Living Learning Community: \$5,000
  - Focused on racial justice and anti-black violence
- Student EDI Grant Program: \$10,000
- Black Graduation: \$800
- Black Student Resource Center: \$600
- Lorene Fisher is a designated staff member that focuses on supporting Black student success: \$8,000 set aside for reclassification when this process can move forward.
- BSU ABC Conference attendance support: \$2,000
- TOTAL: \$31,400