



Academic Senate

To: Senate Faculty

Fr: Jason Stajich
Chair, Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

Re: Spring Letter from Senate Chair

Dear Colleagues,

Spring has brought welcome hope and renewal to our UC Riverside campus community and I greet you with an optimistic and resolute eye toward the coming months. I have been putting off writing a campus letter for too long. Like I expect most of you, I have struggled to look beyond the immediate while battling pandemic fatigue and juggling family and work.

Layered on this is the continued anguish and anger I share at continued killings by police, dehumanization of black and brown bodies, mass shootings, attacks on communities of Asian/American and Pacific Islanders. If you wish to put energy towards actions I wish to make you aware of the [May 3 Day of Refusal](#) organized by the organization [Scholars for Social Justice](#), the [national Cops Off Campus Coalition](#), the UCR chapter of Cops Off Campus, and the Riverside Abolition Network. This is a national direct action by faculty and students who are supporting—and/or part of—a [growing national movement](#) to transform campus and public safety, [abolish police violence/terror/presence](#), and create a vision for social justice that directly reflects the spirit, demands, and critical analysis of ongoing global movements against antiblack state violence and police killings. Should you choose to honor the Day of Refusal, please approach with a spirit of peace, respect, and justice that actively honors Tyisha Miller, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Daunte Wright, Ma'Khia Bryant, and the many others whose lives have been stolen by police violence. Our colleagues at UCR are [building a critical mass](#) of colleagues, students, staff, and community members who embrace the ethical responsibility of responding to a long record of gendered antiblack and racist police harassment on and near campus.

I also share updates on some of what has been going on our campus. Recovery from the trauma this pandemic is needed in every aspect of our lives and as we return to once familiar routines, thoughtful conversation about what we want to return to will be required. As part of this conversation, I share some information helpful to relay as we move toward the end of the second year of our remote working environment while also looking ahead to safely return to more in-person interactions with vaccines in our arms.

In the News

If you have not yet read recent articles highlighting funding inequity in the UC system, I recommend you take a chance to do so. Rightly so, there is an emphasis on UCR's challenges: LA Times, [UC grapples with allegations of funding inequities, racism](#). This also follows earlier discussions of tuition raises and equity: [UC chancellors urge tuition hike amid financial crisis](#). What we knew and what these articles underscore, is that UCR is a campus of world-class researchers and intellectual leaders. We serve our students well because of the dedicated team of faculty and staff who are at the core focused on providing excellent support for our students and the research mission. Even so, we cannot always meet needs and expectations because there are insufficient resources. UCR is at the lower tier of funding based on historical and UC institutional priorities that have not valued our undergraduate and California-focused student population. How we chart the next phases in this campus's growth and the priorities of our University system requires us to voice and direct our priorities as a campus.

I am very proud of what our campus achieves in research in a diverse range of disciplines while helping support and propel our graduate and undergraduate students into successful careers. However, though we often are lauded for doing more with less, faculty will meet this praise with realism and honesty as to how we can maintain the excellence in academic research and scholarship with funding and personnel support lost.

Impact of COVID on Faculty Careers

The faculty and staff responded to the abrupt closing of campus in remarkable fashion. It is precisely this effort, ingenuity, and sacrifice that allowed instruction to proceed. But this effort to pivot to remote instruction and the restrictions on travel and in person activities froze research activities beyond the bare minimum to not lose irreplaceable resources. As is being well documented (and perhaps you answered a survey or two...), the impacts of the pandemic have not been equally felt across society and among disciplines and career stages.

In seeing this, I am particularly concerned for our early career faculty and students who have had research and scholarship impacted just as they are building their careers. I am focused on finding ways for UCR to support faculty at all stages, but especially to support those who may be in the most vulnerable positions. Over the coming months we plan to engage in more discussions through Senate committees and in more general fora where concerns and importantly, ideas can be shared. This can identify campus resources and the areas of need in a range of ways from teaching relief, research funds, and mentoring. The UC Systemwide committees are also discussing these challenges and options available, where members from all campuses are advocating. My email remains open to schedule a meeting or hear suggestions if you wish to communicate sooner as we work with the Committee on Faculty Welfare and the entire Senate on ways to support campus community.

Shared Governance

The Riverside Division of the Academic Senate continues to participate in robust shared governance on our campus and as part of the Systemwide debate and discussions. I want to thank my faculty colleagues for their work in reviewing local and systemwide proposals and the

dedicated efforts to shape the direction of our University. I also point your attention to recent remarks at the UC Regents Board Meeting (March 17, 2021) where UC Academic Senate Chair and UCR Professor Mary Gauvain gave an excellent and effective description of shared governance and its importance to the strength and future of our university system. I encourage you to take a few moments to listen to her remarks <https://youtu.be/XBF3yIQ0Ev4?t=3193> (link includes the video start at 53:13) or read the transcript of Chair Gauvain's [remarks](#).

Converting Courses to Online Offerings

The Senate will be working to provide a summary of the procedures for converting a course to online, including the expectations and description of pedagogy needed. XCITE <https://xcite.ucr.edu/> have developed teaching and technology resources available to support the transitions including special focus on making an online, and not just remote, course. With these efforts we anticipate more faculty will choose to convert courses to online offerings. We will be working to communicate clear guidelines for the Senate approval of courses to faculty who are interested to make these transitions.

I also want to share that XCITE, Undergraduate Education, and UCR Extension are organizing a seven week seminar on [The Art and Science of Student Engagement](#) which starts April 22nd from 2:00-3:00pm for faculty, teaching assistants, and instructors on best practices in online instruction and have a chance to collaborate with colleagues, and participate in activities to apply concepts learned.

In closing, several other ongoing efforts in the Senate to rethink use of student teaching evaluation, the review of General Education, and broader UC Systemwide concerns. I will continue to keep you informed and seek input as we progress on our work this Spring and Summer.

Yours In Service,
Jason

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason", located at the bottom left of the page.