



Kum-Kum Bhavnani
Telephone: (510) 987-9303
Email: kum-kum.bhavnani@ucop.edu

*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

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Dear Colleagues,

As I step down from my role as Chair of the Systemwide Senate today, I send this letter of appreciation to all UC faculty, and request Divisional Chairs and Senates distribute this letter to all senate faculty within their division.

This year has been a year like no other for the UC. I certainly cannot remember a year like it in my 29 years at the UC. [Council's wide ranging discussions and documents](#) stand in testament to my assessment.

Deep thanks on behalf of all the students, their households, and their parents for the shift to remote learning in March as California instituted its Shelter In Place Policy to tackle the global pandemic. Faculty switched to remote instruction in less than two weeks: what was achieved was truly incredible although I know it took a lot of sweat and tears (not blood, I hope...). We received ~5000 responses to Remote Instruction Survey and I learnt a lot about Qualtrics!. UCEP Chair, John Serences, led the project, and we now have a [joint Senate-UCOP report](#).¹

Other highlights:

UC Leadership Appointments

[President Drake](#) started on 15th August, and has hit the ground running. Council was thrilled by the selection, and are very appreciative of President Drake's willingness to serve the UC. Per [Regents Policy 7101](#) the Academic Council set up an Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) to advise the Regents on the search: [the final report of the AAC](#) was sent to the Regents Office in July, with a request for circulation to the full Board.

[Chancellor Muñoz](#) started at UC Merced on 1st July. We welcome him back to the Merced area as he starts his new life. Interim Chancellor Nathan Brostrom, having done a magnificent job during his year at UC Merced, now returns as CFO for the UC: he is greeted with open arms at this time of economic uncertainty for all. [Regents Policy 7102](#), on the appointment of Chancellors, was amended by the Board at the July 2020 meeting, despite a strong [letter from Academic Council](#) and a [letter from 20 previous Academic Council chairs](#) opposing the changes.

Legislative Issues

Legislative actions inevitably affect the UC, and this year was no exception. [The Supreme Court decision on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) was roundly celebrated, an initiative created by President Napolitano before she joined the UC. There have also been two systemwide reviews of the [Presidential Policy on Native American Cultural Affiliation and Repatriation Act](#). The [proposed repeal of Proposition 209](#) was enthusiastically embraced by Council, and also endorsed by the Regents at a [June 2020 special meeting](#).

¹ https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/reports/kkb-division-chairs-instructor-survey-results.pdf

Covid-19

Senate acted promptly in response to the need for a number of necessary amendments for [admissions](#), [grading](#) and [visa](#) requirements from March onwards, as well as offering [guidance for faculty merit and promotion reviews](#) and [graduate student funding](#).

Standardized Testing

In May 2020, the Regents considered the [Report of the Standardized Testing Task Force](#), and the accompanying [Recommendations from the Systemwide Assembly](#). Following a robust discussion, the Board accepted [President Napolitano's Recommendations](#) which diverged from those of the Assembly.

Policing, Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

[Policing](#), [anti-racism](#), [anti-xenophobia](#), and [diversity, equity and inclusion](#) emerged as related themes throughout the year, including in light of the strike by [graduate students at UCSC](#). In the wake of the murder of George Floyd at end May, Council successfully advocated for a few minutes of University-wide [silence and reflection](#) simultaneous with his Minneapolis memorial.

Climate Change

The [August 2019 Senate Memorial on Fossil Fuel Divestment](#), [was effective in its goals](#), and Council suggested that such [investments also be removed from the UC Retirement System](#) (UCRS). In November 2019 Council passed [three climate change](#) principles regarding the climate crisis. To that end, an Interim Working Group was convened, which developed a charge for a Climate Crisis Task Force (CCTF: item A, attached). As per procedure, nominations were requested and offered by UCoC for populating the CCTF. Given the unfolding of events, it became impossible to create a viable CCTF during my time as Chair.

Future of financial uncertainty

The [financial uncertainty for the UC](#) is severe. In order to address expected loss of revenue (item B: attached) and the costs that campuses anticipate in 2020-21, the University borrowed \$2.8 billion at a very low cost of 2.15%. \$1.5 billion of this has been allocated to campuses for working capital. The remaining \$1.3 billion will be used for capital projects at all ten campuses and to refund existing debt for cash flow savings.

In July Council wrote to President Napolitano in appreciation of the Regents' position on ACA-5:

...[Our] constitution of shared governance has brought an exceptional level of thought and wisdom to judgments... The coming months and years will be trying, perhaps more so than any other time in the history of the University. [The UC has] a century of shared governance to call on to steer us through the uncharted waters, and the Academic Senate looks forward to working with the Board of Regents and the Office of the President to steer us ultimately to safe harbor.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve the Senate and the UC in the past two years.

I welcome incoming chair, Mary Gauvain, and incoming vice chair, Robert Horwitz, and wish them the very best as they continue the proud tradition of UC's shared governance.

Best,

Kumar Kumar Bhavani

*Fiat Lux
Hágase la Luz
Let There be Light*