

Academic Senate Task Force for UC Merced
May 23, 2001
Chair's Report to the Academic Assembly

In its third year, the Academic Senate Task Force for UC Merced (TF) has continued to meet monthly, once in Merced, once on the Scripps campus at UCSD, the other meetings being in Oakland. Meeting format was altered starting in February. Past policy was to hold TF executive sessions plus meetings inviting the Chancellor and, depending on the agenda, specific staff members and consultants. In February, retaining the executive sessions, we shifted to a concept of a Task Force/ Administration meeting chaired jointly by the Chancellor and the TF Chair, and involving the Vice Chancellors as regular participants. This format has thus far been successful, providing more informal interactions, and agendas that can better anticipate topics of concern to either group. There has been rotation in the TF membership and a representative of BOARS has been added - members are listed at the end of this report.

This year has continued the pattern of change that was set last year when the Governor asked that the opening date be moved from 2005 to 2004. This year the major changes have been related to siting of the campus. Reactions to environmental concerns have been the primary concern of the staff, and have dominated UCM coverage by the press. While essential permits must still be obtained, the path to a satisfactory resolution has recently become more clear, based primarily on moving the proposed site much closer to the city of Merced, minimizing impact on the vernal pool environment and providing the income the donor trust had anticipated to improve its ability to provide college scholarships for Merced students.

Academic progress continues behind the more publicized environmental activities. There have been three areas of particular activity - generation of courses and curricula, recruiting of initial academic staff, and student affairs planning. Reference can be made to the Task Force and UCM web sites for additional background: www.ucop.edu/senate/ucmerced and www.ucmerced.edu.

COURSES AND CURRICULA

Specific courses appropriate for summer session offerings have been generated with cooperation from the Davis campus. Lacking all the administrative and faculty review capabilities of a complete campus, but motivated to begin to make the San Joaquin Valley aware of the educational advantages UCM will bring, the UCM staff and the Task Force have collaborated with Davis to generate and approve eight courses to be available to Valley students this summer.

Curricular developments have been looking to 2004 and beyond. Most important of these has been the generation of a precursor to a first catalog. UCM outreach efforts need material with which to inform high school students who will be enrolling in Community Colleges with the intent of transferring to UCM in 2004. Since these will be entering UCM as upper division students, they need guidance relating to preparation for majors that may be available when the campus opens. At the same time, we did not want to commit faculty members who are not yet on board. The approach taken was to compile the requirements for broad categories of majors on existing UC campuses, and generate lists of Community College courses now available in the Valley that would match these requirements. General guidance and tables of courses

appropriate for a range of majors are thus now in the process of being assembled into a brochure for use by the UCM outreach staff.

A further curriculum related question was raised in March. All campuses normally compile a list of potential new majors or other academic programs that might be proposed in the coming five years, primarily for the information of CPEC. Since the list is for long range planning and not a binding commitment, it was decided that UCM should send a list of logical majors that might be implemented in 2004-2005. As an indication of the thinking of the TF and Staff, considering the needs of Valley students, likely enrollment pressures from the rest of the State, and the number of faculty (100) planned to be on board at that time, the programs submitted were: World History and Cultures, Comparative Literature and Languages, Social sciences, Economics, Public Policy, Physical sciences, Biological Sciences, Mathematics, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Environmental Engineering. The intention would be to develop small in-depth programs under these umbrellas, fleshing out the programs as the faculty size grows.

In these three activities the Task Force was represented by our Committee on Educational Policy, although particularly the first two topics involved substantial discussion with the entire Task Force at several of our monthly meetings.

FACULTY RECRUITING AND APPOINTMENTS

The procedures for recruiting key administrators and faculty have been topics for Task Force discussion starting at the first meeting, held in November of 1998. At that time it was decided jointly by the Senior Associate to the President for UC Merced (Tomlinson-Keasey, eventually the Chancellor) and the Task Force that there would be at least two Task Force appointees for various study groups and on the search committees for key positions. Subsequently the question of processing faculty appointments led to the agreement that there would be a UCM CAP appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees, separate from the Task Force, and that in some sense, the Task Force and its subcommittees would play the roles carried out by "departments."

The procedure for Vice Chancellor (VC) and Dean searches has moved in general in the fashion planned. Over the past year TF members have been involved in searches, now completed, for the VC for Planning, VC for Administration and an Executive VC/Provost. A search is just starting for a VC for Student Affairs. Searches for the founding academic Deans (Social Science/Humanities/Arts; Natural Sciences; Engineering) are in process and may be completed by the end of the summer. With these key appointees on board, significant faculty recruiting will begin in the fall of 2001, barely in time to start assembling the initial cadre of 100 for opening in 2004.

While the role of the UCM CAP has, from the beginning, been fairly clear, clarifying the role of the Task Force in carrying out departmental functions has been a topic of recent concern. As a result it is now planned that, as each Dean comes on board, he or she will work with the Task Force to form one or more TF subcommittees to carry out the functions of departments for the Division involved. These subcommittees would include members of the Task Force, members drawn from the UC Academic Senate at large and UCM faculty as they are appointed. The chair of each subcommittee would be appointed by the Dean in consultation with the subcommittee members. Membership and chairs of the subcommittees would change as campus planning and growth take place.

The Deans would work with their subcommittees to lay out recruiting plans, set up search committees, generate position descriptions and carry the departmental process along flexibly in whatever form may take best advantage of the opportunities. In any case this would culminate in a "departmental" (TF subcommittee) vote in accordance with Senate Bylaw 55, and a forwarding letter from the subcommittee chair to the UCM CAP via the appropriate Dean. While the subcommittees would derive their authority from the Task Force acting as a Senate Division until the UCM Division is formed, it is anticipated that the subcommittees would soon become dominated by UCM faculty members.

One further academic personnel development in process has to do with the possibility of establishing a "paper-less" academic record keeping system that would support the recruitment, appointment and advancement functions at all levels from the department to the Chancellor, with access to various elements controlled depending on the nature of the decision to be made and the constituency involved. System development ideas are being tested in connection with the faculty appointment actions now underway related to the senior academic administrator appointments.

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Even before the existence of the Task Force, Tomlinson-Keasey, then Senior Associate to the President for UC Merced, established a working group to advise on all aspects of student life. From the time of establishment of the Task Force, we have had two members and the TF chair actively engaged as part of the Student Planning Group. Early discussions in the Task Force led to the conclusion that one way in which UCM could improve over existing UC campuses would be to strive for more substantial faculty involvement in, and responsibility for, student affairs. This is reflected in the final report to the Chancellor from the Student Affairs Planning Group (UCM web site), and in the decision that some version of an undergraduate college system, to build an improved version of the UCSD model, would be developed at UCM (Task Force web site).

Implementation of these concepts has moved toward reality with the recent initiation of a search for a Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. This involved generating a position description for this Vice Chancellor including the possibility of delegating to faculty members responsibility for executing some functions normally carried out directly under the VC Student Affairs, thus opening the way to better integration of academic and other aspects of university support of student life. Generation of the position description included substantial interaction between the Task Force and the UCM administration.

OTHER ELEMENTS OF TASK FORCE ACTIVITY

Budget Development: The process for putting together the budget requests for UCM have been different each year and will probably be different next year as well. At the time of Task Force formation there was already in place a budget plan for the first few years of campus development. As brought to the Task Force in spring of 1999 for discussion it was clear that there were shortcomings in several areas. The budget exercise in the spring of 2000 was the first to make a comprehensive analysis of the situation, with the opportunity to do this triggered by the Governor's decision to move formal opening from 2005 to 2004. The resulting plan was generated primarily by the Chancellor's Special Assistant (R. Park) and his staff, with the some Task Force consultation. Budget development activity for 01/02 is starting at this time under the aegis of the Vice Chancellor for Administration, with the process outlined formally

including involvement of the Task Force Committee for Budget. Next year we can expect that the process will be operated by the Executive Vice Chancellor.

Site Planning: Approaches to development of the site in the southern portion of the Virginia Smith Trust area began as part of the documentation submitted March 1, 2001, to the Corps of Engineers, and is continuing in hope that this site will be approved. The Task Force has had two good interactive sessions with the planners retained to produce a master plan for this site, expressing the need to think of the plan as not only meeting the requirement for an attractive, functional campus at full build-out, but providing equally attractive form when the campus is of intermediate size. Much remains to be done in this arena.

Admissions: Given the changing Systemwide scene in admissions in general, and the intensive outreach activity sponsored by UCM in the San Joaquin Valley, the Task Force clearly has work to do and will benefit from having a representative from BOARS as a Task Force member. The most important development from the UCM view is in the area of dual admissions. Presuming approval of BOARS plans by the Assembly and the Regents, UCM will have the option of deciding whether to admit students in this manner in 2002, for transfer into full student status as juniors in 2004. If the decision is to take that route there must be an accelerated development of catalog material, with the TF and a small fraction of the startup UCM faculty committing the campus to a general education program and much more narrowly defined majors than have currently been discussed. Whether to start with 2002 admissions or wait until 2003 or 2004 will be a major topic for the Task Force in the coming year.

Graduate Programs: UCM planning has from the start anticipated 10% of its initial enrollment being at the graduate level. The Task Force has, also from the start, advised that a larger fraction will be essential if the new faculty members are to mount the research programs that one would anticipate. Given the recent push to increase graduate enrollment Systemwide, we expect that in reality some graduate programs will be started in 2003, perhaps in collaboration with other UC campuses, and that from the start the graduate fraction will exceed the planning numbers.

CONCLUSION

In spite of uncertainties in development of the physical plant, the Task Force has been moving ahead to support opening in 2004. At this point it is clear that there will be a campus -- arrival of the senior academic administrators this summer and fall will dictate a heavy workload for the TF members and increased requests for participation by Senate members from across the entire University. The first three years of the TF have been challenging, particularly in making plans and decisions that would be useful, without restricting the initiative of the UCM faculty members who will follow us. The next three years will emphasize helping our UCM colleagues build their enterprise, with the Task Force gradually disappearing from the scene.

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