

The Regents of the University of California

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

November 13, 2024

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee met on the above date at the UCSF-Mission Bay Conference Center, San Francisco campus and by teleconference meeting conducted in accordance with California Government Code §§ 11133.

Members present: Regents Anguiano, Batchlor, Beharry, Hernandez, Leib, Salazar, and Sarris; Advisory members Palazoglu and Wang; Chancellors Gillman, Muñoz, Wilcox, and Yang; Staff Advisor Emiru

In attendance: Regents Analyst Sheridan, Deputy General Counsel Woodall, Provost Newman, and Recording Secretary Li

The meeting convened at 9:55 a.m. with Committee Chair Leib presiding.

In light of Regent Pérez’s announcement about the end of his term, Provost Newman thanked Regent Pérez for his leadership and his influence on how the University considers its mission.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of September 18, 2024 were approved, Regents Anguiano, Batchlor, Beharry, Leib, and Sarris voting “aye.”¹

2. DESIGNATION OF THE STRATHEARN RANCH RESERVE (SAN BENITO COUNTY) INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESERVE SYSTEM

The President of the University recommended that the Regents designate the Strathearn Ranch property as the 42nd component of the Natural Reserve System (NRS) to be administered by the NRS systemwide office and operated by UC Santa Cruz with a \$4 million to \$7 million gift that will be used to fund an endowment.

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Provost Newman introduced the item. Founded in 1965, the Natural Reserve System (NRS) was comprised of 41 wildland sites encompassing 47,000 acres. The NRS also provided access to and stewardship of millions of acres of public lands. These “living laboratories” and “classrooms without walls” have enabled the University to monitor developments in climate change, biodiversity, and water conservation, and have offered access to nature to

¹ Roll call vote required by the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act [Government Code § 11123(b)(1)(D)] for all meetings held by teleconference.

diverse communities across California. Each NRS site was managed by a UC campus and made available for use by the entire UC system.

Chancellor Larive stated that UC Santa Cruz proposed the creation of Strathearn Ranch Reserve in 2013 in anticipation of receiving the property through a bequest. The owner, who had wished to remain anonymous, had met multiple times with UCSC representatives before passing away earlier this year. The owner felt strongly that this property, which had been a working ranch for the past century, should remain in its natural state. UCSC Natural Reserves Administrative Director Gage Dayton and the owner visited UC Berkeley's Hastings Natural History Reservation, and the owner was impressed with the care of the property, the engagement of students and scientists, and the University's use of reserve property to train the next generation of conservation leaders. During the reserve designation review process, UCSC received strong support from the University-wide NRS Advisory Committee, a three-campus review committee, the NRS Executive Director, and the systemwide Provost and President. Seeking Regental approval was the last step in the designation process.

Strathearn Ranch was about a 90-minute drive from the Santa Cruz campus, included several diverse habitats, and presented significant opportunities for field-based learning, long-term research, and community engagement. UCSC anticipated teaching undergraduate and graduate courses at the property in ecology, conservation biology, geology, and environmental science, and students would be able to stay overnight for immersive learning experiences. Strathearn Ranch would also be utilized by student artists and others who wish to capture its beautiful natural landscape. There would be valuable educational opportunities for local K–12 schools and community colleges, as well as potential collaborations with tribal groups such as the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, whose traditional territory included the property. Chancellor Larive noted that it was not traditional to attach an endowment to a bequeathed property, but the owner's estate would donate an endowment of \$4 million to \$7 million to ensure the reserve's financial viability and cover ongoing staffing and operational costs.

Donald Croll, Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Faculty Director of the UCSC Natural Reserves, noted that California was the most biologically diverse state in the nation. The state represented four percent of U.S. land area but 30 percent of the country's plant and animal species as well as 30 percent of U.S. threatened species. He indicated that only 0.3 percent of California native species have gone extinct. To protect this biodiversity, one must address the changing climate, water availability, wildfire, biodiversity loss, and habitat change. UC was well situated to meet these challenges, could develop and test new solutions, and could train the next generation of conservation leaders. The University had a unique network of natural reserves and a strong legacy in environmental education and research. UC, a leader in innovating sustainability solutions, had a diverse student population and a strong tradition of collaborating with nongovernmental organization, government, and business sectors.

UC field-based education yielded positive results; students who took courses at UC natural reserves graduated at higher rates, had higher grade point averages at graduation, and had

more confidence in reaching their academic goals. These education opportunities have also closed achievement gaps among underrepresented students. Strathearn Ranch would be a strong addition to the NRS, with its diverse plant and animal species and geological formations. The property's rapidly changing woodland and grassland ecosystems would serve as a new field site for climate research. Strathearn Ranch would also be a two- to three-hour drive from the Berkeley, Davis, and Merced campuses. Mr. Croll invited the Regents to visit Strathearn Ranch and other NRS reserves.

Regent Sarris stated that he was glad that UCSC was working with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, noting that this was not included in the written materials. He asked whether UC would study the changes, such as the introduction of non-native species, that have compromised the landscape at Strathearn Ranch since aboriginal times. Chancellor Larive replied that UCSC worked closely with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band on campus programs such as the Amah Mutsun Relearning Program for native plants. The tribe also managed landscapes along the central coasts with UC and other entities. For instance, the tribe had a memorandum of understanding with Pinnacles National Park for landscape management. UC Santa Cruz has begun conversation with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band about collaborating but could not go into further detail until the Regents approve the reserve. The campus was open to interacting with other tribal groups as well. Mr. Dayton expressed enthusiasm about collaborating with tribal partners and acknowledged the changes that have occurred in the landscape at Strathearn Ranch over centuries. UCSC planned to invite tribal and other partners to create a narrative of the landscape spanning thousands of years.

Regent Beharry, referring to the written materials, noted that maintenance, upgrades, code compliance, and improvements could cost an estimated \$2 million. He asked whether UCSC had a detailed assessment of upgrade needs and operational responsibilities and how they would affect the campus. Regent Beharry asked how the campus planned to secure additional funds if the proposed gift falls short, noting that UCSC would help cover administrative, financial, and human resources needs. In his view, the Board must examine UCSC's ability to operate a new reserve given that, several months ago, the Board was considering the campus' financial straits. Chancellor Larive responded that the endowment was being offered in a range because the donor's estate has not yet been settled, but UCSC was confident that it would be within that range. Detailed upgrade needs would not be known until the reserve is designated. Some buildings would likely need seismic safety work and other improvements, but this would not interfere with use of the property. Making changes to buildings in phases could help UC Santa Cruz manage the financial aspect of operating Strathearn Ranch. Chancellor Larive noted that students camp at many reserves. NRS Associate Director Michael Kisgen explained that the three-campus review of the property served as a baseline assessment. These campuses compared Strathearn Ranch with existing reserves to ensure that the amount proposed would cover needs of the reserve. Mr. Dayton added that a detailed assessment of the facilities would determine their cost and use.

Regent Beharry noted that \$20,000 would be allocated to fellowships annually, which he estimated would make up 7.1 percent to 12.5 percent of the budget. He asked if UCSC

planned to increase this allocation and what steps the campus was taking to secure more funding. Chancellor Larive replied that UCSC was always seeking funding for campus priorities such as experiential learning. Funding could not only support fellowships but also coursework. The budget must be evaluated after the estate is settled. Ms. Newman stated that resources have been provided to the systemwide NRS in order to create a philanthropic plan that would benefit all of the reserves. Mr. Croll highlighted other fellowship programs at UCSC. The Center to Advance Mentored, Inquiry-Based Opportunities (CAMINO) offered a paid summer internship at UCSC reserves, and the campus recently received a generous donation to create additional fellowships. There were also undergraduate research opportunities in science and technology.

Regent Beharry asked what information about research and collaborations at Strathearn Ranch has been shared with other campuses. Mr. Kisgen replied that the new reserve would be one of the sites of an NRS systemwide field studies course that, like the UC Washington Center, accepted students from all campuses. Information about research was available through the NRS Research Application Management System, and the NRS reached out to campuses about systemwide courses and research opportunities. The NRS would also make sure that Strathearn Ranch is part of the California Biodiversity Network for State research opportunities. Mr. Croll added that, as a member of the NRS Advisory Committee, he discussed research and teaching opportunities, best practices, and funding strategies with faculty from other UC campuses.

Regent Anguiano stated that Strathearn Ranch was located in San Benito County, which had a population that was 62 percent Latino(a). She suggested that UC could engage the local K–12 community in sustainability work, noting that the demographics of the sustainability workforce did not reflect the diversity of California. Mr. Dayton expressed agreement, adding that it would support the public service aspect of the UC mission. UCSC was already in conversation with local politicians and community members regarding this. Mr. Kisgen added that NRS resources were tight and that adding a site was not done lightly. Strathearn Ranch was being considered given its location and proximity to local communities.

Regent Hernandez asked about the value versus the risk of operating an additional reserve. Mr. Croll responded that adding reserves enables the NRS to conduct climate change research across the state's many latitudes, elevations, and habitat types and to reach more local communities. With the addition of Strathearn Ranch, the NRS would be able to work with communities in the Gabilan Range and fill a gap in the reserve network. Chancellor Larive added that Strathearn Ranch's unique geological aspects would be of interest to earth scientists.

Regent Salazar expressed his wish to see native peoples more engaged with the UC mission given the fact that the University was conducting research on their traditional lands. He asked how Californians, particularly those from diverse communities, could become more engaged with all NRS reserves. Chancellor Larive replied that the six reserves managed by UCSC offered a wide range of engagement opportunities for students, faculty, and community members. For instance, engagement at Año Nuevo Island Reserve focused on

elephant seals, and one could take part in bird banding at Younger Lagoon Reserve. Mr. Kisgen added that engagement was an important consideration for the systemwide NRS. This would be the first time that the local population around Strathearn Ranch interacts with UC-level research or education. He shared that Provost Newman and Vice President Maldonado have provided the NRS with resources to strategize ways to raise its public profile and increase public access, especially tribal access, to the reserves.

Regent Sarris stated that the tribe in the area was not federally recognized and could offer virtually no resources, but other reserves were located on the ancestral lands of federally recognized tribes, who had federal and business resources. He suggested partnering with these tribes. Regent Sarris' tribe, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, comanaged 100,000 acres of ancestral territory with various agencies, providing resources and knowledge. Mr. Kisgen thanked Regent Sarris for his help with the California Biodiversity Network's conference on tribal partnerships that was hosted by the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. He agreed that partnering is the way forward.

Committee Chair Leib asked whether UCSC has involved Regent Rivas, originally from San Benito County, in this process. Chancellor Larive replied that the campus has contacted Regent Rivas' local office. She anticipated that he would be enthusiastic and helpful with community engagement.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the President's recommendation and voted to present it to the Board, Regents Anguiano, Batchlor, Beharry, Hernandez, Leib, Salazar, and Sarris voting "aye."

3. **RESEARCH FRONTIERS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Provost Newman introduced the discussion about artificial intelligence (AI), which was estimated to contribute up to nearly \$16 trillion to the global economy by 2030. In this year's UC Undergraduate Experience Survey, nearly two-thirds of respondents reported using AI tools like ChatGPT. The use of AI tools was most prevalent among students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and was expected to increase as technology improves and other disciplines identify meaningful applications. UC researchers have undertaken projects ranging from theoretical science to practical applications to determine how data could be safeguarded and used responsibly, and how AI technology could be used to solve problems at scale.

Ms. Newman announced that Research and Innovation at the Office of the President (UCOP) has partnered with Los Alamos National Laboratory and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory to launch AI Science at Scale, a pilot initiative that would fund projects from UC and National Laboratory researchers in multiphysics, biological systems, and materials discovery. On October 16, UC Riverside hosted a workshop regarding this

initiative that drew 186 researchers from all UC campuses and UC National Laboratories. The Request for Proposals has been released, and proposals were expected in 2025.

Joshua Viers, Professor and Associate Vice Chancellor for Interdisciplinary Research and Strategic Initiatives at UC Merced, presented the work of the AgAID Institute, which received \$20 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This was one of two UC-affiliated AI initiatives funded by the USDA, the other being the Artificial Intelligence Institute for Next Generation Food Systems led by UC Davis. AgAID's mission was to develop technological solutions that integrate AI into agriculture to solve issues such as water scarcity, labor shortages, and complex farm operations. AgAID sought to develop AI that is safe, appropriate, accessible, and affordable, that improves the quality of life and work conditions for the agricultural workforce, and that amplifies human capabilities instead of replacing them. One concept was agricultural digital twins, simulation models for optimizing processes, testing scenarios, and predicting outcomes before those processes are implemented on actual farms. AgAID was developing decision-making dashboards in the areas of Water Intelligence, Farm Intelligence, and Labor Intelligence that focus on specialty crops in the western United States and was creating opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. Water Intelligence helped water managers more effectively prepare for climate extremes such as hydroclimate whiplash, or the alternation of severe drought with severe flooding. AI systems were also being used to predict which land should lie fallow, or inactive, pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Farm Intelligence optimized the mechanical harvesting of almonds, increasing yield efficiency while reducing dust and improving air quality in the San Joaquin Valley. AgAID has received additional funding from the National Science Foundation and UC multi-campus research programs and initiatives. UC Merced, which was recently designated a UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Agricultural Experiment Station, tested and refined these innovations at its Experimental Smart Farm. The campus was committed to keeping humans involved in its AI efforts to empower the local region.

İlkay Altıntaş, Professor and Founding Director of the WIFIRE Lab at UC San Diego, shared that WIFIRE Lab was working to bridge gaps in data, AI, and advanced computing for wildland fire science and management, which needed both proactive and reactive solutions. Over the last decade, WIFIRE Lab has developed two online platforms for fire response and mitigation. Firemap used aircraft intelligence, remote sensing, data, and predictive modeling to support the initial response to a fire and was used by firefighters in Colorado and California, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). This online platform provided real-time weather and ignition information and used AI to monitor and predict the spread of fire. AI was also used to assess damage and the risk of post-fire floods and landslides. BurnPro3D was developed to support the planning and implementation of prescribed burns in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Forest Service, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. This platform created fire simulations and compared fuel consumption and risk under different scenarios. BurnPro3D was supported by the UC Climate Action Program and CAL FIRE to ensure its usefulness and to democratize wildfire risk reduction in vulnerable communities. The WIFIRE Commons enabled real-time access to data sets generated by San Diego Gas and Electric Company, which led to

the development of a fire and weather intelligence platform. With support from CAL FIRE, WIFIRE Lab has built a new data hub for the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force that fulfills reporting requirements using existing data from various agencies. Furthermore, WIFIRE Commons was being expanded to a national scale. Ms. Altıntaş concluded by highlighting the progress made in the last decade, citing the ability to create immersive visualization of scientific data for training, decision-making, and communication regarding vulnerable communities.

Giovanni Vigna, Professor and Director of the AI Institute for Agent-Based Cyber Threat Intelligence and Operation (ACTION Institute) at UC Santa Barbara, stated that the ACTION Institute worked to protect the nation's infrastructure from sophisticated threats, some of which were backed by nation-states. AI and cybersecurity experts at the ACTION Institute were developing AI-enabled intelligent security agents, who operate with autonomy to assess infrastructure security, detect attacks, and respond to them, and partnering with industry on technology transfer. Its research plan was divided into two aspects: foundational AI and cybersecurity. The ACTION Institute was also developing new tools and classes to educate the workforce and students on AI and cyber security, such as large-scale online courses and "capture the flag" competitions for high school and undergraduate students. Mr. Vigna envisioned that network protection would be bolstered through interaction with intelligent security agents; such reasoning capability could help predict future threats. He emphasized the importance of applying AI techniques responsibly, ethically, and in a way that always keeps humans informed and involved.

Regent Hernandez asked how AI could help reduce dust in mechanical almond harvesting. Mr. Viers noted that the San Joaquin Valley had a severely elevated incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases, and that California had nearly 1.5 million acres of almond fields. To minimize dust, AgAID's approach was to keep almonds off the orchard floor or to use rollers instead of sweepers. AI helped maximize yield by optimizing the vibration of mechanical tree shakers.

Regent-designate Wang asked whether the application of UC Responsible AI Principles was being discussed or tracked. Ms. Newman responded that this could be discussed at a future meeting. A dedicated, multi-campus group of scientists disseminated ethical principles to UC researchers, and grants frequently asked researchers about the ethical implications of their work. In Ms. Newman's view, the University was seen as a leader with regard to ethical concerns in AI, a fast-moving field that required a quick response.

Regent-designate Wang asked how UC was investing in partnerships with industry, the nonprofit sector, and the community, as well as other potentially revenue-driving relationships. Mr. Viers replied that, through its Farms Food Future Innovation Initiative, UC Merced partnered with UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Central Valley Community Foundation, Fresno State University, and others. With Regental approval, UC Merced has created a 501(c)(3) organization that matched UC research with local community needs. Mr. Vigna stated that the ACTION Institute was partially funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and worked with IBM, OpenAI, and Google; the Institute was in constant communication with the technology sector. Ms. Altıntaş stated

that that WIFIRE Commons focused on maintaining open science and open data in the fire technology industry. She was a member of CAL FIRE's Wildfire Technology Research and Development Review Advisory Board. The San Diego Supercomputer Center, where Ms. Altıntaş was Chief Data Science Officer, partnered with UC ANR and others to determine gaps, what ideas could be incubated, and how to scale and sustain partnerships.

Regent Anguiano asked about undergraduate research opportunities. Mr. Viers stated that undergraduate students participated in the development of AgAID's digital twin software application and would be able to view real-time simulations at the smart farm through the application. Mr. Vigna stated that the ACTION Institute's infrastructure, used to test agent-based applications, was created and managed by undergraduate researchers, and undergraduate teams participated in "capture the flag" competitions as a form of training. Ms. Altıntaş stated that the WIFIRE Lab offered undergraduate students experiential learning projects and design challenges, including a new design challenge on sustainable food systems in partnership with UC ANR and industry.

Faculty Representative Palazoglu shared that the Academic Senate has appointed a workgroup on AI chaired by former Faculty Representative James Steintrager. The workgroup's four focus areas were the use of AI in admissions, teaching, research, as well as its use relative to faculty workload and welfare.

4. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY SUB-REPORT ON DIVERSITY: UC 2030 – EQUITY IS EXCELLENCE**

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Provost Newman introduced the item, emphasizing the importance of eliminating disparities for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students in order to achieve the UC 2030 goals of adding 1.2 million graduates, reaching a graduation rate of 90 percent, promoting timely graduation, and ensuring that opportunities afforded by a UC education are available to all UC students.

Vice President Brown noted that the UC 2030 goals were now embedded in the University's "impact" webpage to increase their visibility, and she introduced a separate dashboard highlighting UC's progress in achieving its timely graduation and parity goals. In 2023, freshman four-year graduation rates were 73 percent for all students, 68 percent for Pell Grant recipients, 66 percent for first-generation students, and 63 percent for underrepresented, or Black, Latino(a), and Native American students. The transfer two-year graduation rates were 64 percent for all students, 61 percent for Pell Grant recipients, 62 percent for first-generation students, and 61 percent for underrepresented students. The dashboard also displayed the number of additional students who needed to graduate in a timely manner to meet the four-year and two-year graduation goals. Information could be disaggregated by campus. The dashboard also demonstrated how graduation rates relate to retention rates as well as the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Retention among transfer students dropped to about 91 percent in 2020 and has since risen to about 93 percent. In

“UC 2030 – Equity is Excellence,” Institutional Research and Academic Planning (IRAP) at the Office of the President organized ten strategies campuses employed to achieve these goals under four themes. Under the theme “Excellence in Teaching and Learning,” campuses were working to ensure that gateway courses were not barriers to majors, particularly those in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. IRAP planned to release a report on this work in the spring. Under the theme “On-Time Graduation,” campuses sought to remove institutional barriers, shifting students from academic probation to a path to recovery. Under the theme “Student Experience,” the report illustrated campuses’ efforts to become Minority Serving Institutions. Three UC campuses have been awarded the Seal of *Excelencia* for their work in providing experiential learning, financial aid, and living and learning communities to Hispanic students. Under the “Leadership” theme, campuses were building leadership goals into their strategic plans.

UC Davis Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Mary Croughan described how UC Davis’ strategic plan, “To Boldly Go,” aligned with UC 2030 goals. The strategic plan’s first goal, providing an educational experience that prepares UCD students to address the needs and challenges of a diverse and changing world, has served as a foundation for equity and student success initiatives. UC Davis was an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander–Serving Institution (AANAPISI) and was now eligible to apply for a Hispanic Serving Institution designation. Each campus committee that has worked on student success has contributed to UCD’s improved graduation rates and equity while indicating areas of improvement. Dashboards were provided to all faculty and leadership to access progress, and Ms. Croughan met weekly with the Budget and Institutional Analysis teams to examine data, discuss recommendations, and ensure that the campus’ budget reflects its priorities. UC Davis evaluated student outcomes from each course, major, and department, looking for differences based on demographic characteristics, and similar metrics were being used in performance reviews and annual evaluations of deans. In particular, an examination of the grade distributions, drop rates, and major transfers of first-year mathematics, chemistry, and biology courses found that some students would benefit from introductory courses or series; preliminary data have shown that the chemistry series has been a success.

UC Davis has made substantive changes to undergraduate advising: investing an additional \$2.3 million last year to increase the number of advisors; creating a centralized advising unit and mechanisms that remove barriers for students; and establishing an executive work group to ensure a cohesive approach to advising across the campus. UC Davis was also developing an early warning system that would identify and aid struggling students and train faculty, and the campus planned to launch new degree auditing software that would provide accurate and transparent information to advisors and students. These initiatives had not been successful in the past due to a decentralized approach to undergraduate education, but recent successes could be attributed to a shift to a more data-driven culture, in which administrators listen to faculty and staff, who examine the data and best practices and make recommendations. Administrators were also working closely with the UC Davis Division of the Academic Senate. UC Davis was now taking a holistic approach, exploring how the components of undergraduate education, graduate education, research, facilities, staff support, and faculty workloads intersected and interacted with each other, and the campus’

Sustaining Teaching and Research Task Force (START) was reviewing and implementing recommendations to transform these components.

Regent Beharry shared his concern that differences in funding for various Minority Serving Institution (MSI) designations would pit groups against each other. According to UCLA alumna Kristine Espinoza, federal law prevented institutions from accessing funding under more than one MSI designation. According to Robert Underwood, former President of the University of Guam, the HSI designation provided more money than the AANAPISI designation. Statistics have shown that the AANAPISI designation provided less funding than other designations, and fewer institutions were pursuing it. Citing the Higher Education Act of 1965, Regent Beharry noted that no AANAPISI shall receive funds under any other provision of the statute. S. 2317, the Minority-Serving Institutions Fairness Act, was introduced in 2015 and had California State University support but not UC support; the bill did not pass. Regent Beharry suggested that the Office of Federal Governmental Relations (FGR) explore future legislation that would allow campuses to apply for funding under multiple MSI designations. Associate Vice President Chris Harrington replied that FGR could examine S.2317. He noted that, aside from funding, MSI designations helped institutions apply for funding from other agencies.

Regent Beharry asked whether graduate student data was available through the UC 2030 dashboard. Ms. Brown replied that the dashboard displayed information about the undergraduate aspects of the UC 2030 goals; one data point was the proportion of undergraduate students who pursue graduate education. The graduate aspect of the UC 2030 goals focused on the proportion of students coming from more diverse institutions.

Regent Beharry praised the diversity of his social circle at UC Merced, adding that he would not have been exposed to such diversity had he not pursued higher education. Ms. Newman remarked that these outcomes were due to UC campuses' commitment to meeting these goals.

Committee Chair Leib stated that Regent Beharry's comments reminded him of the importance of having a student voice at Regents meetings. He commended Regent Beharry for his research on this subject.

Chancellor Muñoz shared that the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Board engaged in legislative advocacy and supported a bill that would provide additional funding for deferred maintenance at HSIs. He suggested that FGR and campus government relations offices look into this potential funding source.

Regent Anguiano noted that California K–12 students were over 50 percent Latino(a), but this was not the case at UC. She asked what best practices UC Riverside and UC Merced could share so that student diversity could be improved at other campuses. Regent Anguiano recalled that the Regents Task Force on Institutional Growth recommended that UC reflect the diversity of the state. Chancellor Muñoz replied that UC should interact more with and invest early in the K–12 system. Delays in the rollout of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid had a significant effect on families and led to about 12 percent

fewer college applications in California. The University must do better to educate families about the return on investment of pursuing higher education. Communicating in English, Spanish, and other languages via platforms to which certain populations are accustomed would help bring credibility to UC's message, particularly in the future political environment. UC Merced and other campuses had the capacity to enroll more students. Chancellor Wilcox underscored the importance of partnerships as UC alone could not improve diversity. Ten years ago, UC Riverside launched Growing Inland Achievement, a K–16 collaborative with the California State University, the California Community Colleges, K–12 schools, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, and the private sector. UCR created the Riverside County Education Collaborative to examine high school achievement and was a founding member of the University Innovation Alliance, a national effort. UCR has worked hard to become part of local and national collaborations to change the educational landscape. Chancellor Muñoz expressed agreement that UC could not achieve this alone. The prior week, UC Merced hosted the inaugural Strategic Transfer Summit, in which leaders from all three segments of California public higher education discussed how to improve partnerships. The \$65.1 million grant that launched AgAID was the most significant federal grant awarded to the Central Valley and was made possible through partnerships.

Regent Sarris noted potential future political challenges. Students might be worried about leaving their families to attend college when family members could be deported. He thanked Chancellor Muñoz for planning to visit two majority-Latino(a) high schools in the Graton Rancheria area.

Regent Sarris asked how Filipino(a) students were classified at UC, noting that this could affect the statistics being reported. Ms. Brown replied that Filipino(a) students were reported as Asian. The University was looking into disaggregating data further, such as among underrepresented students. At present, the data could be disaggregated to indicate individuals who identify with more than one ethnicity. Ms. Newman stated that the University could make a compelling case for higher education by engaging with the Governor's Master Plan for Career Education, which was of great importance to first-generation students. To improve outreach to regions with lower rates of transfer to the University, UC Merced planned to offer asynchronous online mathematics courses to several community colleges from these regions. Chancellor Muñoz added that the program offered work to instructors and required courses for transfer to UC.

Regent Salazar asked how the five-year graduation rate differed from the four-year rate. Ms. Newman responded that graduation rates were typically measured in four years and six years. The six-year graduation rate was higher, but UC was aiming for graduation in four years because it was the most financially efficient for students. Ms. Brown stated that the University was close to achieving its goal of a six-year graduation rate of 90 percent. The five-year graduation rate was higher than the four-year rate. Campuses were examining what courses were preventing students from graduating in four years and exploring opportunities during the summer.

Ms. Croughan added that UC Davis was developing analytics to recommend pre-matriculation programs for students who might struggle in their first year as freshman students or transfer students. UC Davis was expanding its Special Transitional Enrichment Program (STEP) to more students and ensuring there is no financial barrier to participation, as first-generation students often work during the summer to pay for their education.

5. UPDATES ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID AND PATH TO DEBT-FREE UC

[Background material was provided to Regents in advance of the meeting, and a copy is on file in the Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff.]

Committee Chair Leib invited Student Observer Audrey Jacobs to make remarks.

Ms. Jacobs noted that, last year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) was revised for the first time in 40 years, with the Student Aid Index (SAI) replacing the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Students could receive a stipend of up to \$1,500 within this new model, but having multiple children in college would no longer be considered, and families with multiple children in college would receive much less aid. The UC Office of the President has partnered with campus financial aid offices to estimate the effect of these changes. Some students have noted that their financial aid would not be prorated if they do not enroll for a full academic year. Ms. Jacobs expressed gratitude to President Drake for speaking to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona about legislation that would limit the use of a prorated SAI under certain circumstances. Students wished to be informed about ongoing conversations with the Department of Education and possible solutions. At UC Irvine, FAFSA changes and migration to a new processing platform resulted in about ten percent of students not receiving their financial aid disbursement. This disproportionately affected students who were undocumented or came from families with mixed immigration status. Financial aid delays affected not only class registration but also students' ability to pay rent and buy groceries. Ms. Jacobs shared that an undocumented UCI student who was also a single mother quit her job to focus on school full-time and had to borrow money to cover her food and transportation expenses. Students Advocating for Immigrant Rights and Equity (SAFIRE) at UCI found that students were most often concerned about housing insecurity, difficulty meeting basic needs, stress from tuition and fees, the lack of academic resources, and strains on emotional and mental health. Ms. Jacobs expressed concern that FAFSA delays were also anticipated next year and called on the University to counter them by streamlining FAFSA processing, improving communication, and obtaining reliable disbursement timelines.

Provost Newman introduced the item, a discussion of progress toward achieving a debt-free UC education by 2030 and the challenges of meeting this goal. The rollout of the new FAFSA, for one, upended processes for providing services and financial aid packages. Ms. Newman acknowledged the hard work of financial aid, admissions, and registrar's offices across the UC system, commending their commitment to students during this crisis.

Associate Vice Provost for Student Financial Support Shawn Brick stated that changes were made to the FAFSA form, how it was submitted, as well as the formulas for

determining student eligibility. In his view, this FAFSA rollout was the most disruptive of his 25-year career. The form should have been available starting October 1, 2023 but was delayed until January 1, 2024. Typically, schools receive FAFSA data about three days after a student submits the form, but student data were not sent to schools until March and April. In February, campuses would typically send admission offers followed by financial aid offers one or two days later, and freshman applicants would be asked to accept offers by May 1 and transfer applicants by June 1. Colleges, universities, and States have built their processes and infrastructure around this timeline, including not only admissions and financial aid but also campus housing, orientation, and summer programs. Aside from the impacts noted by Ms. Jacobs, the University has been able to send financial aid offers and disburse money to the vast majority of students for fall 2024.

UC Santa Cruz Director of Financial Aid Lorena Lara Rodriguez shared the challenges that the campus faced. Data from about one-third of FAFSA forms submitted from September 2023 to March 2024 had inconsistencies. By April 2024, financial aid staff were determining what data were usable and assembling financial aid packages. UCSC shared these issues with the U.S. Department of Education, which reprocessed most of the affected applications by May 1. The campus did everything it could to reduce stress for students and families, offering newly admitted students financial aid estimates and flexible deadlines and assisting continuing students over the summer. Most students received financial aid on time for the fall quarter, but the financial aid office was still assisting a small group of students, including about 760 students with mixed-status families. These were U.S. citizen students who had at least one parent who was undocumented or had no Social Security number. The new form required every student and parent to undergo an identity verification process, and those without a Social Security number underwent a series of workarounds. Ms. Rodriguez recalled helping one student whose mixed-status family was initially hesitant to apply for financial aid because it would require providing identity documents to a federal agency. UC worked with the California Student Aid Commission to allow students from mixed-status families to submit the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), which typically gave undocumented students access to State and institutional aid. However, this was only a stopgap measure, and UCSC would work with these students to file FAFSA forms to receive federal aid. Ms. Rodriguez expressed gratitude to the Office of Federal Governmental Relations for relaying to the U.S. Congress and the presidential administration the impact of FAFSA challenges on students. She noted that two UC financial aid directors served on the board of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

UCSC Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Michelle Whittingham, stated that, in early January, the University's chief enrollment officers recognized the need for a greater level of collaboration given the uncertainty that staff and students faced. She asked Mr. Brick and Han Mi Yoon-Wu, Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, for a meeting of admissions, financial aid, and enrollment leadership every other week regarding the FAFSA rollout. UC was one of the first university systems to move the deadline for freshman applicants' Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) from May 1 to May 15, and UC moved its financial aid deadline to align with the State's timeline. UCSC kept the SIR deadline for transfer the same, but the campus

offered flexibility to all students on an individual basis. Moving the SIR deadline placed significant pressure on summer orientation programs, housing for new and continuing students, and curricular planning. Campuses did not wish to lose progress in enrolling diverse classes, and early numbers indicated success in this regard. In March 2025, UCSC would meet with the Department of Education to share the challenges the campus faced, how it responded, and its needs. UCSC would also offer to collaborate.

Ms. Newman noted uncertainty about the future of the Department of Education, as well as financial aid and Pell Grants, given the results of the recent U.S. presidential election.

Committee Chair Leib asked that students be invited to share their personal experiences with the FAFSA delays at a future meeting. Ms. Whittingham responded that this had been discussed during the preparation of this presentation, but student confidentiality was a concern. She noted that students were helping beta test the 2025–26 FAFSA at UC Merced. Ms. Rodriguez stressed the importance of student testimony and the wide variety of FAFSA experiences among students. Committee Chair Leib suggested that FGR and California’s U.S. senators help relay student testimony.

Chancellor Muñoz called attention to the fact that problems have not been fully resolved; experts anticipated issues in the coming year. The number of students affected was not inconsequential; at UC Merced, an estimated 300 to 500 students were affected. He agreed that student testimony was important; students were smart and resilient, but these FAFSA issues, on top of a host of other issues that students were facing, could discourage them from attending college. In serving as beta testing site of the next FAFSA for the nation, the University could use its identity to advocate on behalf of students.

Committee Chair Leib offered that student experiences could be shared in a closed session meeting.

Regent Anguiano asked that the following information be provided the next time this topic is presented: the number of UC students affected by the FAFSA delays and, if available, the number of students who did not apply to the University because of financial aid issues.

Regent Hernandez, noting the large number of students who apply but are not admitted to more selective UC campuses, suggested staggered admission so that students could consider additional UC campuses with more capacity. He stated that he did not understand why UC Merced has not yet exceeded 10,000 students. Ms. Newman replied that she and the chancellors have discussed the creation of a cascading system of enrollment; an update would be provided in the future. Ms. Whittingham added that admissions staff inform students who are not accepted about referral programs or submitting a late application, and staff across UC were checking waitlists. Considering students on campus waitlists versus those who have not applied to a campus presented a conundrum.

Committee Chair Leib requested that he, Regent Anguiano, and Regent Reilly meet with Ms. Newman regarding the University’s expiring contract with the publisher Springer

Nature and that the matter be added to the January agenda. Over the last month, he has been asked by legislators and others about this contract.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Attest:

Secretary and Chief of Staff