



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA MERCED  
Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion



Listening Tour Executive Summary:  
**Where We Are and Where We Are Going**



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**4** Listening  
Tour  
Sessions

**2** Online  
Qualtrics  
Surveys

**3** Administrators

**11** Faculty

**156** Staff

**7** Graduate Students

**13** Undergraduate Students

*And counting...*

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# A letter from Associate Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer Dania Matos



Dear Campus Community,

Upon arriving at UC Merced in July 2019, I embarked on a series of structured listening tour sessions to provide a brave space for the campus community to share your lived experiences on our campus and for me to ensure your voices were heard both on strengths and opportunities here. These were coupled with informal monthly drop-in hours that allowed me to meet you where you are and listen from there, too. These drop-ins are still currently being held and I thank you for trusting me and showing up authentically.

What became clear was the need to center our work through an equity and justice minded approach. At the core of this approach is an awareness, acknowledgment, and disruption of power hierarchies and structural inequalities. Campus-wide strategies should not be directed from those in positions of power to the rest of the campus community; instead, it should be a collaborative effort that creates a space for those whose voices often go unheard. The listening tour was the first step in this approach, but not the last. While our plan was to host a playback/feedforward sessions on the findings in Spring 2020,

COVID-19 had a different plan, but it did not stop the work. We still intend on hosting this session when we are able to physically come together, as well as the listening tour session that will take place in the Merced community. However, we did not want this to stop us from getting the results to you.

To help with the organization and presentation of the listening tour findings, Hala Alnagar, a graduate student researcher in the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, analyzed and organized the data into the themes presented in this report. It is interesting to note that the listening tour findings mirror many themes found in various campus climate surveys and my informal drop-in hours. In the following pages, you will find:

- An outline of our listening tour timeline, thematic structure, and the process of data analysis
- A presentation of our findings
- Our next steps, including our newly developed equity, diversity and inclusion strategic framework and how I will always continue listening

These findings will be used to inform our work from this day forward. They will be considered in upcoming conversations regarding campus climate action planning, the organization structure of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, including my role and positionality as well as the development of the inaugural equity, diversity and inclusion university strategic plan. We will also soon launch a strategic planning website to ensure this process is transparent and we remain accountable.

With care and concern in ensuring our campus does better and is better in every way possible, I want to thank you all for taking the time to share yourselves – it is humbling and inspiring! It is an honor to create this with you. This is our first collective step as we embark on a journey of building belonging, building excellence, and building together as we transform our future.

Always listening

Dania Matos, Associate Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer  
Pronouns: she/her/hers



# 2020 & Beyond: Building & Thinking Forward

Associate Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer Dania Matos invited staff, students, faculty, alumni, parents and friends of UC Merced to join her for 2020 & Beyond: Building & Thinking Forward, a series of structured listening sessions. Together, campus community members explored three key themes that will guide the formation of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The goals will form the foundation of a campus-wide strategic framework and strategic plan.

Sessions were scheduled in September, October, November, and January (see below) and two Qualtrics surveys were sent out for September and January sessions to accommodate those unable to physically attend the events. There were plans in place for a listening tour session in May that would bring forward the voices of city of Merced residents; however, due to the distancing protocols taken in response to COVID-19, this session will be postponed until it is safe for us to convene together in a physical space. In the meantime, the EDI office continues in its efforts to build relationships with community organizations by sharing the findings of our listening tour and seeking feedback as we develop our strategic framework.

## Listening Tour Timeline





## Listening Tour: **Identifying Themes**

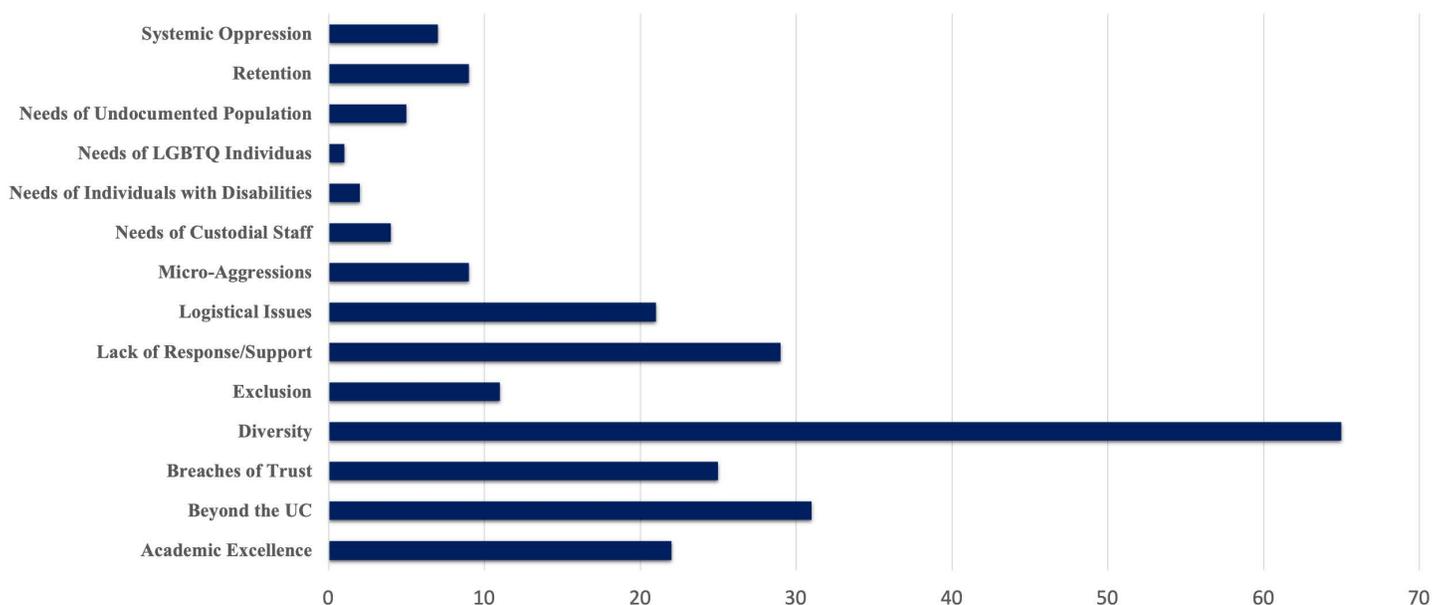
Questions were posed that explored each session's overarching theme. Participants had the opportunity to answer questions on belonging, excellence, and togetherness and to explore how our university thrives in each of these areas as well as where we need to improve. There were opportunities for group discussions where individuals volunteered to share their perspective. In order to collect the data anonymously, all participants wrote their responses on note cards without identifying themselves. These note cards were collected and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded using the qualitative coding software Atlas.ti. A list of codes were developed based on the emerging themes within the responses. While the questions varied between sessions, participants still brought forward topics that revolved around similar themes.

On the following page is a code occurrence table that presents a condensed list of codes that were developed and the number of times each code was assigned to the responses. While we are taking all of the themes into consideration, we are currently focusing on the themes that far outweighed the others in terms of occurrence. These themes include increasing diversity among staff, faculty, and senior leadership and engaging with the Merced community.



# Listening Tour: Identifying Themes

Condensed Code Occurrence Table



While the above table lists 14 codes, there were actually a total of 52 codes used during the analytical process. The codes have been condensed to make it easier to present the general themes that were common concerns of the members of our community. Each code above contains a number of sub-categories that fall beneath it. For example, while "Diversity" is listed as one code with 65 occurrences, there were a total of 6 categories, including general (5), senior leadership (15), faculty (22), staff (12), students (9), and curriculum/majors (2). While we focus on diversity and community engagement (coded as "Beyond the UC") in this report, we plan to pay attention to other areas of concern that are present in this table as we plan our next steps. If you have questions about the full list of codes, please contact the EDI office via our [online feedback form](#).



## Diversity: **Staff, Faculty, and Senior Leadership**

When presented with a question on our campus's achievements relating to excellence and diversity in the next 20 years, a majority of our campus community responded with a desire for increased diversity among staff, faculty, and senior leadership.

I hope UC Merced hires a more diverse population of professional **staff**, not just teaching faculty, but a **diverse group of faculty in facilities, students first center, housing, dining, etc.**

Our **faculty** and staff hires are a representation of our student body.

75% of **senior leadership** will be reflective of the student body.

Not only did members of the UCM community believe that diversity was key to the campus's continued success, but they expressed a conscious desire to achieve diversity and excellence congruently, without needing to sacrifice one for the other.

I hope we will **hire people of color** not just to diversity UCM but **because they are exceptional.**

I hope we will be a **top ten research institute** with the **most diverse faculty, staff, and senior leadership.**



## Beyond the UC: **Unity with the Merced Community**

The desire for a closer relationship with our wider Merced community came up as a response to multiple questions. When it thrives, our relationship with the wider Merced community elicits a sense of belonging; when it is lacking, it can present members of the campus community with a sense of exclusion.

**Belonging:** Volunteering with community members to provide resources for those in need in Merced and being welcomed as a member of the team looking to improve the city and county.

**Exclusion:** The Merced community looks on UC Merced as a closed-off glass-and-concrete bubble. Those that aren't looking to get funding or contracts by working with the University generally view it with a mix of disdain or indifference.

These were some of the responses related to community-engagement that were elicited when participants were asked what they hope the university can say we achieved relative to excellence and diversity in 20 years:

Community collaborations that have **community members from the very beginning.**

We have built a good relationship with the community around UC Merced. It is no longer the UC and Merced. **We are one.**

I hope to say we achieved partnering with our SJV and Merced community, **not by gentrifying but through aid, engagement, and education.**



## Additional findings: **Thriving and Improvement**

Alongside the themes that have been presented, we were able to identify specific areas where our community members believed the university thrived and areas where the university needed improvement. The framework of these categories was derived from Brene Brown's book, *Rising Strong*. In it, she outlines the "Anatomy of Trust" with the acronym BRAVING. Participants were presented with the following terms and definitions:

- **Boundaries**: I trust you if you are clear about your boundaries and you hold them, and you're clear about my boundaries, and you respect them.
- **Reliability**: You do what you say you're going to do. We have to be very clear on our limitations so we don't take on so much that we come up short, and don't deliver on our commitments.
- **Accountability**: I can only trust you if when you make a mistake, you're willing to own it, apologize for it, and make amends. I can only trust you if when I make a mistake, I am allowed to do the same.
- **Vault**: What I share with you, you will hold in confidence. Also, you do not share things with me that are not yours to share, because then my trust in you is diminished.
- **Integrity**: Choosing courage over comfort, choosing what's right over what's fun, fast or easy, and practicing your values not just professing your values.
- **Non-judgment**: I can fall apart, ask for help, and be in struggle, without being judged by you, and you can do the same with me. If you cannot ask for help and they cannot reciprocate, that is not a trusting relationship. Real trust doesn't exist unless help is reciprocal in non-judgment.
- **Generosity**: Our relationship is only a trusting relationship if you can assume the most generous thing about my words, intentions, and behaviors. And then check in with me.

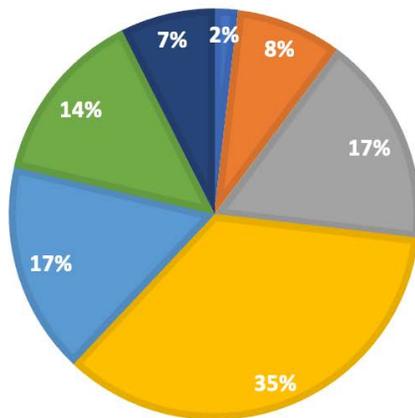


## Additional findings: **Thriving and improvement**

In a group activity, participants were asked to pick one part of Brene Brown's Anatomy of Trust which represented where they believed the university thrived the most and one area in which the university needed to improve the most.

### UNIVERSITY THRIVES

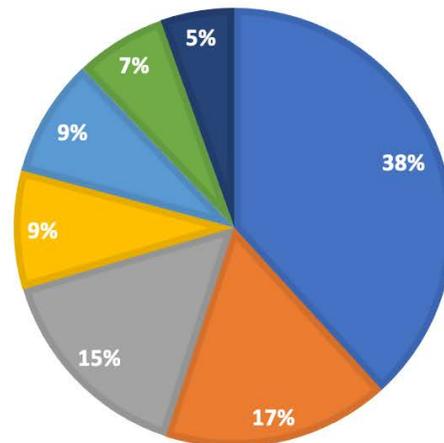
■ Accountability ■ Reliability ■ Non-judgement ■ Integrity ■ Generosity ■ Boundaries ■ Vault



A large majority of participants believed that the university thrived the most when it comes to integrity.

### UNIVERSITY NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

■ Accountability ■ Reliability ■ Non-judgement ■ Integrity ■ Generosity ■ Boundaries ■ Vault



On the other side of the conversation, an overwhelming percentage of participants believed the university needed to improve when it comes to accountability.



## Listening Continued: Listening Tour Follow-up Focus Groups

While the listening tour was a wonderful opportunity to hear the concerns from various parts of our community, it demonstrated the need to continue the conversation in a more concentrated effort. The EDI office plans to conduct a number of focus groups that would further tease out the findings that came forward in this report, including the most prevalent issues – diversity among staff, faculty and leadership, and building a relationship with the wider Merced community – but also incorporating some of our other findings that were not elaborated on in this report.

First and foremost, these focus groups will each be made up of individuals who represent the same group on campus – i.e. undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, etc. The listening tour sessions were able to bring us all together over collective issues, but the focus groups will allow us to hone in on the specific needs of each group. Because of the nature of the listening tour conversations, we were not able to connect pieces of feedback with the role of the individual who provided it. Thus, these focus groups would allow us to identify similar concerns across groups, but to also understand where the concerns are unique to a specific portion of our campus community. Most importantly, when recruiting participants for these focus groups, we will pay special attention to power dynamics to ensure that participants are in a space where they can express themselves freely. For example, staff members will not be in a focus group with their supervisor and professors will not be in the same focus group with the head of their department.

The questions we bring to each focus group will be a continuation of the questions asked at the listening tour sessions, based on themes around belonging, inclusion, and excellence. We will also add questions that will aid us in teasing out the themes mentioned in this report.

We will begin recruitment for these focus groups near the end of Fall 2020, and conduct them in Spring 2021. The number of focus groups will vary based on the number of participants we are able to recruit, but each focus group will consist of 8-10 individuals. Each group should be large enough to elicit a varied conversation with multiple points of view, but small enough to maintain an intimate and structured space.



## Listening continued: **People First Workgroup**

In the middle of preparing our listening tour results, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic required us to take a moment of pause to reevaluate our office's next steps and the timeline of those next steps. While we had initially planned to present the listening tour results at a playback session scheduled for the end of April, we took the time to curate this report in its place, but most importantly, to present our campus community with more than just data results. Alongside the strategic framework – which you can find on page 12 – we have developed the People First workgroup.

The People First workgroup will inform our campus wide strategies on COVID-19 scenario planning and how they impact our people (faculty, staff, and students), through the development of general principles guidelines, surveying and virtual focus groups. In placing "people first," the workgroup will also ensure that the campus is providing adequate support and responding to gaps and issues in real time. It will also assist in providing evidence-based impact data to internal and external constituents.

The longer-term plan is to transition this workgroup to lead the development and implementation in our "people strategy" for staff, students and faculty. The current membership is as follows:

- Dania Matos, Chief Diversity Officer (co-lead)
- Jonathan Grady, Dean of Students (co-lead)
- Cinnamon Danube, Principal Analyst, Institutional Research and Decision Support
- Robin DeLugan, Academic Senate
- Anthony Garrison-Engbrecht, Chief of Staff, Student Affairs
- Priya Lakireddy, Staff Assembly Representative
- Laura Martin, Assistant Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost, Academic Planning & Institutional Assessment
- Nicole Pollack, Chief Human Resources Officer
- James Zimmerman, Interim Vice Provost & Dean for Undergraduate Education

Staffing:

- EDI graduate student researchers – Hala Alnagar & Maria Ramirez Loyola



## Listening continued: **People First Workgroup**

The first task of the People First workgroup was to develop and distribute a campus-wide survey on COVID-19 experiences, which assessed the overall well-being of our campus community and evaluated the impact of existing campus resources and response efforts. On May 13th, this survey was sent out to all staff, undergraduate and graduate students, post-docs, and both senate and non-senate faculty. The results of this survey will first and foremost allow us to improve existing resources and propose new initiatives if needed. Further, the responses we gather from this survey will inform the questions we develop for virtual focus groups that will allow us to gain more insight into the impacts of COVID-19 on our campus community.

These focus groups are separate from the previously mentioned listening tour follow-up focus groups. The People First focus groups will specifically address COVID-19 impacts and campus resources. They will be conducted virtually, but otherwise structured similarly to the listening tour follow-up focus groups. Each focus group will consist of either staff, faculty, or students and we will pay close attention to the make-up of each group to ensure that an individual is not in the same focus group as their supervisor.

We will use the time in the summer to analyze the quantitative findings and to begin formulating qualitative questions for the focus groups based on these findings. We plan to begin scheduling these focus groups at the beginning of Fall 2020. This will be an especially pertinent time to check in with our campus community's needs as California may be further along in its stages of re-opening the state. At that point, our campus may be continuing its virtual operations or it may be at the beginning stages of transitioning back to in-person work. Either of these scenarios requires us to ensure that our campus community has what they need to continue their work, but most importantly, to ensure that they are safe and healthy.

We hope that the creation of a People First workgroup assures our campus community that we are doing everything in our power to stay attuned to their needs, even while we are at a physical distance from one another. The impacts of COVID-19 are heaviest on those who are already marginalized and so the equity-minded practices of our office are more important than ever. On the following pages is an outline of our newly-developed strategic framework, which further details and demonstrates the central tenants of our office's vision and goals.



**“Critical consciousness is an active and persistent curiosity and awareness that examines beliefs, practices, assumptions, and norms to detect how power and privilege operate to contribute to inequality and oppression” (Freire, 2000)**



Office of EDI's Vision	What It Means	How We Do It
<p><b>People first. Anti-oppression &amp; liberation for all:</b> Equity requires the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take actions against these systems, which include understanding the root causes of injustice. It is in our collective understanding and commitment to eradication of these systems that we work towards these goals in both local and global contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismantling systemic &amp; structural inequality</li> <li>• Developing transformative practitioners &amp; advocates</li> <li>• Acknowledging privilege &amp; power</li> <li>• Developing shared &amp; accessible knowledge</li> </ul>	<p><b>Critical consciousness &amp; collaboration:</b> Continuous awareness of how power and privilege shape our institution and an intersectional development of practices and practitioners that work towards our collective freedom.</p>
<h3>How We Get There</h3>		
<p>We believe that <i>community, access, transparency, inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability</i> (BobCAT IDEA) are key enablers and critical components to accomplishing our office's vision. BobCAT IDEA(s) unlock knowledge, produce equity-minded practitioners, and drive meaningful impact and outcomes.</p>		
<h3>Thus, We Aim To</h3>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop shared and accessible knowledge</li> <li>• Recognize that community extends beyond campus and create active engagement of our local and global environments (<i>community</i>)</li> <li>• Strive to provide equal and equitable opportunities for all to thrive (<i>access</i>)</li> <li>• Establish public-facing communication that is clear, consistent, and self-evaluative (<i>transparency</i>)</li> <li>• Create an environment that cultivates a sense of belonging (<i>inclusion</i>)</li> <li>• Engage all people and perspectives in recognition of our collective excellence (<i>diversity</i>)</li> <li>• Ensure access to opportunities for all through the removal of structural barriers (<i>equity</i>)</li> <li>• Acknowledge and own our progress and areas of improvement to create a culture of trust and responsibility (<i>accountability</i>)</li> </ul>		

# BobCAT IDEAs are put in action through our three pillars:



## OUR PEOPLE

What is the student, staff, and faculty experience at UCM?

How do we engage with our community and what is our reputation?



## OUR CAMPUS

What are our policies, procedures, & programs? How do we run our institution? What is the classroom, lab, and office experience?



## OUR BRILLIANCE

Whose knowledge is recognized and prioritized? How is information shared and created equitably with all and by all?



## Next Steps: **Timeline**

Within this report were a number of plans for our office's next steps and below is a table with a timeline of these next steps. This is not a comprehensive timeline that encompasses all of our office's initiatives, but is a presentation of the plans that were discussed within the context of this report.

<b>May 2020</b>	People First workgroup: Distribute COVID-19 experience survey
<b>June 2020</b>	COVID-19 experience survey data analysis
<b>June - July 2020</b>	People First workgroup focus group planning
<b>August 2020</b>	People First workgroup focus group recruitment
<b>Fall 2020</b>	Conducting People First workgroup focus groups
<b>End of Fall 2020</b>	Listening tour follow-up focus groups recruitment
<b>Spring 2020</b>	Conducting listening tour follow-up focus groups



# The listening continues...

Your feedback and perspective are key to our continued growth and development. Please share your thoughts and ideas [on this feedback form](#).

