



UC MERCED CAMPUS REPORT FOR CUCSA – August 2004

Graduate Students Begin Studies at UC Merced: Start for First Eleven Students is August 30, 2004

Gifted young scholars often seek the leading edge of civilization in search of the sheer joy of discovery and accomplishment. The academic adventurers who lined up at the doors of UC Merced this fall are no exception. Eleven graduate students will begin coursework and research at the new university, before there is even an official physical campus to call home. Outstanding faculty, cross-disciplinary research and the campus' Merced location are among reasons cited by the students for their decision to pursue their studies here, along with the chance to blaze a new trail.

The grad students and their faculty advisers are working for now at the University's facility at Castle Aviation and Economic Center, where labs and offices have been established over the last several years. They will move to the new Merced campus as space becomes available, beginning next year. Location was a key element in the decision of Ph.D. student Don Schweizer, a National Parks Service employee at Yosemite involved with vegetation management and ecological restoration. He now studies under professor Sam Traina, who also directs the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI). "Living and working in Yosemite is wonderful, and the opportunity to earn a Ph.D. so close to home was just too good to pass up," he comments. Schweizer hopes to stay on with the Park Service and advance to increasingly better positions after completing his doctorate at UC Merced.

The students will prepare for the future in individualized graduate programs in the schools of Natural Science and Engineering. Interdisciplinary graduate courses to be offered this fall are Hydrology and Climate, Environmental Systems Seminar and Current Topics in Quantitative Biology.

"It took a pioneering spirit for these students to come on board. They will be rewarded with their places in history as the first students and graduates of the tenth campus of the University of California," says Keith Alley, Vice Chancellor of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies at UC Merced. "Students who will follow in their footsteps will be grateful for the contributions these founding students made to the campus and community."

Graduate Program applications are now being accepted through the Online Graduate Application system. Students interested in applying to the UC Merced Graduate Program for the Fall 2005 semester are invited to file an application. Applications are being accepted for M.S., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in the following areas of concentration: Environmental Systems; Quantitative and Systems Biology; Molecular Science and Engineering; Social, Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences

Governor Approves Funding for UC Merced

California State Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a budget package for 2004-05 that includes \$20 million in startup funds for the University of California, Merced. The \$20 million allocation will allow the 10th campus of the University of California to open to 1,000 students in fall 2005.

"My strong support to provide funding for the new UC campus underscores my belief that we should continue working to expand the dream of college and not leave the Central Valley out of the dream," said Governor Schwarzenegger, referring to his State of the State address given in January. "I believe UC Merced is essential for expanding higher education opportunities in the Central Valley and for providing an educational outlet for students throughout the state."

The \$20 million allocation will help fund faculty hiring, enrollment and student support services, library materials and operational expenses associated with serving 1,000 students next year.

"We are grateful for Governor Schwarzenegger's steadfast support. His commitment ensures that students in the rapidly growing Central Valley will have expanded access to a UC education," said Chancellor Carol Tomlinson-Keasey. "By moving forward with UC Merced, the governor and the legislature have also recognized that the campus is becoming a powerful economic engine within the region. As the campus grows, we promise a good return on their investment."

Opening with a mix of undergraduate and graduate students, the campus plans to offer undergraduate academic majors that include bioengineering; biological sciences; computer science and engineering; earth systems science; environmental engineering; human biology; management; social, behavioral and cognitive sciences; and world cultures and history. Opening day graduate programs of study include environmental systems; molecular science and engineering; and quantitative and systems biology. Additional undergraduate and graduate programs are being planned with possible availability as early as 2005.

Faculty members are currently developing innovative academic programs and teaching summer courses while also attracting federal research funding for projects such as monitoring water quality in Valley-bound rivers from the Sierra Nevada and devising competitively priced solar units for residential air conditioning systems. To date, the university has been awarded more than \$10 million in funding through grants and contracts with an additional \$21 million pending approval.

Meanwhile, the campus site changes daily as the first buildings take shape. The \$280 million capital budget, which has been funded over the past four years through a combination of bond, state and UC funds, is supporting the construction of three academic buildings, student housing and dining, a recreation center and campus site infrastructure. In total, the State has dedicated \$360 million toward the development of the UC Merced campus.