University of California, Merced

School of Natural Sciences

2016 Faculty Survey:

*Findings and Response*

Prepared for

School of Natural Science

Senate and Non-Senate Faculty

Prepared by

School of Natural Science

Administrative Unit Managers

INTRODUCTION

During the spring semester of 2016, the School of Natural Sciences faculty were asked to respond to a survey designed and implemented by the school’s Administrative Unit Managers. The survey remained open for 3 weeks, contained 87 short questions about services provided in 2015, and averaged a 16-minute response time. Responses were voluntary, confidential, and reported in the aggregate. There was a 43 percent response rate (N = 48 out 111; 12 Non-Senate and 36 Senate Faculty).

This report summarizes some of the main findings of each unit and the respective actions taken in response to said findings. By “closing the loop” we would like to express to faculty that their responses, comments, and suggestions are important to the staff and impact the actions of each unit. The next annual SNS Faculty Survey is expected to be launched in February, 2017.

\*Click headings to be directed to that unit’s website

**FACULTY SUPPORT**

# [Financial and Administrative Operations - Reimbursements](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/business)

Travel & Reimbursement Services found that 24% of respondents experienced “long” turnaround times. To address this finding we did two things:

1) We shifted personnel focus to ensure that reimbursement requests were prioritized

2) We shifted to a completely paperless environment. Together, these actions resulted in an average 51% decrease in processing time (comparing Q1 across 2 years).

Travel & Reimbursement Services also found that 46% of users were satisfied and did not experience any technical or system issues in Finance Suite. Without a staff programmer to work on our SNS created system, we have been unable to fully fix all issues. In order to circumvent any problems, we have created a resource library ([here](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/business/travel-reimbursements/resources)) that addresses technical issues and solutions or “work-arounds” that work within system limitations.

Travel and Reimbursement Services also found that 55% of respondents thought there was “just the right amount of communication” regarding Finance Suite requests. In response to this, we have implemented a weekly audit of requests at all stages of the process. The audit triggers a call to action for account owners, approvers and managers who have pending requests in their queue.

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## **[Financial and Administrative Operations - Procurements](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/business)**

 Procurement Services found that 67% of respondents experienced a timely turnaround. To address this finding we did two things:

1) We issued over 17 Procurement Cards.

2) We shifted to a completely paperless environment.

Procurement Services also found that 67% of users experienced no technical or system issues in Granada. Without a staff programmer to work on our SNS created system, we have been unable to fully fix these issues. In order to circumvent the problems, we are working on replacing Granada with Workflow. Workflow order requests are processed within the CatBuy system, customized for UC Merced. It allows the users to initiate orders in the CatBuy system with little knowledge of purchasing policies, processes, and codes (e.g project, or object codes).

Procurement Services also found that 76% of respondents indicated they thought there was good customer service. In response to this, we have Purchasers stay in communication with the requestors at all times, by forwarding order confirmations, and notify them of any backorders.

Contact: Diego Molina (dmolina@ucmerced.edu)

## **[Personnel](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/personnel)**

The Personnel Unit has been committed to enhancing our online presence. We have been adding our SNS processes and procedures online. We have also made strides to create processes that can be done electronically. We recently launched our Lecturer Evaluation Program, which was created to provide an easier way for supervisors to evaluate the lecturer’s performance at the end of the semester or once a year. This program is intended to help streamline the process and lessen the burden on Lecturer Supervisors who are conducting these evaluations.

The Postdoctoral Scholar Program went campus-wide rather than just SNS. SNS is still hosting the event and managing all the logistics. The invitation was sent out to other postdocs in the other schools and the other schools are providing funding to help out the program.

In terms of advancement case processing, the survey results show that there is a high level of satisfaction (89.5%) with the organization of our academic personnel process. Our office is currently ahead compared to last year on processing time, which will show when we pull the final report at the end of this academic year.

We have implemented and will continue to host bring-your-own-lunch series to communicate important updates and guidance.

Contact: Dora Lopes (dlopes@ucmerced.edu)

# [Grants Administrations](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/grants)

Overall, the faculty are extremely happy with the customer service provided by the Grants Administration Unit, but increased visibility is desired. We have implemented face-to-face quarterly meetings to enhance our one-on-one relationships with the faculty.

Contact: Becky Etheridge (betheridge@ucmerced.edu)

# [Faculty Support Team](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/faculty-support/space)

Faculty survey results strongly indicated the need and desire for increased staff support of faculty/academic units. One action in direct response to this finding was the hire of an additional faculty support specialist, although we still need to secure the budget to make this position permanent. Other findings indicate dissatisfaction with the level of communication regarding research lab renovations. This is being addressed through increased direct communication between the SNS Dean’s Office and the individual impacted faculty. Finally, there was a clearly stated desire for improved timeliness of space assignments. We are finalizing a comprehensive database containing all SNS space assignment information in order to speed up the assignment process. This process is also being tracked to determine which processes are more prone to delay.

 Contact: Annette Garcia (agarcia@ucmerced.edu)

# [Instructional Lab Support](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/instructional-labs)

According to the survey results, the SNS instructional lab staff are doing a good job communicating and working collaboratively with the faculty and instructors, especially in regards to scheduling lab experiments and lab safety. The lab staff are currently working on improving the process for providing feedback to the teaching assistants. Additionally, the lab staff will be communicating with the faculty leads for the lab courses to clarify the teaching assistant feedback process.

Contact: Donna Jaramillo-Fellin (djaramillo-fellin@ucmerced.edu), Physical Sciences; or Jim Whalen (jwhalen2@ucmerced.edu), Life Sciences

**STUDENT SUPPORT**

# [Undergraduate Academic Advising](http://ns-advising.ucmerced.edu/)

From the results of the faculty survey, it seems there is a lack of clarity in SNS Undergraduate Advising’s role in our students’ success.  We will be sharing our newly developed unit view book which shares our unit’s goals and services as well as highlights from the previous academic year.  We will also be broadly sharing the faculty advising model outline which includes intended outcomes.

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# [Graduate Programs](http://naturalsciencesgrads.ucmerced.edu/)

Using the results from the 2016 faculty survey, we found that approximately 85% of respondents were satisfied with the quality and timeliness of the assistance provided by the graduate program staff. It was also reported that many users experienced difficulty interacting with Target X (aka SalesForce) and Graduate and Lecturer Academic Appointment System (GLAAS) software. Cognizant of these complications, the graduate program has since added several new features in both software programs, which have increased the flexibility of and improved the timeliness of the processes. With maturation of Target X and the improving relationship between Graduate Division and Target X, we believe this should be less of an issue in the future. In the past year, Graduate Division has added several new features in Target X for applicants to submit pertinent information. Applicants can now enter their research interests and for QSB applicants they can identify whether they want a rotational track or preferred advisor.

We also acknowledge the faculty feedback about graduate students having to submit multiple applications during their tenure in order to be a TA. We transitioned to a single recruitment for an Academic Year which includes summer, fall, and spring; however, it is still necessary to complete this each year. We also reduced the number of documents required for that application.

 Contact: Paul Roberts (proberts@ucmerced.edu)

# [Instructional and Curriculum Support](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/instruction-curriculum)

The responses to the faculty survey indicated that an improvement in customer service was needed in the area of academic resourcing. In response, the Curriculum Unit has set up a single email address (snscurriculum@ucmerced.edu) that is received by all staff members in the unit. We assure that faculty will receive a response within 24 hours of receipt, even if simply to indicate that we are working on the request. We also added a 15 hour per week Student Assistant to improve overall customer service.

 Contact: Shannon Adamson (sadamson@ucmerced.edu)

## **[Assessment Support](http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/assessment)**

Using the results from the faculty survey, we found that on average, 22% of respondents have used at least one of the services provided by the Student and Program Assessment Manager and that 80% of the respondents indicated that they would like to utilize those same services in the future. In response to these findings, the Assessment Support Unit has actively chosen to continue providing the current services and has taken actions towards increase staff capacity (the hiring of an Assessment Specialist on a one-year contract) to better support and promote academic assessment practices.

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