

Instructional Policies and Student Support, Part II

1 October 2020

With the start of October, this SSHA instructional policy and student support outreach highlights:

- Accessibility Services
- Camera Requirements
- 'Cat Chronicles, weekly newsletter series
- Media support and planning for all instructors
- Student Basic Needs, campus resources
- Students of Concern, policies and resources
- Student Leadership, how to support and stay involved

If you have any questions or support needs, please feel encouraged to stay connected with your departments and the SSHA dean office with questions and thoughts.

Accessibility

Students are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services to request needed accommodations to ensure equal academic opportunities, access, and inclusion at access.ucmerced.edu/student-accommodation-request

*Accessibility services supports both undergraduate and graduate students

Camera Requirements

Related to accessibility, "Camera on" classroom policies present equity considerations as not all students can fully manage their home context and potential background disruptions. Further, not every student will have a laptop capable of using background images to maintain privacy¹. Campus policies generally are that cameras, if required at all, are only used for major exams. Student engagement is important, and there are many ways to account for participation and contribution – including chat logs, collaborative activities, polls, and audio responses.

'Cat Chronicle - Weekly Success Newsletter for Undergraduate Students:

Starting in mid-September, undergraduates received 'Cat Chronicle, campus' weekly success newsletter for [New Students](#) and [Continuing Students](#). The newsletter is part of this semester's student success strategy, reviving the "Weekly Success" campaign in 2016-2017.

The 'Cat Chronicle is intended to accomplish the following:

- Provide just-in-time information to support undergraduate student academic success
- Engage campus expertise in creation of content that is timely and relevant
- Provide information in ways that are engaging to both new and continuing undergraduate students

If you are interested in following, please note there is a "follow by email" link to subscribe.

¹ Zoom provides guidance on background images <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>

Media Support for All Instructors

Teaching remotely is time-intensive and a learning curve, with media-intensive planning. If you are looking for support and community to work with media production at home or by scheduled time on campus, we are exploring some options to provide take-home kits and having small classrooms temporarily repurposed as self-service studios for recording podcasts or videos.

In addition to equipment, this media support would include video and/or editing support by student workers, supervised by Academic & Emerging Technologies in OIT (with Director Joan Holmquist). Participants would have consultation support from instructional designer staff, who can advise on best practices and time-saving approaches to producing materials. This support is designed to enhance teaching plans for either this semester or Spring 2021.

Knowing interest levels from faculty and graduate students would inform current planning. By Friday October 9, please contact Sarah Frey (Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education) and/or Anne Zanzucchi. This project is a cross-campus partnership, including expertise from the Global Arts, Media, and Writing Studies department. Our goal is to begin coordinating support by mid to end of October and through Spring 2021.

Student Basic Needs Resources

UC Merced continues to be committed to providing students with academic, personal, and career resources as they learn and engage remotely. Below are some Fall 2020 resources:

- **UC Merced's Success Anywhere website** provides a comprehensive list of resources to ensure students are informed, engaged, and well: <https://success.ucmerced.edu/>.
- **Food** - Students experiencing difficulty affording groceries or accessing nutritious food may visit [Basic Needs](#) for a list of local and regional food-related resources or email Basicneed@ucmerced.edu.
- **Academic** - students experiencing academic, personal, and career-related concerns may visit studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students to find resources and support options.
- **Housing** - students in need of temporary housing may request a meeting with the Dean of Students Office to discuss options. Students who are currently homeless or living in a home environment that is abusive and/or violent may apply for on-campus housing at housing.ucmerced.edu/apply.
- **Finances** - If financial concerns surface, students may meet with our Financial Wellness Coordinator at <https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/economic-support> to engage in one-on-one financial wellness counseling, learn about developing and maintaining budgets, and discuss financial options to meet specific needs. Additionally, the Dean of Students Office continues to provide emergency funds to students facing unexpected, unforeseen, and unavoidable emergency expenses surrounding situations such as accidents, illness, homelessness, fire damage, or need for temporary housing. Currently enrolled students may apply for funds when they have exhausted all other financial resources (student loans, personal resources, and payment plans).

Students of Concern

We may have students who are demonstrating a sudden change in or concerning behavior, with [an overview from Office of Student Life](#) or <https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/>. An important resource is

the Student Response Team, which is a cross-section of experts on campus “to address academic, physical, psychological, and safety risk indicators experienced by students to avoid a crisis.” Instructors have option to [complete a student of concern form](#) <<https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students/students-concern-form>>, describing observations for consideration, which can help this organize support and action plans. This process and support are available for undergraduate and graduate students.

*All noted support and policy connect to registered students, whether on-campus or elsewhere.

*The Health Center and Counseling Services are open with daily services

<<https://counseling.ucmerced.edu/>>

Student Leadership

Student government (the Association of Students of UC Merced or ASUCM) includes school representatives. This year’s representatives from SSHA are [Citlalli Gamino](#) and [Eliane Cabrera](#), who meet on a routine basis with Megan Topete (Assistant Dean, Student Services and Instruction) and the Associate Dean to discuss student concerns and ideas. We appreciate Citlalli and Elaine’s advocacy for student voices during this difficult time and hope to include them in as many leadership opportunities as possible in the upcoming year.

SSHA also supports Frontline, a school-based student association of academic and professional student organizations <https://ssha.ucmerced.edu/ssha-frontline> If you advise student organizations that might benefit from this association and school-based support for leadership development, please feel encouraged to stay in touch.

Alumni opportunities continue to develop. Career Services staff partner directly with schools now, and for SSHA [Lezly Juergenson](#) is our lead and has initiated a popular monthly panel forum called “SSHA by Degrees” featuring alumni-guided presentations and discussions about employment and service opportunities, linked to SSHA degrees. If you have ideas about topics and/or alumni contacts, keep us posted!