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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND ARTS
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Greetings Colleagues,

It has been a while since I wrote to say hello. I hope each of you is doing well.

I have had the pleasure of seeing many of you on zoom recently, including check-ins with departments/programs. I truly enjoy those opportunities to connect, and I look forward to future conversations. Connections will be easier when we get back to campus in some capacity the fall. Details on the fall campus transition are forthcoming.

All the signs of spring 2021 are popping up: flowers, baby animals...vaccine sites, and COVID. Except for the flowers and animals, I truly hope that this is not our new normal for springs of the future.

I was unable to write last week, and I wanted to be sure that I acknowledged the holiday we just had in honor of Cesar Chavez. While the holiday was last week, today is actually Mr. Chavez's birthday.

As you know, Chavez was a Mexican-American labor leader and civil rights activist (see [Cesar Chavez - Facts, Accomplishments, Death - HISTORY](#)). He dedicated his work to help struggling farmworkers, and he is responsible for drawing attention to their plight in the 60s and 70s. Because of him, I learned about immigrant labor and I witnessed the grape strike/boycott in my preteens. I recall my teachers speaking sympathetically about the struggle and how much they admired Chavez's nonviolent and intelligent approach to resistance.

UCM is, in many ways, inextricably connected to the history and efforts of the agriculture community of the Valley: many UCM faculty and staff come from hard working families like those advocated for by Mr. Chavez, and many of our students grew-up in the valley alongside farmworker friends and family members. I have long admired the humility, drive, and connection to family that comes from these roots and heritage, and it is unlike anything I have seen elsewhere.

While SSHA endures COVID restraints, we maintain our commitment to equity and justice. People like Cesar Chavez should remind us of the importance of dignity, respect, and humility in what we do and how we regard the people we serve. As Mr. Chavez has said:

"The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. *It is always about people.*"

Take care,
Jeff

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Gilger".

Jeffrey Gilger, Dean

