

SAFI Round Two: Diversity, Inequality & Representation

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A. Executive Summary

This cross-disciplinary theme focuses on research and teaching that critically examines historical and contemporary experiences and conditions of diversity (ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, social class); inequality (in poverty, education, health, migration, the environment, and politics); and representation (portrayals and inclusion of diverse populations). We represent a diverse group of faculty in Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Economics, Engineering, History, Literature, Life and Environmental Sciences, Linguistics, Physiology & Nutrition, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Public Health, and Sociology, in partnership with ReCCES/ Blum Center for Developing Economies and the Sierra Nevada Research Institute, proposing the development of an initiative designed to transcend disciplinary boundaries to encourage innovative scholarship and training. The theme is both local and global in scope, and will directly serve the interests and needs of the Central Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada communities. University development around the theme may occur through existing and new research centers, existing and emerging minors and majors, graduate programs, research and teaching clusters, and strategic hiring initiatives. This theme ensures the development of intellectually exciting and critical work that will shape and transform the campus, the region, and the world as we head towards 2020.

B. Succinct Definition of Thematic Area

Our theme brings together UC Merced faculty and graduate students across a variety of disciplines. It fits squarely with Theme 1 identified by the SAFI Working Group: Disparities: Equity, Diversity, Social Inequality. It is relevant to other thematic areas as well, including Cross-cultural Studies and Cultural Production, Human Health, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Environmental Sustainability, and Life Sciences. It draws from multiple proposals submitted in Round 1 to create a unique initiative that builds on UC Merced's established strengths across schools and in a number of bylaw units. We engage with eleven proposals: The Center for the Study of Comparative Inequalities; Public Health at UC Merced; Economics; the Education Research Center; Engaged Transformation of Poverty; Applied Philosophy; Cognition, Computation, and Human Data Science; Sociology; Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies; UC Merced Library's Open Proposal; and Arts, Humanities, Anthropology in the World at UC Merced. Representatives from each of these areas participated in drafting this SAFI proposal.

Diversity, Inequality, and Representation is a cross-school, cross-disciplinary theme focused on research and teaching that critically examines historical and contemporary experiences and conditions of diverse groups, social and environmental inequality, and representation. This theme builds on and promotes work that emphasizes and explores 1) diversity along the lines of race and ethnicity, sex and gender, sexuality, citizenship, and social class; 2) social inequality, including poverty, disparities in educational opportunity and attainment, and disparities in health and access to health care; and 3) representation, or how academic scholarship and creative works interpret and portray diversity and inequality and are inclusive of diverse groups.

Diversity, Inequality and Representation emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, or the idea that understanding diversity and inequality requires examining the intersection of multiple factors. The key to understanding society and culture is recognizing that multiple dimensions of inequality have been constructed together and cannot be understood in isolation. For example, to understand poverty without looking at race and gender gives an incomplete picture of the complexities of inequality. Our theme incorporates global studies and invites international comparisons while promoting a focus on diversity and inequality at home. Whether studying regional poverty, exposure to environmental hazards, underrepresented groups in academic and professional fields, such as women and minorities in STEM, or the creation of more equitable, healthy, or sustainable communities, this initiative will attract faculty and resources that will distinguish and enhance our campus. Our theme transcends disciplinary divides and promotes an interdisciplinarity founded on the matrices of inequality that bind what might otherwise be separate research programs. By emphasizing community engagement as a core value, this strategic initiative will encourage research, teaching and service that mutually benefit our campus and the underserved Central Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada regions.

C. Intellectual Components of the Strategic Initiative

By taking an intersectional approach to diversity, inequality, and representation, UC Merced can be at the forefront of studies of inequality. Our theme draws on new directions of scholarship within diverse disciplines to consider how multiple dimensions of social inequality simultaneously shape individual and collective experiences and outcomes. A study of health disparities across different racial groups, for example, that ignores how class and gender intersect to produce differential treatment is inherently limited. Likewise, a study of language barriers between doctors and immigrant patients, of representations of modern day slaves in contemporary fiction, of the educational pathways of first-generation students at UC Merced, of the placement of prisons along Highway 99, of the effect of pesticides on farm workers or of opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs, would all be enriched with an intersectional approach. An intersectional approach to diversity, inequality, and representation transcends the limits of traditional scholarship, which has tended to be conducted within disciplinary silos. Older and more established universities are often constrained in the ways in which they fund and promote interdisciplinary work. In contrast, UC Merced is in a unique position to develop truly interdisciplinary research focusing on diversity and inequality that can be disseminated to public stakeholders and audiences. In bridging the social and natural sciences, humanities and the arts, we can also help faculty across disciplines and schools to tap into new sources of funding for research relevant to the study of diversity, inequality, and representation, including grants administered by the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

This theme would help UC Merced complete its mission to offer world class educational opportunities to an underserved population. In order to serve the community and fulfill this mission, the University can do more than offer classes to local residents: we can conduct research on the forms of inequality and social challenges facing Central Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada residents. The population of the Central Valley, in particular, with more than 6 million residents, is larger than that of 10 US states. The challenges its diverse population faces in terms of inequality and representation affect all of California, and the nation. By emphasizing our expertise in these issues, we can demonstrate that our research programs are important and worthy of support, with implications for the region, the state and beyond. The combined areas of strength we are developing are unique for the UC system and nationally, and will help us recruit world-class faculty, draw graduate students and attain national and even international standing.

D. UCM's Role in this Theme

1. The UCM Campus' unique position in this particular field

a. Current strengths on campus in this area

UC Merced already has substantial strength in areas related to this theme, and we are well situated to continue building in this area. The theme of Diversity, Inequality, and Representation allows UC Merced to build on its existing strengths in fields including Anthropology, Economics, Engineering, Ethnic Studies, History, Literature, Life and Environmental Sciences, Philosophy, Psychology, Public Health, and Sociology. For example, UC Merced has considerable strengths in topics such as citizenship and civic engagement, education, environmental studies, human rights, immigration, and labor studies (to name a few) that transcend disciplinary divides and fall within this theme.

We have numerous faculty members with expertise in critical race studies, immigration, gender and sexuality, community engaged research, health disparities, environmental threats, spatial disparities, and other topics directly related to this theme. Some examples of the many relevant research and programs on campus that fit within this theme include:

- The 2013-14 "Race and Justice in Transnational Perspective" Seminar Series organized by faculty in History, Sociology, Anthropology, and Literature.
- The annual UCM Human Rights Film Series, which draws from multiple fields and brings together scholars from these diverse areas.
- The 2014 "Thirty Years of Mass Incarceration Conference," organized by Tanya Golash Boza, David Torres-Rouff, and Nigel Hatton, and which included presenters from the local and scholarly community and faculty in the School of Social Science, Humanities and the Arts.
- Past community-engaged conferences and symposia: Merced Immigration Forum (2012); Abolishing Homeless (2011); and Water Quality in California's Rural Central Valley (2010).
- Discovery centered on the dynamics of immigration and immigration policy, and global economic development, including Economics faculty Alex Whalley, Greg Wright, and three new hires starting AY 2014-2015; faculty in Sociology including Tanya Golash-Boza, Zulema Valdez, and new affiliated faculty member Marjorie Zatz; and faculty in the humanities including Mario Sifuentez.
- Research by faculty members including Virginia Adan-Lifante, Susan Amussen, Irene Beattie, Jan Goggans, Tanya Golash-Boza, Laura Hamilton, Linda Anne Rebhun, Anna

Song, Zulema Valdez, Anne Warlamount, and potential Literature faculty Matthew Kaiser focuses on the many ways gender shapes our lives and identity.

The theme is consistent with UC Merced’s large scale commitment to new forms of scholarship, learning, and community engagement. For example, our link with the National Park Service and the Yosemite Leadership Program on campus focus on both science and the arts; while SNRI provides a crucial interdisciplinary link to the surrounding area’s multiple forms of diversity. ReCCES/Blum Center, and HSRI also rely on a multifaceted and often transdisciplinary understanding of people and place within an engaged environment. Our relationship with the Merced Irrigation District is a crucial step to understanding local water reserves, water sustainability, and cultural access and disparities in access to safe and affordable drinking water. The Center for the Humanities has sponsored a number of transdisciplinary events, including the September exhibit at the Merced Multicultural Center “Central Valley Threads: Picking Out Strands of Life and Art in the Central Valley.” Our partnerships with Fresno, Merced, Modesto and Kern County school districts enable the campus to work on issues of educational inequalities and diversity within school districts. Further this theme will capitalize on the opportunity to translate scholarly work to diverse stakeholders and public audiences.

b. Potential research areas of expansion

Areas of expansion include building on our existing research strengths, developing targeted research on issues pertinent to the Central Valley, and developing new and innovative areas of research that build bridges between disciplines, departments, and schools at UC Merced. Areas of focus will include diversity, poverty and inequality, social justice, and representations.

Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -racial, ethnic, diasporic, & migrant communities -diversity & intersectionality in higher education -inter-ethnic conflict & prejudice -assimilation & acculturation -citizenship and belonging -language & translation -gender and sexuality
Poverty and Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -state of the welfare state -local and global economy -food insecurity & food deserts -education gap -information inequality -farmworker rights
Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -mass incarceration -deportation -human rights -environmental justice -global justice
Representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -diversity within the academy -portrayals of diverse groups in media

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -literary representations of diverse groups -class as subject in art, literature, and music -gender inequalities within reception and distribution of forms of art -historical subjects -the Central Valley in poetry, fiction, art, and theater
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In addition to strengthening and expanding the above research areas, Diversity, Inequality and Representation will build partnerships across campus. In collaboration with the UC Merced Library faculty and student research can provide information and data on the region. The library will use its digital-assets infrastructure and expertise to surface existing Central Valley information resources for faculty use and research. Just one example of hidden resources are the Merced Irrigation District records (MID) currently held at UC Riverside. Containing historical maps, photographs, business records, and water data, the MID’s analog-format records are difficult to find and access; our library will transform these records into primary-source materials for research on Central Valley topics ranging from sociology to water usage and allocation. In collaboration with the library we can build a collection of digital materials that can serve as a vast resource for a future Center for San Joaquin Valley Studies. The library can also curate the data and resources produced by faculty and student research. Additionally, the established engagement of Diversity, Inequalities, and Representation with the SAFI 2 combined ES/SNRI/LES proposal offers faculty and graduate students heretofore unexplored intersections between the social sciences, environment, and the humanities by articulating broad themes that can be interpreted in multiple ways and in multiple places. Both Diversity, Inequality, and Representation and Environmental Sustainability see the Central Valley as a start point laboratory, robust with opportunity, that can accomplish broader understandings at a global scale.

2. How will investment in this area make our program distinctive/competitive when compared to programs within UC and other research universities?

The strategic theme of Diversity, Inequality, and Representation will make UC Merced stand out as a university that focuses on the future, on local and global contexts, including community engagement, and that nurtures research that is both intersectional and translational in nature. Over recent years other top-tier universities have created centers for the study of poverty and/or inequality (Cornell, Michigan, Oxford, Wisconsin-Madison, Stanford, UCLA, UCD). The joint theme Diversity, Inequality and Representation is a fresh approach to urgent social concerns. It will position UC Merced to lead the next generation of disciplinary and transdisciplinary scholars to develop theories, methodologies and representational practices that will bring greater understanding to the complexities of inequality and attention to the role of higher education to inform publics and policymakers alike.

E. What bylaw units/grad groups might participate, and how would they participate?

All bylaw units and graduate groups, across schools, can participate. The theme for hiring would be announced and any bylaw unit that wants to propose a hire within that theme can put forward a hiring request, so bylaw units could hire within the theme and also apply to specific issues such as food access, immigration, spatial inequality, economic development, localized poverty, water, etc.

F. General description of special programmatic needs (specialized space requirements, special library collections, etc.). The main programmatic needs of this proposal are as follows: 1) faculty hiring in thematic areas; 2) cluster hires that bridge disciplinary divides; 3) faculty research support; and 4) the formation of new Centers that facilitate conversations between these new hires as well as existing faculty.

1. Faculty hiring in thematic areas.

We are proposing to support and facilitate a hiring plan that leverages resources to significantly impact UC Merced's excellence in: (1) basic research and graduate student training, (2) community engagement, and (3) innovative undergraduate programming. That this approach will simultaneously achieve all three goals represents an outstanding opportunity for the campus to achieve a very high return on investment. Furthermore, this proposed highly innovative SAFI hiring approach will place UC Merced firmly at the forefront of emerging models of high impact research universities in the 21st century. The proposal is to hire a certain number of faculty FTEs over a period of time (e.g., 15 FTE in 5 years) that are consistent with the SAFI's emphasis on diversity, inequality and representation. The SAFI will request hiring proposals from any bylaw units that seek to hire world leading scholars who will: (1) contribute to strengthening existing or planned graduate programs; and (2) engage the theme in their research and teaching.

The flexibility of this approach will support both disciplinary and interdisciplinary hiring. The primary goal of the initiative is to build excellence and depth in this important area. At the same time to strengthen our Ph.D. training all hires will be affiliated with a planned or existing Ph.D. program to continue the development of world leading Ph.D. programs on campus. To facilitate the success of these new hires and enhance UC Merced's positions as leader in discovery, we hope to offer research Seed Grants for faculty who work in the theme.

2. Interdisciplinary cluster hires

We imagine that some of these hires could occur through cluster hiring, which would allow bylaw units to build their strengths together. For example, a cluster hire that focuses on the intersecting inequalities of race, class, and gender, would allow various units to simultaneously hire in this area and attract scholars who are committed to building interdisciplinary communities. The Applied Philosophy proposal, for example, includes provision for philosophical research in gender and race studies that would engage with research in Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Psychology, Political Science, and Sociology. Another example; a cluster of several hires in the theme of environmental justice could easily attract scholars from Anthropology, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, History, Literature, Political Sciences, or Sociology, or the newer interdisciplinary fields of Ethnic Studies or Sustainability Science, who could work together to build a platform that is truly transdisciplinary and innovative. Examples of cluster hires include: health disparities; environmental justice; immigration; and critical race and gender studies.

3. Engagement with existing centers and faculty research support.

We are also proposing to collaborate with the ReCCES/Blum Center in order to promote community engaged research - which is central to this theme. With this collaboration, external resources will be secured so as to provide selected hires with a course release. The course releases will provide each school hosting selected faculty who work in this theme with sufficient funding to hire a lecturer to staff an undergraduate course that would be typically taught by that

FTE. The course release allows faculty to develop and offer undergraduate community engaged research experiences as part of the new Community Research and Service Minor. In addition, summer graduate student fellow positions will be created to allow masters and doctoral students to assist with faculty research, consequently training the next generation of community engaged scholars. We see a partnership with the ReCCES/Blum Center leadership team as a particular strength of our proposal. We also envision similar partnerships with SNRI that could bridge the divide between the social sciences, the natural sciences, humanities, and the arts.

4. The development of new research centers.

The Centers will serve as a synergistic hub for scholars working in each of these areas. We envision at least three proposed new Centers: Center for the Study of Comparative Inequalities; Educational Research Center; Center for San Joaquin Valley Studies, in addition to building on existing Centers, specifically SNRI and ReCCES/Blum Center for Developing Economies. These Centers would facilitate conversations through the funding of Working Groups and Symposia and Collaborative Seed Grants. These Centers will also be engaged in faculty development as well as grantmaking to contribute to the development of UC Merced as an internationally renowned university. Given our planned cooperation with ReCCES and the high potential for community engagement, and we also envision a space in downtown Merced where researchers in this theme can build community partnerships.