

## INTRODUCTION

# HI, I'M KAMYAR



Greetings from KL 113! My name is Kamyar Nekoui and I am a sophomore studying Management and Business Economics. I belong to multiple organizations on campus, including Business Society and Rotaract, as well as interning for our new AVC/DOS Dr. Jonathan Grady. My responsibilities include receiving and addressing student concerns, increasing communication between the administration and students, and co-chairing the Dean of Students Advisory Board. Our overall goal is to hear your concerns and work together to seek effective solutions. Please feel welcome to contact me via email ([knekoui@ucmerced.edu](mailto:knekoui@ucmerced.edu)) or stop by during my office hours! I will be in KL 113 on Monday and Friday from 8 to 10am, and Wednesday from 9 to 10am. Information and concerns shared with me will remain confidential and handled with care. Please reach out and connect with us!

## Our Approach

Utilizing a social justice orientation rooted in community cultural wealth, criticalness, collaboration, accountability, and care, the Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students is a central space for students, parents, staff, and faculty to receive assistance with navigating the complexity of student life. Transparency is absolutely crucial to build and maintain trust throughout the campus community. Embedded within the work we do here in the Dean of Students office, three main mediums of communication and transparency will be implemented:

- Town halls
  - Transcripts posted publicly
- Online surveys
- Individual meetings
  - Including both my office hours and Dr. Grady's open door policy

Additionally, communication through monthly updates such as this one aim to increase student awareness. Please contact me ([knekoui@ucmerced.edu](mailto:knekoui@ucmerced.edu)) with any questions or concerns regarding the AVC/DOS office.

## Dean of Students Website

The AVC/DOS website (link below) contains our full mission statement, staff members, monthly updates, and functions. Some of these functions include:

- Connecting stakeholders to appropriate campus and community resources.
- Work collaboratively to serve, support, and empower students.
- Serve as an advocate to students and their support networks in times of personal, academic, or community crisis.
- Offering wide-ranging support to all students in times of challenge.

## DOS Advisory Board

The Dean of Students Advisory Board is a group of students, many of whom are leaders and representatives of campus organizations. We not only meet with stakeholders and provide knowledge related to student concerns, but also help devise strategies and push our work forward. The Board is co-chaired by myself and AVC/DOS Dr. Jonathan Grady. If interested in potentially joining our Board, please email me at [knekoui@ucmerced.edu](mailto:knekoui@ucmerced.edu) for more info.

## Meetings

During the month of January, multiple large scale meetings occurred.

- The DOS Advisory Board met with the UC Student Regent Paul Monge and shared with him many concerns the campus is facing. The UC Student Regent was very kind and offered his own feedback and support regarding some of the concerns aired.
- Dr. Grady and myself met with the Intercultural Hub Board to discuss ideas regarding cultural spaces.

## Student Concerns Update

Listed here are four macro-level student concerns (not in any particular order), solicited from various meetings in January. In each corresponding box, I have noted our updates in terms our intentions here in the DOS office.

- 1. Basic Needs
- 2. Communication
- 3. Free Speech vs. Hate Speech
- 4. Staffing
- 5. Cultural Spaces

1

Food security and basic needs are a growing concern for our community. UCM was recently awarded funds to address these concerns through expanded services and new initiatives. For updates, please contact Bavneet Kaur at [bkaur23@ucmerced.edu](mailto:bkaur23@ucmerced.edu).

2

Effective communication on our campus is critical for student affairs particularly. With stellar communication comes trust, and with trust, students and administrators can push work forward. Some of the ways I aim to increase communication are through my office hours, town halls, surveys, and individual meetings along with these monthly updates.

3

In regards to the growing concern of hate speech and free speech, I would like to share the words of Chancellor Leland from a recent letter: "As a university and as individuals, we are obligated to stand up against hate and to resist it in whatever form it presents itself. But as a public university, we must also uphold the First Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits governmental entities — including public universities and colleges — from regulating expression on a vast variety of matters and settings ... We can counter such speech with protests and boycotts and robust denunciations, and we can exercise some content-neutral time, place and manner restrictions. But we cannot legally suppress it solely because it is hateful." I encourage members of the campus community to attend a presentation on February 13th from 4:30-5:30pm in COB2 110 with Dean of Berkeley Law Erwin Chemerinsky to learn more about free speech.

4

The Division of Student Affairs is committed to ensuring student success, and will be hiring multiple full-time positions including but not limited to a social justice coordinator and women's center coordinator. All finalists will be brought to campus for students, staff, and faculty feedback.

5

The establishment of cultural centers on campus is a priority. The AVC/DOS office will be collaborating with multiple campus stakeholders including but not limited to: Associate Director of Social Justice Initiatives Onar Primitivo, Campus Climate Director De Acker, and the Intercultural Hub Board. A proposal will be completed and vetted campus wide by the end of spring 2018.