



University of California, Merced  
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## CULTURAL SPACES AT UC MERCED SPACE AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION PROPOSAL

May 1, 2018

TO: Chancellor Dorothy Leland and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Charles Nies

FROM: Jonathan Grady, Ph.D., Onar Primitivo, and Kamyar Nekoui

Graduate Cultural Resource Center (Violet Barton, Danielle Bermudez, Maria Mora, Kim McMillon, Jamin Shih, and Michelle Yeung)

Black Cultural Resource Center (Manar Harran)

Intercultural Hub (Cristóbal Alberto, Reyna Gabriel Peralta, Alejandro Jurado, Connie Liu, Teresa Wachira)

UC Merced Campus Community (Students, Staff, and Faculty)

“As the only UC campus to lack a larger cultural center, our students do not have access to the resources, training, research opportunities, safe spaces, and counseling these centers would provide that we need to reach our potential as scholars and activists. A larger cultural center would give students a space where student voices can be respected and heard, where the empowerment of our students takes precedence, and where the diversity of our campus can inspire new perspectives in scholarship and research.” Anonymous Student

The history of cultural spaces in higher education stems from the emergence of students of color demanding a space where they could build a community, feel safe and supported, heal, and ultimately thrive (Patton, 2010). Students, staff, and faculty of color often feel marginalized, isolated, threatened, and undervalued by their White counterparts and report reoccurring instances of microaggressions, trauma, and the silencing of their voices and lived experiences (Bourke, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Johnson et al., 2007; Lozano, 2010; Liu, Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010; Negy & Lunt, 2008; Patton, 2006, 2010; Shotton, Yellowfish, & Citrón, 2010). If UC Merced is to create an environment where all students, staff, and faculty feel safe and supported and are provided the resources and tools needed to succeed, the development and expansion of cultural spaces at UC Merced is essential. In essence, this proposal will highlight the need for cultural spaces at UC Merced, provide a vision for cultural spaces now and in the future (a vision that has been vetted by the entire campus community), suggest space recommendations, and provide a suggested timeline for completion (with an anticipated budget narrative). This proposal reflects the sentiments of students, staff, and faculty who provided feedback through focus groups, town hall meetings, individual interviews, and input through an online survey. *It is also important to note that the fight for these spaces from students, staff, and faculty has been longstanding. Thus, the previous and current work of the community to ensure these spaces come into fruition must be recognized and honored.*

**THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL SPACES AT UC MERCED**

“Cultural spaces provide students with a safe space to study and meet their research goals, without any additional stressors that may arise due to micro-aggressions, discrimination, and racism...which is why fight for these spaces.” Anonymous Student

Starting in 2005, UC Merced welcomed its first undergraduate student to campus. Two years prior “with graduate students in tow, UC Merced began setting up research laboratories and programs at UC Merced's ancillary research facility on the former Castle Air Force Base, biding their time until buildings were ready on campus. The first graduate courses began in fall 2004.”

As of now, the community of UC Merced consist of 7375 undergraduate (92.5%) and 592 graduate students (7.5%) with a combined total of 7967 (UC Merced website, Fast Facts). This is projected to reach 10,000 student population in the year 2020. As the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts lead 39.0% for undergraduate majors, second is the School of Natural Sciences (29%), School of Engineering at 27% and 5% as undeclared. Project 2020 will only increase these numbers and with it the vibrant campus and student life experience.

Situated in the California San Joaquin Valley, UC Merced brings its own uniqueness of diversity (UC Merced website, Fast Facts).

- African American 340 (4.6%)
- Asian Pacific Islander 1512 (20.5%)
- Hispanic 3,028 (53.3%)
- Native American 12 (<0%)
- White 755 (10.2%)
- Nonresident Alien 545 (5.3%)
- Two or more races 240 (3.3%)
- Unknown/Declined to state 43 (<0%)

With regards to gender, UC Merced has 48% males (2,996) and females at 51.4% (3,203) and .6% (38) unknown, breakdown in gender, the undergraduate students are primarily recruited from the San Joaquin Valley, Los Angeles and San Francisco areas providing a rich tapestry of backgrounds and experiences to the UC Merced campus.

With UC Merced’s richness in diversity in race and ethnicity, student’s socio-economic backgrounds and as a foremost leader in serving first-generation/low income students, the need for student agency, advocacy, empowerment and to connect is a critical need impacting the success of our student community. Other considerations are:

- There is currently no space on campus allowing students to gather by affinity groups if needed.
- Very few meeting, gathering places for students beyond The Lantern. No dedicated co-curricular space accessible creating safe space/place for any groups on campus.
- The campus commitment to diversity and inclusion is embedded in the Principles of Community stating (<http://www.ucmerced.edu/principles-of-community>):
  - *We recognize and celebrate the identities, values and beliefs of our community.*
  - *We uphold the right to freedom of expression and encourage a culture of dialogue, understanding, and civility in all interactions. We seek to create a campus where a rich tapestry of ideas is shared, collaboration is embraced, and innovation is promoted.*

The 2013 campus climate survey focused specifically on diversity/inclusion and exclusion, states, “The UC Merced Campus Climate survey found that 78% of all respondents were comfortable or very comfortable with the climate for diversity in their department, work unit, academic unit, college or school, 22% were less than comfortable. Additionally, 28% of respondents believed that they had personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive or hostile conduct, with 11% of respondents indicating that the conduct interfered with their ability to work or learn at UC Merced.” As the campus strives to create a welcoming and inclusive campus, those who felt intimidated or excluded at times do not find an immediate identifiable space/office for advocacy.

Dr. Lori Patton Davis, Associate Professor at Indiana University School of Education in Higher Education and Student Affairs, author of the book *Campus Cultural Centers in Higher Education*, “highlights various types of racial/ethnic specific culture Centers in Higher Education, their continued relevance, and implication for their existence in relation to student retention and success.” (Division of Student Affairs External Consultant Report, March 2016, p. 23). Davis was invited to campus, who met with different stakeholders from undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty/staff and with the campus leadership in order to provide a report related to the need of such centers. In the report, Davis shared that the “UCM community members overwhelmingly agreed there was a need for a cultural center/space. This center would provide a safe space and validation for minoritized students. It would also offer programming, services and advocacy to support minoritized students in particular” (pg. 5).

## **CULTURAL SPACES AT UC MERCED: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

### *The History of Cultural Spaces at UC Merced*

“A week after the November 4, 2015 incident students came together at the Students of Color Conference in Berkeley and began conversations on the necessity of our campus having safe spaces for marginalized identity communities (of color, LGBTQPIA+, etc.) to go to in times of crisis. At the Students of Color Conference, students quickly realized that our campus is the ONLY University of California without a cultural center, yet our campus is often marketed as, "the most diverse UC". Upon returning from the Students of Color Conference a student coalition was created with the purpose of ensuring that a cultural center finally be built on our campus!” Intercultural Hub Board

With UC Merced’s richness in diversity, Gonzalez (2000) “stressed the importance of cultural nourishment,” which is applicable with many student communities. This cultural nourishment and learning expands throughout the campus spaces, going beyond the residence halls, classrooms and student organizations. One of the many purposes the cultural (e.g.: Intercultural, Multicultural, Social Justice) center can provide is to enhance “learning environments to encompass the multicultural and multi-contextual perspectives of (but not limited to) racial/ethnic students (Gloria, 1999). Cultural centers also enhance the learning environment addressing intersections of identity, power/privilege and social justice. As stated, the student population at UC Merced is very diverse, and the cultural center can provide avenues for student to explore their multiple identities and how power/privilege may play in their process. Rothenberg (2007) correctly argued “we need to return to a version of multiculturalism that combines celebrations with attention to issues of dominance and subordination, hierarchy, power, and privilege” (p.49).

There has been vibrant conversations around spaces/cultural centers for the UC Merced campus. Davis in her consultant report stated, “the Cultural Center Task Force has done initial work in terms of developing a cultural center on campus. The Task Force identified six key areas that should frame the establishment and operation of the center. While each area seems feasible, they need to be connected to a larger strategic plan and to the needs that students have communicated, realizing these needs will shift over time and with changing demographics

(p.5). In the past there has been student demanding spaces/resources/centers providing support for Black/African American students and students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+, meaning multiple will be needed. Unfortunately at that time, overall space was very limited and to continue looking at any future proposals for Project 2020 to ensure such need is met.

In 2015, a delegation of 70+ student leaders attended the Student Of Color Conference and worked with campus leaders around cultural centers to serve and provide support and resources for different identities (racial, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, undocumented, intersections of identities). It was at this time as a collective of student voices worked together to establish a space that “strives to promote principles of intersectionality, diversity, inclusivity and social justice by providing students a safe, inclusive space. Through unity, identity exploration, and communication with one another, we hope to build solidarity and foster a culture of acceptance and anti-oppression activism on our campus” (Intercultural Hub Mission Statement, [https://www.change.org/p/chancellor-leland-create-the-intercultural-hub-at-uc-merced?recruiter=490405146&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copylink](https://www.change.org/p/chancellor-leland-create-the-intercultural-hub-at-uc-merced?recruiter=490405146&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink)).

Coordinated by the ASUCM (Associated Students of UC Merced) Vice President of External and the members within the working group, the students worked with at the time the Coordinator of Social Justice Initiatives directly, ASUCM and Senators and with currently our Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Charles Nies. As the conversation continued, the strong commitment from student leaders, specially womxn of color, queer people of color and students who are undocumented pressed on and in April of 2016, the Intercultural Hub was established along with a similar space for graduate students of color which opened the month before, and in 2017 established space for the Black Student Resource Center.

Prior to these spaces, feedback was solicited from different campus partners, from undergraduate students, LGBTQ+, Black/African American students, graduate students, and enhancing disability services within the last three-four years, using the Campus Climate Report done in 2013 was the catalyst to further connect with different communities, listen and connect with the current needs of the student experiences. With all of the summary reports collected and visioning how such space(s) will thrive, four pillars were shared with the stakeholders for the Intercultural Hub (space) can practice and commit to, these pillars were social justice, education, coalitional building and collective healing. Vetted through different groups and with the current survey, the UC Merced community with these pillars can flourish and a good number of those who responded can resonate with the pillars.

Currently, an initiative has been created to continue assessing the needs of the campus concerning the expansion of such affinity spaces to ensure the vitality of such spaces, continue to provide resources for programming and potentially staffing the spaces with full-time professional staff(s). Stated in her report, Dr. Patton-Davis provided numerous recommendations and Future Considerations (p.19-23):

### **Recommendations and Further Considerations**

1. UCM is examining potential spaces for a multicultural center on campus, but should continuously engage with community members, primarily students, on how the space will be used. The Cultural Center Task Force has done some of this work, but the need for ongoing conversations cannot be underestimated. The Task Force findings and ongoing conversations will move UCM closer to the realization of a cultural space with a solid rationale for how the center is structured and how it operates.
2. The cultural center at UCM should be connected to the CREA faculty. This connection could take the form of a faculty fellow position in which CREA faculty share their research with students in the center and have

other responsibilities for an academic year. The faculty member would receive a small stipend to support their research and to give a public lecture, which would count a service.

3. The cultural space should be staffed with a director, two coordinators, an administrative assistant, graduate assistant, and at least two student workers. Given UCM's size, it is not feasible to have individual culture centers on campus, though having them in the future should definitely be an overall goal as the institution grows. The director should provide general leadership over the center. One coordinator should have responsibility for retention programs and services. The other coordinator will be responsible for academic and cultural programming. The graduate and undergraduate student workers will be responsible for assisting with the implementation of programs and services. In lieu of individual spaces, the center programming should be geared toward implementing customized programs that address the needs of various student populations. Given the current issues on campus, particularly the demographics, Black student programming and efforts to enhance their participation and sense of belonging should be prioritized in these programming efforts.
4. The cultural center should have designated spaces for cultural organizations to store artifacts and information.
5. Currently, the cultural center will be too small to house a significant library. However the library should work in partnership with the multicultural space to create a cultural commons that highlights diverse books representing various minoritized populations.
6. The cultural center should be connected to residence life; particularly the student initiated learning communities. While erecting a black culture center is not feasible at this juncture, collaboration with and support of the Afro Terrace learning community, as well as well as Black student union should occur. This would require a series of meetings between Black students on campus and the multicultural center director as far as a needs assessment.
7. UCM should order modular furniture for the multicultural space, allowing for more space and functionality for both small and large-scale programming.
8. UCM should identify additional spaces on campus to address the privacy needs of graduate students, undocumented students, and LGBTQ students.
9. Given the limited space on campus UCM may need to reconfigure some of the functions on campus to meet diverse student needs. In other words, space should not be limited to physical spaces. Existing offices and their functions could be altered to address different populations and their needs rather than erecting several spaces.
10. The notion of "safe space" frequently emerges around cultural center discourses. UCM community members should resist safe space language to reference the cultural center because such language can be deceptive and fails to acknowledge that some individuals, by virtue of their marginalized identities have never been and can never be safe in a society rampant with violence and discrimination. The notion of safe space also fails to account for who can be safe based upon their privileged identities.
11. Given the numerous diversity efforts, thoughtful planning will be needed to figure how existing entities will link to the cultural center. The center should not be responsible for these efforts but should be engaged in programming that complements and enhances them. The presence of a cultural center (and

diversity officers) does not mean this office should oversee all campus diversity efforts (which is often the case). In order for the cultural center to be effective, every other campus entity must be responsible for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Cultural Center Task Force report is important but needs fine-tuning to ensure that the responsibilities assigned to the cultural center are clear and delineated from responsibilities of other campus entities. While the ultimate goal should be promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, each entity can approach these outcomes in different ways.

12. General misconceptions about the existence of cultural centers are common. For example, “if one group asks for a center, every group will ask for a center”. This line of thinking dismisses the concerns and challenges offered by the group that is seeking a center. It also conflates their concerns with other students’ concerns and leads to a erasure of the initial concerns raised. UCM community members should refrain from this microaggressive language and deal with the needs of the groups requesting space. Issues about cultural center relevance are also misguided and stem from a general lack of understanding about the history of minoritized groups on college campuses. The reality is that postsecondary institutions were not established with values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind. Thus, these values are not interwoven across the higher education landscape. As a result, institutions must make concerted efforts to address these areas given a history of exclusion in policies and practices designed to keep minoritized populations from obtaining a college education. UCM should consider hosting a campus conversation about cultural centers. The following readings will prove useful in dispelling a host of myths related to these spaces and promoting dialogue and understanding:
  - a. Patton, L. D. (2006). Black culture centers: Still central to student learning. *About Campus* 11(2), 2-8.
  - b. Patton, L. D., Ranero, J., Everett, K. (2011). Multicultural student services through a different lens: A critical race perspective. In D. Lazarus Stewart (Ed.), *Building bridges, re-visioning community: Multicultural student services on campus* (pp. 63-80). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
  - c. Patton, L. D. (Ed.)(2010). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
  - d. Patton, L. D. (2011). Promoting critical conversations about identity centers. In P. M. Magolda & M. B. Baxter Magolda (Eds.), *Contested issues within student affairs* (pp. 255-260). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
  - e. Stewart, D. L. (Ed.), *Building bridges, re-visioning community: Multicultural student services on campus*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
  - f. Patton, L. D. (2007). Conflict in the midst of culture: The transition from cultural center to multicultural center. In O. G. Brown, M. F. Howard-Hamilton & K. Hinton (Eds.), *Unleashing suppressed voices on college campuses: Diversity issues in higher education* (pp. 75-84). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.
13. The creation of the center should not only focus on space but also financial and human resources. Cultural centers are typically underfunded and expected to over program. This predicament ultimately disenfranchises the cultural center and hinders its effectiveness. Funds should be equitably distributed to the cultural center to support the six areas indicated on the Cultural Center Task Force Report.
14. UCM and the cultural center leadership will need to identify a strategy for community with the campus about diversity, equity, and inclusion. While a website is a standard way of doing this, the Chancellor should consider an annual state of diversity report to the campus or host a diversity conference or convocation that incorporates the entire campus community into the conversation. This effort could highlight diversity research conducted by faculty, research projects, art, and other works, created by students and serve as a community wide event to communicate the institution’s commitment to diversity.

15. UCM might consider creating a delegation to travel to other cultural centers to learn about their programming and structure. The goal would be to generate ideas to support UCM in creating a unique cultural center. A number of cultural center models exist. Rather than focusing on specific models, the following includes a list of links to centers, programming ideas, structures, and efforts that might work well for the UCM context and promote intersectional programming that captures students' diverse identities and promotes identity affirmation and validation in a supportive environment. This list is by no means exhaustive but they represent a few of the many centers I have examined over time. A graduate student should be hired to explore these options and various others and report findings to the Cultural Center Task Force. The report should connect what these centers and programs do to align with UCM's cultural center initiative:

- a. Under1Roof Program (Columbia College) <https://www.cc-seas.columbia.edu/OMA/diversityed/u1r.php>
- b. Center for Multicultural Equity and Access (Georgetown University) <https://cmea.georgetown.edu/> (their structure and programming would align with the direction of UCM's cultural center)
- c. Multicultural Resource Center (Oberlin College) <http://new.oberlin.edu/office/multicultural-resource-center/>
- d. Multicultural Center (Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis) <http://diversity.iupui.edu/departments/mc/> (this institution has similar space constraints as UCM, but is also in the process of adding a Black cultural center in another part of campus)
- e. Multicultural Affairs (Adelphi College) <http://csi.adelphi.edu/about/multicultural-affairs/>
- f. Center for Diversity and Inclusion (Washington University) <http://diversity.wustl.edu/center-diversity-inclusion/> (This center is only 2 years old) and I served as a consultant to assist with their center's development)
- g. Angelina Pedroso Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs (Northeastern Illinois University) <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/angelina-pedroso-center-diversity-and-intercultural-affairs> (This center has very limited space but has managed over time to engage in practices that recognize diverse populations under one umbrella. I've also consulted with for them)

### Research on Existing Centers

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Along with Dr. Patton-Davis report, the UC Merced Social Justice Initiatives Interns were tasked to do research on existing cultural centers with a multicultural, social justice focus, along with any centers on college campuses with a race-based cultural center. With daily contact, their challenge was to search for campuses that may have a similar profile with UC Merced as the first tier. The next tier is a student of color population in close comparison to the UC Merced campus. From their online research, the six (6) schools below were selected as something that can work at UC Merced.

University/Campus	Staffing	Programs
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CSU Dominguez Hills	Center Director Contracts and Procurement Coordinator Reservation Coordinator Student Programming Coordinators (5) International Student Advising (2)	Cross-cultural Retreats Diversity Chats (identity, oppression, communication) Diversity in Action (internship program) Multicultural Center Programming Board Unity Fest
Northeastern Illinois University	Executive Directors -Latin@ Resource Center Director -Director-LGBTQA Resource Center -Director-African and African American Resource Center -Director-Asian and Global Resource Center -Director of Student Advocacy	-Educational lectures, workshops, empowerment projects, and community dialogues -Cross cultural dialogues, heritage conferences, leadership series -Safe Zone Trainings, educational outreach -Salary negotiation workshops, empowerment groups, open discussions, Herstory month -Undocumented Student Projects
University of Houston	Director Program Coordinator Office Coordinator Graduate Assistant	-Meet and Greet -Cultural conversation -Culture Connect Week -Diversity Institute (Annual Symposium) -Speaker Series -Diversity Training

University/Campus	Staffing	Programs
Angelo State University	Director Multicultural Program Specialist Program Assistant	First Gen Living Community First Gen Host Family Program Diversity Dialogue Workshops Multicultural Advisory Council



CSU Fullerton	Director of Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers Assistant Coordinator Graduate Assistant Student Assistant	EMBRACE: Educating Myself for Better Racial Awareness And Cultural Enrichment Diversity Dialogues Diversity and Leadership Workshops (focused on cultural competence) Cultural Ceremonies
UC Santa Barbara	Director Programmer Publicists Office Manager Student Assistants (5) Programming Assistants (2) Office Assistant Graphic Designers (2) Sound Tech	World Music Series Identity Workshops Film Screenings Lectures Musical and Theatrical Performances

### Recommendations and Considerations for UC Merced

The following recommendations indicate the suggested staffing model to establish a fully developed cultural center providing advocacy, resources and services. Positions with an asterisk denote critical staff to support the initial creation and development of a center.

#### Staff Resource Recommendations/Considerations

- Center Director\*
- Assistant Director
- Coordinators
  - Program/Event Advisors (2)
  - Student Advocacy
  - Mentoring/Academic Specialist
- Office Manager
  - Student Assistants (2-5)\*
- Graphic Designer/Publicist

#### Space Consideration

- Size/square footage: Ideal for multi-purpose space usage (e.g. club meetings, small-scale events, programs and trainings).
- Accessibility for all students (physical and secure)
- Hours of operation should be flexible to compliment student class schedule (having student assistants and modified work hours for professional staff beyond the typical 8am-5pm)
- Provide several computers for research and space for studying

Eliminate the duplication of services

- Work collaboratively across campus to ensure no duplication of services
  - Identify a memo of understanding with campus partners for provision of services and education resources (e.g. MOU with Bright Success Center to provide some tutoring sessions in the center instead of the center providing it's own tutoring program).

These recommendations and considerations along with Dr. Patton-Davis are formulated from the research and direct communications with cultural center directors across California. This staff structure aims to create a vibrant, accessible, interactive learning/educational space that increases student agency and campus community and to continue to shift as student needs changes.

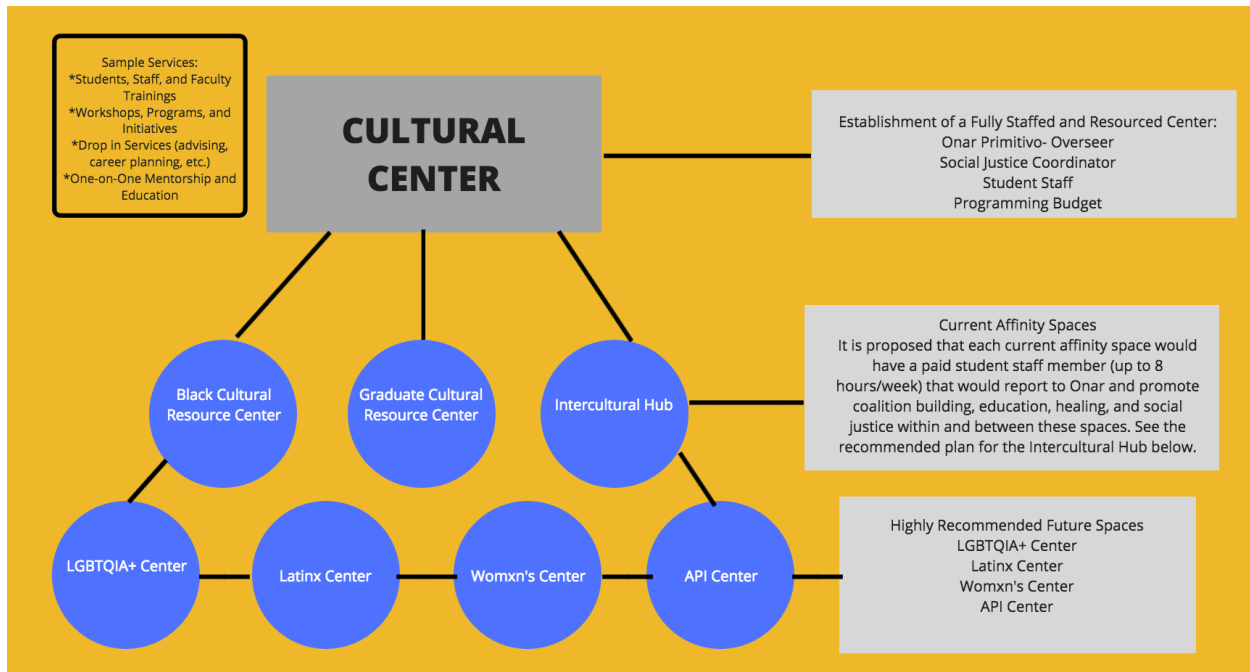
**The Development of a Cultural Center at UC Merced**

“A larger cultural center would provide a space for students to gather and discuss the topics and issues that are important to them. As an institution founded on the principles of learning, discovering, and engagement, this space would allow students to discover their full potential and the impact they can have beyond the "natural laboratory at home" and into "the state, nation and world." It is of the utmost importance for our students to be given the support to nurture their engagement, passion, advocacy, and initiative to change the world around them. A safer space on campus for the many students of marginalized identities would improve campus climate and allow our students to succeed in an environment that may otherwise appear unfamiliar and unwelcome.”

Anonymous Student

**78% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKELY UTILIZE A CULTURAL CENTER**

The following diagram highlights an overarching recommended vision for cultural spaces at UC Merced :



The cultural center (and affinity spaces) will promote principles of intersectionality, diversity, inclusivity, and social justice by providing students a safe, inclusive space. Through unity, identity exploration, and communication with one another, a larger cultural center will work to build solidarity and foster a culture of acceptance and anti-oppression activism at UC Merced. To accomplish this goal, the cultural center will be rooted

in the following key tenants: coalition building, education, social justice, and healing. These tenants are fully supported by the campus community and speak to the importance of community, empowerment, and unity.

Additionally, the cultural center will serve as a one-stop-shop for students, staff, and faculty to come together to build community, to engage in conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion, to study, work, and create, and to educate the self and others (in an environment that is safe, intersectional, respectful, and inclusive) while affinity spaces will serve as healing spaces for students (it is recommended that affinity spaces be “for students/by students”). The next section highlights the vision for affinity spaces at UC Merced.

“It would be amazing for a cultural center to open on our campus. Activities that include scholarly, social-cultural, and leadership engagement. Programs focused on racial retention, Women’s Leadership, cross-cultural community building, and advocates for civil rights and social justice through education and empowerment. I would like to see initiatives that seek to make higher education accessible for historically underrepresented, low- income, and first generation college students. I vision the cultural center to be a place where students can share their experiences with the goal to empower and encourage students of our communities (Black, Latinx, Chicanx, Native American, Pilipinx, Asian and Pacific Islander) to create their path towards higher education.”

Anonymous Respondent

The larger cultural center will have a full-time Assistant Director (Onar Primitivo) that will oversee the center, a full-time Social Justice Coordinator (focusing on programming, education, and intergroup dialogues), multiple student staff members, and will work closely with the Director of Student Advocacy (ASUCM) and the Commissioner for Diversity (ASUCM). Additionally, the current budget for Social Justice Initiatives could be used as the budget for the larger cultural center (\$30,000) and will hopefully expand in the future (please see suggested budget narrative). The following diagram highlights suggested services, initiatives, and programs:



“Centers can offer spaces for students to screen relevant films, hold programming events, and engage intellectually with their campus and the Merced community. These spaces foster understanding and building community but also increases recruitment and retention of diverse students. Counseling available in the spaces, with drop-in hours of different support services. Recruitment and Retention initiatives.” Anonymous Respondent

## THE EXPANSION OF AFFINITY SPACES AT UC MERCED

### Graduate Cultural Resource Center: Current Challenges and Future Opportunities

*(A Report Submitted by the Graduate Cultural Resource Center: Violet Barton, Danielle Bermudez, Maria Mora, Kim McMillon, Jamin Shih, and Michelle Yeung)*

As graduate students at the University of California, Merced, we recognize that it is imperative for our campus to build a campus community that is inclusive and welcoming to students of all backgrounds. Our campus prides itself on having "the most ethnically and culturally diverse student body among all University of California campuses" and its status as being a Hispanic-Serving Institution, which is a primary reason that our campus absolutely requires more support and spaces for our students of color. As the only University of California campus to lack a central Cultural Center, our students do not have access to the resources, training, research opportunities, safe spaces, and counseling these centers would provide that we need to reach our potential as scholars and activists.

A larger Cultural Center would give students a space where student voices can be respected and heard, where the empowerment of our students takes precedence, and where the diversity of our campus can inspire new perspectives in scholarship and research.

As our campus's diversity mission statement says, "Diversity enriches our research and academic missions" and this diversity is instrumental in "[nurturing] innovation and creativity." This center would benefit students in countless valuable ways and the success of Cultural Centers across the University of California system is a testament to the benefits one would bring to the University of California, Merced. They are, but are not limited to:

#### ADVOCACY

A Cultural Center would provide a space for students to gather and discuss the topics and issues that are important to them. As an institution founded on the principles of learning, discovering, and engagement, this space would allow students to discover their full potential and the impact they can have beyond the "natural laboratory at home" and into "the state, nation and world." It is of the utmost importance for our students to be given the support to nurture their engagement, passion, and initiative to change the world around them.

#### COMMUNITY

A safe space on campus for the many students of marginalized identities would improve campus climate and allow our students to succeed in an environment that may otherwise appear unfamiliar and unwelcome. Clubs and initiatives for students with similar backgrounds and experience play a vital role in helping students become aware of communities that share their experiences and understand the unique challenges in navigating higher education as a member of a traditionally underrepresented group. Centers can offer spaces for students to screen relevant films, hold programming events, and engage intellectually with their campus and the Merced community. These spaces foster understanding and community but also increase retention.

## EXPERIENCE

A Cultural Center provides valuable work experience for university students and also create jobs that allow our students to gain marketable skills in clerical duties, program administration, research, and management to become more competitive on the job market. These positions also serve as opportunities to make higher education more financially feasible for our students for whom the ability to work on (and with) UC Merced helps make the educational experience more accessible and enriching.

## OPPORTUNITY

A Cultural Center has the potential to better connect both undergraduate and graduate students to scholarships and fellowships that are relevant to their experiences and studies. Students who are more aware of the breadth of support available to them and the steps needed to take advantage of these opportunities will be better suited to earning scholarships that both increase the accessibility of their education and also highlight the value of our campus's scholarship as a whole. In addition, increased access to relevant resources such as books, films, and papers related to the experiences and histories of diverse groups provides an opportunity for new learning, understanding, and research.

## RETENTION

An increased and nuanced focus on inclusion and opportunity would increase retention by creating an environment better tailored to students' needs. In addition, Cultural Centers across the University of California system have intentional efforts to increase recruitment and retention of students from diverse backgrounds by anticipating and catering to the needs of diverse student bodies.

## SCHOLARSHIP

The potential is boundless for students and faculty to engage in cutting-edge interdisciplinary scholarship through resources and space provided at a Cultural Center. In addition to being able to host speakers and promote student-faculty relationships, the center would offer a crucial space for the exchange of ideas and perspectives that is conducive to the development of new and exciting research.

A Cultural Center remains a space on our campus that is sorely missing, especially in light of the success of similar centers across the University of California system. The benefits such a center would provide are multi-faceted and interact with each other to create a stronger, more unified campus. As graduate students at the University of California, Merced, we believe that our campus would be strengthened by efforts to better serve the needs of our diverse student body and the construction of a Cultural Center would play a vital role in the legacy our campus is creating.

## **Graduate Cultural Resource Center at UC Merced: Mapping the Vision Fall 2015-Spring 2018 and Beyond**

### **Missions**

- “With a focus on social justice, personal and community development, cultural awareness and advocacy, Social Justice Programs seeks to cultivate and develop an inclusive environment where students are aware of local, national and global issues and are equipped and prepared to thrive in a diverse global society. Through numerous programs, workshops and trainings — hosted or co-sponsored by Social Justice Initiatives — students have the opportunity to enhance their academic experience while learning a little more about themselves, others and the world along the way. ” - UC Merced Social Justice Initiatives

- “Emerging from the work of passionate student activists, The Intercultural Hub strives to promote principles of intersectionality, diversity, inclusivity and social justice by providing students a safe, inclusive space. Through unity, identity exploration, and communication with one another, we hope to build solidarity and foster a culture of acceptance and anti-oppression activism on our campus.” - UC Merced Intercultural Hub student working group (2015-2016)
- “We recognize and celebrate the identities, values and beliefs of our community.  
We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person while cultivating a campus climate rooted in mutual respect and compassion.  
We uphold the right to freedom of expression and encourage a culture of dialogue, understanding, and civility in all interactions.  
We seek to create a campus where a rich tapestry of ideas is shared, collaboration is embraced, and innovation is promoted.  
We pursue excellence in teaching and learning through contributions from all community members fostering a culture of open exchange.  
We promote opportunities for active participation and leadership in our communities.  
We champion civic engagement, environmental stewardship, research and teaching that connect theory and practice to learning and doing.  
We take pride in building, sustaining and sharing a culture that is founded on these principles of unity and respect.” - UC Merced Principles of Community
- “Background: Within the last academic year, there is ongoing discussion and organizing among undergraduate students for the creation of a cross-cultural center on campus, but there is currently limited plans for the creation of a cross-cultural space for graduate students. Student Services Building 350, otherwise known as the “Gradpad”, is supposed to be a social and academic space designated for all graduate students at UC Merced. However, graduate students of color and LGBTQ+ students, across many identity groups, have experienced several transgressions in the “Gradpad”, making it an unsafe space where graduate students of color and LGBTQ+ students are targeted and oppressive comments have been made. These comments are not just limited to the GradPad, as these comments have also been made across the campus at UC Merced. This violates the UC Merced Principles of Community, Title VII, and Title IX, and creates even greater barriers for the well-being and success of graduate students of color and LGBTQ+ students who are already underrepresented and underserved at the university. Graduate students of color and LGBTQ+ students deserve the right to feel safe in our campus community.

Preamble: We affirmatively raise the issue of race discrimination and harassment; express strong disapproval of race discrimination and harassment; develop appropriate sanctions for race discrimination and harassment; advocate for the administration to inform graduate students of their rights and instructing them to report race discrimination and harassment; and develop methods to sensitize all graduate students to behavioral indicators of race discrimination and harassment and the gravity of its consequences.” - UC Merced GSA 2016 Resolution

## UC Merced and Central Valley Community Context

UC Merced is located in Merced County, in the California Central Valley. Despite its rich ethnic diversity (Hmong, Latino, Sikh, Armenian, Punjabi, Portuguese, etc.), it is in an isolated rural area that lacks many resources that contribute to a climate of structural violence.

Merced County ranks near last (55 out of 58 counties) in women's wellness issues, study says  
<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/living/health-fitness/article70182882.html#storylink=cpy>

Fresno-area schools among most economically segregated in U.S.  
<http://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/education/article98189552.html#storylink=cpy>

UC Merced Receives F+ in Mental Health Rubric  
<http://ucsa.org/smh-rubric/>

Central Valley SunDown Towns, Dr. James Loewen  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/article/258891>

Merced "Crime" Index  
<http://www.clrsearch.com/Central-Valley-Demographics/CA/?compare=Merced%2C+CA>

Central Valley, California, "Prison Alley," De Giorgi, Alessandro. "Ruth Gilmore, Golden Gulag. Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California." *Critical Criminology* 16.2 (2008): 157-163.

Merced County Health Rankings  
[http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/state/downloads/CHR2014\\_CA\\_v2.pdf](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/state/downloads/CHR2014_CA_v2.pdf)

Merced County Economy  
<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Merced-County-case-study-of-economic-woes-4006527.php>

Merced County Demographics  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>

### **Graduate Demographics at UC Merced**

UC Merced is designated a Hispanic-Serving, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native American Serving Institution (Minority-Serving Institution).

As of Fall 2017, n=592 graduate students (irds.ucmerced.edu):

- 17.9% Hispanic (106)
- 0% American Indian (0)
- 9.6% Asian (57)
- 2.36% Black (14)
- .5% Pacific Islander (3)
- 30.9% White (183)
- 3.0% Two or More Races (18)
- 2.36% Decline to State (14)
- 33.3% International (197)

- 44.9% Female (266)
- 54.6% Male (323)
- .5% Decline to State (3)

## Previous and Current Challenges

- According to the 2016 White Paper on a Multicultural/Social Justice Center at UC Merced, “there is currently no space on campus allowing students to gather by affinity groups if needed” (Onar Primitivo 3).
  - There are currently no officially registered graduate cultural clubs or organizations at UC Merced
- “There is no dedicated co-curricular space accessible to create safe space/place for underrepresented groups on campus” (Primitivo 3).
- “...22% (of respondents of the 2013 UC Merced Campus Climate Survey) were less than comfortable. Additionally, 28% of respondents believed that they have personally experienced exclusionary , intimidating, offensive, or hostile conduct, with 11% of respondents indicating that the conduct interfered with their ability to learn or work at UC Merced” (Primitivo 3).
- Other research: “In light of declining financial resources and demands that directors demonstrate that Black Cultural Centers are helping to create positive student outcomes, a common theme within the discourse surrounding BCCs involves validating their existence. Opponents often downplay the contributions of BCCs, arguing that they foster self-segregation and prevent African American students from integrating with the broader campus community. They claim that the roles of BCC are too narrow in that they are solely for African American students and merely serve a social mission. These widely held misconceptions pose a challenge to BCCs and ultimately present a threat to their existence.” -Black Culture Centers: A Review of Pertinent Literature by Kimberly N. Sanders. <https://journals.uncc.edu/urbaned/article/view/443/513> We have faced similar opposition in establishing the GCRC, Hub, and BCRC at UC Merced. Some have said because we are an HSI or MSI, then there is no need for cultural centers, but these are misconceptions. Most commonly, Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva describes university spaces as a white habitus, because of the institutional power, diversity of administrative leadership and governance structures which continue to exclude and make decisions for diverse and underrepresented populations.
- Race scholars such as Dr. Lori Patton Davis and others know that racism and hence its structures become 'normalized' into everyday life," noted by Robin Hughes, interim executive associate dean of the School of Education at X institution. "This normalization of racism deeply and gravely impacts students' psychological well-being. It is critical that leaders understand the psychological brutality of racism and the psychosocial toll on students, administrators, faculty and the institution." - 2010 Dr. Lori Patton Davis book *Campus Culture Centers in Higher Education*.



- Pedagogical scholar Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2012) notes, “Why do students need cultural centers in the 21st century? ... The answer to this question lies in the reality of life in the United States and on our college campuses... Despite advertising themselves as open and democratic spaces where the marketplace of ideas allows for different and divergent viewpoints, many college and university campuses remain difficult places for students of color to negotiate... these places that we believe should be safe havens are often not... Students of color often report feeling isolated and misunderstood in a *culture* of predominantly white-led institutions... They are less likely to use conventional university services like academic advisors, counseling centers, or mainstream student organizations to deal with their feelings and concerns... Thus, the student cultural center becomes a source of support and comfort... In addition to providing social and psychological support for students of color, well-developed centers also serve as an important educational corrective. These centers support lectures, artistic exhibits, workshops, performing arts, and library collections beyond the typical campus offerings... They are places where members of the mainstream and members of a variety of cultural groups can learn about the history, culture, and experiences of others...”
- A cultural space needs to have access to resources and services to be effective, this includes professional staff and continuous, active programming

**OUR STORY**

THE GRADUATE CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER (GCRC) CAME TO FRUITION THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION OF A HANDFUL OF GRADUATE STUDENTS OF COLOR, PARTICULARLY WOMXN OF COLOR AND QUEER AND TRANS STUDENTS OF COLOR, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED WHEN THE UNIVERSITY WAS JUST OVER A DECADE OLD. STUDENTS RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR A SPACE TO AFFIRM THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS OF COLOR FROM MULTIPLE IDENTITIES, AND A PLACE TO HEAL FROM INSTITUTIONAL RACISM, CISHETEROPATRIARCHY AND NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM, AS WELL AS EVERYDAY MICROAGGRESSIONS IN ACADEMIA.

**MISSION**

THE GRADUATE CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER SEEKS TO PROVIDE A SAFER SPACE FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR, ACROSS INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES, TO REVITALIZE THROUGH SOLIDARITY, COMMUNITY-BUILDING, AND HEALING, AS WELL AS PLACE FOR INTELLECTUAL, EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND PHYSICAL NOURISHMENT THROUGH A STUDENT-RUN BOOK BANK, SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMMING, INTERSECTIONAL AND ANTI-OPPRESSION ADVOCACY. THE CENTER AIMS TO SUPPORT THE WELLBEING OF STUDENTS OF COLOR, AND HOPES TO GROW IN THE FUTURE, PROVIDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO WILL RUN THE RESOURCE CENTER. THE GCRC STRIVES TO SUPPORT POLITICAL ORGANIZING AND STUDENT ACTIVISM, AND MAINTAINS A MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS STUDENT USERS, AS THEY WORK TOGETHER IN PURSUIT OF A MORE DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, JUST, AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY.

**LOCATION**

**COB 2 190,  
UC MERCED**

**CONTACT**

**FACEBOOK.COM/GCRC.UCM**

**GRADUATE CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER**

WOMEN OF COLOR PEOPLE'S DAY

**Successes:** Since the Graduate Cultural Resource Center opened, we have created community agreements and hosted and/or co-sponsored several events, including:

- Opening of the GCRC - We Wear Our Crowns
- A Foundational Guide to White Supremacy and Intersectional Thought
- The Schoolhouse of Resistance: Grassroots Leaders and Cultural Centers in Higher Education
- Healing Circles
- Paletas and Murals
- Coffee and Identi-Teas
- Addressing Race in Our Community: Unifying Against Bigotry
- Re-Opening of the GCRC - Imagining Justice
- TPS Advocacy
- Rise Up Through Art: Unite in Solidarity
- One-Year Anniversary: United Resistance
- Undocu-Week 2018: Celebrating Our Existence - Storytelling Through Art

**Challenges:** The timeline below shows several of the challenges we've faced to establish and also maintain the GCRC:



Intentionality of Graduate Cultural Resource Center as a Safe Space at UC Merced: Pillars for a Student-led Social Justice and Emancipatory, Liberatory Education Space

- Affirmation of the Local and Global/Transnational
- Fluid, Intersectional Identities
- Health and Well-Being: Holistic Self-Care
- Safety Everyday and a Place for Times of Crises
- Diversity, Inclusion, Respect, Equity, Social Justice
- Dignified Basic Needs
- Emancipatory, Liberatory, and Critical Pedagogies: Teaching & Learning From the Margins to the Center
- Community-Building and Collective Solidarity
- Recruitment and Retention
- Spaces of Healthy Peer Mentoring
- Educational Justice, Academic Equity, and Transformative Resistance
- Just Communities: Imagining Possibilities, Futurities Through Art for Change

### **Examples of Desired Justice and Emancipatory Education Programming**

#### Campus Conversations: Intimate Spaces

- Identi-Teas and Cross-Cultural Conversations
- Presumed Incompetent
- Conditionally Accepted
- Critical Happenings
- Positive Intentions Board

#### Weekly Empowerment Circles

- Support Groups
- Healing Circles
- Restorative and Transformative Justice
- Sunrise Meditations
- Sunset Poetry
- Soul Sessions
- Sun Baths
- Reflection Days

#### Community Conversations: Larger Events

- Spoken Word

- Letter Writing Campaigns
- Legislation Watches
- Drum Circles
- Queer Cumbias
- Anti-Oppression Teach-ins
- Celebrating Blackness, Latinidad, Al Arabiya, LGBTQ+, API, Middle-Eastern, Mixed, Womxn, Undocumented, First-Generation, Indigeneity, Refugees, Immigrant, International, Transnational Identities
- Activist Tours
- Weaving Identities Through Storytelling
- Dignity Archives
- Cafe con Pan
- Encuentros
- Social Justice Movies and/or Film Festivals
- Panel Discussions

Bi-Weekly Reading Club

Study Sessions - Dismantling Oppressions

Monthly Cultural Meet and Greet

Monthly Social Justice Newsletter

Monthly Anti-Oppression Committee Meetings

Transformative Justice Roundtables

Social Justice Workshops

- Racisms
- Classism
- Sexism
- Heterosexism
- Hetero Cis Patriarchy
- Sexual Violences
- Religious Oppression
- Different Abilities
- Diversity in Politics
- Politics of Diversity
- Identity Politics
- Politics of Representation and Recognition
- Politics of Refusal
- Global Citizens

- (Un)civil Rites
- Human Rights
- Imperial Feminisms
- White Privilege
- Masculinity
- Power of Language
- Privileging the Text
- The Neoliberal University
- Militarized Spaces
- Silencing, Disciplining, and Excluding
- Epistemic Silence: Violence in Research
- Cultural Exploitation and Appropriation
- White Supremacy
- Dominance in Everyday Discourse
- Culture and Ethnicity
- *Racializing, Subalternizing, and Othering*
- Why Diversity is a Dirty Word
- Essentializing Identities in Multi-Culturalism
- “Colorblind” Society: Making Brown Women Invisible
- The “Post/Racial”
- Everyday Racisms on Campus
- Necessary Truths
- Holding Institutions Accountable
- What did you just call me...?
- Ethical Investments and Social Responsibility in Research
- Invest in Graduation, Not Incarceration, Transform Education
- In the Name of Freedom
- White Anxiety, White Guilt, White Fragility, White Rescuers
- Soft Violence, Lateral Violence, Color of Violence, Relational Violence, Epistemic Violence
- Beyond Fronteras: Confronting Legal Violence
- Indigenous Resistance
- Divide and Conquer Tactics
- Transgressing Queer and Trans (In)visibility
- Navigating Academia as a First Generation Student
- UndocuQueer and Unafraid
- International Students and Political Climate
- Student Worker Rights
- Income Insecurity
- Decoloniality
- Basic Needs Access
- Settler Colonialism
- Holistic Wellness and Self Care

- Dismantling Fat-phobia
- Femme Intersectionality
- Transnational Feminisms

### **Semester Speaker Series on Annual Themes**

#### **Symposiums on Intersectionality and Academia**

- Invited Scholars and Engagement with Existing and Emerging Programs on Campus (Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Mesoamerican Studies Center, Center for the Humanities, Womxn's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, etc..)
- Diversity and Academic Pipelines
- Institutional Research on Intersectionality
- Institutional Demographic Data about Students, Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, Administrators, Workers

#### **Art Exhibits, Performances, Acknowledgements/Affirmation Awards**

- Leadership Development for Underrepresented Communities
- Professional Development for Underrepresented Communities

#### **Expanding Values for Utilization of Cultural Space**

- Exercising Agency and Self-determination
- Community Building
- Emancipatory, Liberatory Education
- Self-Reflection
- Sense of safety
- Critical Thinking and Dialogue
- Self and Group Empowerment
- Critical Collective Consciousness
- Affirmation and Celebration of Multiple Intersectional Identities
- Sites of Resistance
- Archives on Struggles for Liberation
- Dismantling Oppressions in Academia
- Social Responsibility Locally and Around the World
- Love and Compassion
- Humanity
- Transformation

#### **Art as Embodied, Lived Experiences**

Murals painted by the campus community are a critical part of the cultural identity of culturally safe spaces

Wall colors

Exhibitions

#### **Wish List**

- Robust budget (programming, supplies, etc..)
- Book and Office Supplies Donations
- Speakers
- 1 LCD Projector
- 1 Computer
- 1 Large Pamphlet Holder Wall Unit
- Multiple Electric Plugs for Charging Phones, Laptops, etc.
- Access to Entry for Disabled Persons
- Continuing Fresh Fruit Basket
- Continuing Sexual health resources
- Continuing Feminine Hygiene Products Basket

### **Spaces and Places Surrounding**

Social Justice-inspired naming of plaza (space between COB II and KL)

In the future, as enrollment increases, the needs of our space will also need to be expanded.

### **Staff Support Needed**

- Hiring support staff through Social Justice Initiatives/Campus Climate that focuses on the GCRC. Future staff should also include academic counselors and holistic Recruitment and Retention Coordinators dedicated for graduate students that is interdisciplinary. Staff for culturally safe spaces must reflect the student populations at UC Merced with proven experiences working with diverse communities. Students from the cultural spaces must be involved in the hiring process from the beginning.

### **Black Cultural Center: Current and Future Needs**

*(A Report Submitted by the Black Cultural Resource Center: Manar Harran)*

In the year 2014, the black students at UC Merced released a series of demands to the university, one of those demands being the creation and permanent funding of a Black Student Resource Center. Four years later in 2018, the university has finally responded and we are proud to say that we have a Black Student Resource Center here on our campus. Since the initial proposal for our resource center was released in 2014, our black student population has declined from 5.7% to now 4.6%. The absence of resources to help support our black students serves as a key leading factor of this decline in our student population. As this campus continues to undergo tremendous changes and growth, we need to see changes with how our administration supports their students and an increase with our black student population.

The university prides itself on how diverse the student body is, but when it comes to providing necessary resources for our black students to ensure their academic success, the university does a poor job. According to UC Merced, “We welcome students, faculty and staff members from all backgrounds, and our goal is that everyone here feels respected and valued. That philosophy is at the core of what we do.” However, many of our black students do not feel respected nor valued. In order to foster a safe and healthy learning environment for our black students on campus, we must work on truly executing the creation and permanent funding of a Black

Resource Center, modeled after the U.C. Santa Cruz African American Resource and Cultural Center (A.A.R.C.C.) and that the full funding comes from the Chancellor's office.

With the lack of targeted resources for Black students on our campus, the center can serve as a targeted resource for Black students. This Black Resource Center will serve as the "umbrella" for all support, resources, and programs for students from the African diaspora at UCM. The center will provide leadership training, collaborative meeting/study rooms, networking/scholarships, community service efforts, advisement, and advocacy for the diaspora community on campus.

The black students here at UC Merced hope to have these goals met by the implementation of the following resources in the center. We want a full implementation of a computer lab with at least 5 desk tops with access to free printing. The significance of this will help contribute to our black student success here on campus.

Our Black Student Resource Center will also be a place for professional development. We hope to have a fully funded professional staff member who works out of our resource center along since a paid intern to continue providing various services in regards to professional development. They will be working on an internship and resource opportunity that can be easily accessed by out students. We plan to also have services that can help our students secure a position that'll help them develop professionally – such as resume, cover letter and LinkedIn development workshops and services.

Academic excellence is a key leading factor that contributes to student success. We hope to promote this through various tutoring outlets and services. For these tutoring services, we plan to have our juniors and seniors provide tutoring for the underclassmen. We want our student tutors to be compensated for the services that they provide. The black students also plan to implement lead scholars to continue to build on our mentoring programs and allow them to have their own office hours. The lead scholar will also be responsible for managing the pan-Afrikan library and organizing a book club. In addition to that, the lead scholar will be compiling a list of various scholarships that our students can qualify for. We also hope to have a budget that is allocated each year to fund our very own Black Student Resource Center Scholarship.

Mental health stands as one of the greatest issues faced amongst the black community and the only way this can truly be addressed is by hiring a fully-staffed black psychologist. Mental health here on our campus is an issue that continues being thrown on the back burner and this issue can no longer be ignored. We need a black psychologist in our resource center that way our students can feel comfortable reaching out to a professional that they can relate to and most importantly feel safe in their presence. Our black psychologist will help us kick-start many conversations around mental health and will help us facilitate various healing circles to ensure that there is strength and a strong sense of community within our black community.

With the implementation of the following resources in the Black Student Resource Center, we truly believe that this will not only help our black students succeed but the university as well. We can work together on such a project to continue supporting the endless efforts that our students are making in order to survive the everyday life of being a black college student.



### Future Role of the Intercultural Hub

There have been multiple suggestions as to the future role of the Intercultural Hub. The newly appointed Commissioner on Diversity and Director of Student Advocacy Students will work closely with Onar Primitivo and other students/stakeholders to develop a charter (similar to GCRC or MCSC) and map out how the space will compliment the larger cultural center. Appendix A highlights sentiments from current members of the Intercultural Hub space.

### Recommended Future Affinity Spaces at UC Merced

When thinking about the expansion and establishment of affinity spaces, such efforts must be tailored to utilize the most logical approach for the specific campus. Therefore, revisiting the proposed structure of cultural spaces at UC Merced is fundamental to discussing affinity spaces and their purpose.

In terms of purpose, it is important to consider the idea of safety, that all of the suggested communities below have experienced—both locally and nationally—tragic forms of verbal and physical violence. The first writing of section 2B, pertaining to the Graduate Cultural Resource Center, highlights not only the daunting data from campus climate reports and the 2016 White Paper, but also the successful increase of minority retention as a direct result of spaces such as these.

Another facet of affinity spaces, is to allow for all the proposed tenets (see above) to be practiced in a different, yet similarly paramount fashion compared to the larger cultural center. Moving the responsibility of external educational opportunities away from affinity spaces, and instead to the overarching center, allows for members of a historically agressed group to heal more efficiently, and partake in deeper conversations. A classic example is a non-Black student wanting to know why “Black Lives Matter” is said instead of “All Lives Matter.” Instead of asking members of the Black Cultural Resource Center—who are not only **healing**, but also could be spending their time in complex dialogue within the space—the student can instead utilize the fully staffed and resourced cultural center to address their inquiry. This way, the members of an affinity space have the opportunity to heal without the responsibility of teaching on their shoulders. Further thinking about the **education** tenet, affinity spaces allow for learning to occur *within the population* of a particular affinity group, strengthening the bonds shared, leading to a form of **coalition building**. Lastly in discussing these macro-level tenets and the purpose of affinity spaces, allocating space for marginalized communities to better navigate a system of education (which historically was not intended for these groups), contributes to the ongoing theme of **social justice**.

Highly suggested future affinity spaces, listed in respective quantity of responses (starting with the most recommended), are the following: Latinx Center, LGBTQIA+ Center, Asian Pacific Islander (API) Center, Womxn Center, Native American Center, Undocumented Student Center, and Middle Eastern Center.

Referring to the structure depicted diagram in section above, the overarching cultural center would be fully staffed and resourced, serving as a safe, respectful, and intersectional place to provide services and programming detailed in the flowchart above. In addition to any new affinity spaces, the current affinity spaces (BCRC, GCRC, and the Intercultural Hub) would report upwards to the cultural center. The medium through which the reporting would occur, thinking about structure and communication, would be through a paid staff member.

The discussion of student staff versus professional staff is ongoing. As learned through the findings of *Crucial Conversations*, students prefer spaces “for students, **by** students” for two reasons typically. First, students are frustrated by uncompensated labor in relation to work and initiatives related to social justice. Secondly, students prefer to govern spaces on their own because of the resulting sense of sovereignty. As mentioned in earlier

writings above, the existing affinity spaces at UC Merced experience difficulties and have a need for increased resources. A common resource mentioned is the desire for a budget. Understanding the role of bureaucracy and the importance of accountability, a budget can only be delegated to a professional staff member. Therefore, in order to best serve students, it is suggested to explore the “both/and” by incorporating a mix of both student and professional staff.

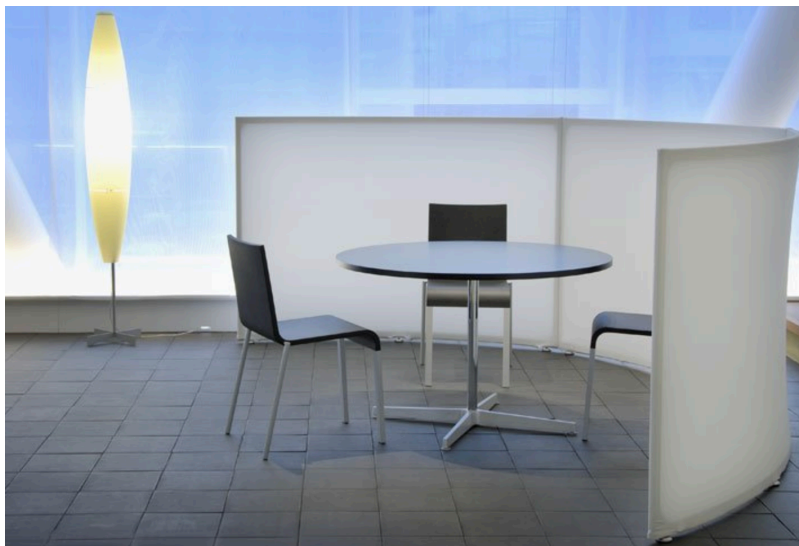
Through the model suggested, a paid student staff member who reports to the larger cultural center helps to mitigate the theme of unpaid labor. **In addition to the paid student staff per each affinity space, there will also be an associated paid staff member assigned to each affinity space to support the needs of these spaces (for example, Social Justice Coordinator, etc.). While this person’s office would NOT be in the actual affinity space, this person would support and advocate for the needs of the spaces.** It is with great confidence and hope, that the University is asked to *prioritize* and *allocate resources* to **institutionalize affinity spaces** and support the success of the student body composed of various cultural groups.

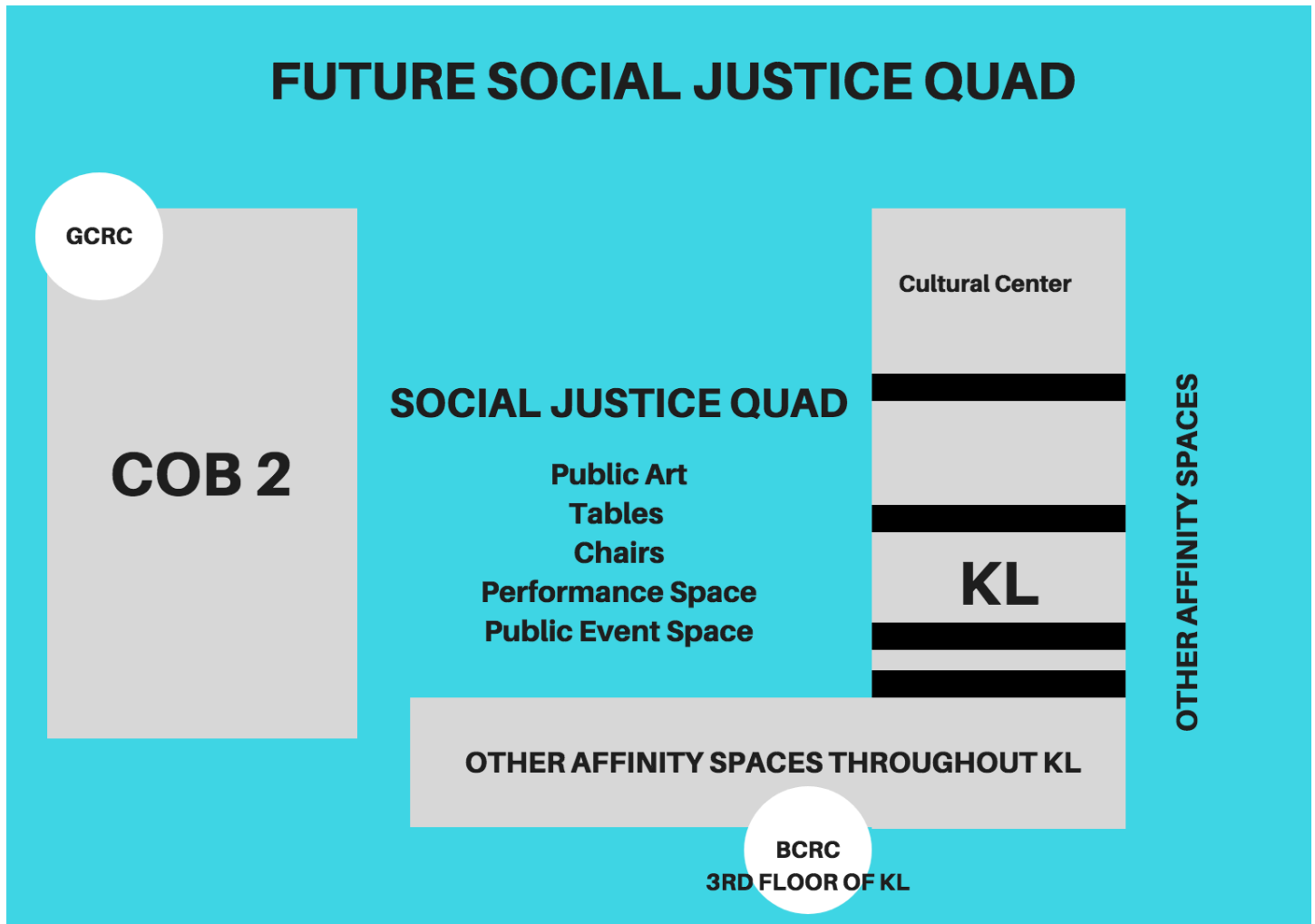
## **SPACE ALLOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Cultural Center Space Recommendation*

The current location of the **Bobcat Lair** is the recommended space for the cultural center considering its size, open layout, and location. Considering the proposed strategic vision, **limited remodeling and resources are needed**. The envisioned layout would align with the open-concept model that is currently being used for the downtown center. In addition to the current furniture/set up of the space, the following will be needed initially:

- *Paint*
- *Storage cabinet/Bookshelves*
- *Movable Couch/Furniture*
- *Two office desks (for the Drop-in services and the new Social Justice Coordinator)*
- *Work table (for students to make large posters and prepare for events)*
- *Computers*
- *Movable partition for privacy similar to the below:*





As the campus considers expanding affinity spaces on campus, it is suggested that space be considered in KL to form a social justice quad (with a possible naming opportunity). If the Bobcat Lair becomes the new cultural center, other potential spaces to consider would be (the current space of Social Justice Initiatives, the current work/tutoring room next to the Intercultural Hub, and space amongst the backfilling of spaces throughout the first floor of KL). The proposed Social Justice Quad would provide a communal space for public art, tables and chairs for community usage, performance space for teach-ins, speakers, performances, etc., and food options.

### *Future Space Recommendations*

A recognized goal of the community is to pursue the future long-term goal of a freestanding multicultural building. It would be suggested that Onar Primitivo and both paid student staff members for the existing affinity spaces (BCRC and GCRC) would meet with Development and Alumni relations to discuss ongoing needs and future donor opportunities.

“As students we have been demanding a free standing building that will provide resources, events, and academic support to succeed. This free standing building has been highly desired and needed for students. As the first new 21st century research university, we need to hold ourselves to a higher standard that reflects the ever growing population of our campus. This is only a preliminary step that students have been requesting and not the end to the conversation of cultural spaces. Giving its students the highest quality of education and

college experience to learn about and embrace our diversity. Visual and spatial representation is essential for empathy and growth between communities that have not had the opportunity to share diverse spaces. For more than a decade, there has been a need for students on having a free standing building with resources that meets the diversity of our campus. Of which, the university has capitalized and prides itself to be. While the University prophesizes and exploits the cultural identity through advertisement, it lacks to support its students with resources and spaces for them to thrive. The student population demands a cultural space building that supports student’s identities and intersectional identities to the best given capacity. We ask that the cultural building is fully funded along with staff and faculty that supports and uplifts student and people of the Central Valley through social justice, education, coalition building, and healing.”

Commissioner on Diversity, Cristóbal Alberto

**TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION AND BUDGET NARRATIVE**

*Suggested Goals for 2018-2019*

- *Hire one paid student staff member for the GCRC (up to 12 hours/week). This student staff member will report to Onar Primitivo.*
- *Hire one paid student staff member for the BCRC (up to 12 hours/week). This student staff member will report to Onar Primitivo.*
- *Hire one paid student staff member for the Intercultural Hub (up to 12 hours/week). This student staff member will report to Onar Primitivo.*
- *Secure Location of LGBTQIA+ Center*
- *Cultural Center Grand Opening*
- *Increase Annual Budget of Cultural Center by 15%*
- *Chief Diversity Officer Hired*

*Anticipated Budget Narrative*

CATEGORY	REQUESTED FUNDING
Paid Student Staff Position for the BCRC (up to 12 hours/week)	\$5,076
Paid Student Staff Position for the GCRC (up to 12 hours/week)	\$5,076
Paid Student Staff Position for the Intercultural Hub (up to 12 hours/week)	\$5,076
Cultural Center Establishment: Bobcat Lair Remodel/Equipment/Resources	\$10,000
Increased Budget for Cultural Center by 15% (increasing the budget of social justice initiatives)	\$4,500
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$29,780</b>

### *Suggested Goals for 2019-2020*

- *Increase Public Cultural Art on Campus*
- *LGBTQIA+ Center Opening*
- *Establish Social Justice Quad (potential naming opportunity)*
- *Secure other potential affinity spaces on campus*
- *Secure sustained funding for GCRC, Intercultural Hub, and BCRC*

### *Goals to Consider for 2020 and Beyond*

- *Freestanding Cultural Building*
- *Increased Professional and Student Staffing*
- *Increased Annual Budgets and Support for Cultural and Affinity Spaces*

Intercultural Hub Space

Names:

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The future role of the intercultural hub:

- On May 20th, 2017 the Intercultural Hub\* was open to students demanding for a cultural center for multiple years. We acknowledge our past and current contributors through their pain, sweat, tears, energy and love that was put to obtain this space for students. Acknowledging that students mobilized for a cultural space after the 2015 incident on campus. With the increase tension in campus climate, nation and global political drift. As the new, and tenth University of California in the twenty-first century that as of Fall 2017 the University of California [Enrollment website](#) states that UC Merced is 72% first generation college student and over 80% students of color, the school lacked in providing resources and support for it communities.
- When the University of California, Merced opened its doors in 2005 in assisting the Central Valley and its communities; it did not provide adequate institutional support for students in obtaining a high quality education.
- Our student population has not felt well assisted and welcomed by the University due to the lack in resources for students, graduate students, post-doctorates, faculty, and staff. The institution is continuously over-enrolling in a campus that is inadequate to foster support and educational advancement for all students -- lack of resources, overworked and underpaid staff and faculty, inadequate space and space allocation for departments and students.
- We request that the Social Justice Initiative coordinator work closely with The Hub space and reflect the need for a student of color space. We request the Social Justice coordinator to be in collaboration with students from The Hub to provide leadership trainings, resources, and programing events that all center communities of color and any other need of the current students. We request the Social Justice Initiative Coordinator to host collaborative meeting with The Hub board, networking, scholarships, community service opportunities, advisement of events, and advocacy for the space.
- We would like to have the history the new Multicultural Center to document and acknowledge the efforts of students from the Graduate Cultural Resource Center, Black Cultural Resource Center, and the Intercultural Hub as leading departments for cultural spaces at the University of California, Merced.
- We would like the space to become a space for students of color, a location where students of color and their intersectional identities can share space collectively and create coalition, education, and social justice. A space for students of color to find support until each identity space request from students has a staffed, funded, supportive, and a working center. We demand for further resources such as a budget, supplies, and program provided from the Social Justice Coordinator.

- The Intercultural Hub room will not be replaced with any affinity space or any other occupation placed on the room due to the necessity for students of color to have their own space apart of staff and faculty. Administration and the University needs to be actively looking and allocating spaces for the affinity spaces to provide proper centers. The Intercultural Hub space capacity only allows fourteen individuals inside the space, inadequate for any center to thrive in an over packed campus. People will continue to follow and uphold the pillars of the space that the space was build on and the guidelines when entering the space.