

UC Merced

AIARU: Panel 2 - Organization and Structure of the Modern Research University

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Symposium**

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**Panel #2: Organization and Structure of the Modern Research
University**

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**UC MERCED
PROFESSOR,
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Hello, and thank you for coming today. We're going to do a different organization. I'm going to be taking a few. You're already--supposed to be here. Okay. A few introductions and a few introductory comments. The panel is going to take the first shot at responding, and then we're opening the mike. So we would like people to come up from the audience to make their comments.

So let me just start, we're talking about, I think structure matters because you need to have a structure that's flexible. I have here scaffolding on a building, a well-designed building in California, particularly, it has to be flexible, because if we have an earthquake, you don't want it to just fall apart. But we also, and the structure's important because it has to promote research excellence. It has to promote excellence in undergraduate education. And it is the structure that pretty much determines how resources get allocated on the campus.

So what does Merced need? And this is a question I'm throwing out to all of you. Everyone's been talking this morning about how we have this incredible opportunity. We're the new research

university. We have this unique, diverse student body. But this unique, diverse student body has been alluded to before. Fifty percent of them are first-generation college goers. And they want the core that they, or they want the traditional disciplines that they see in another place. So we have the tension of being this exciting place that we can promote all this interdisciplinary research and, you know, truthfully, the exciting research is often at the edges of discipline. 'Cause we're going into new territories. The void that Steve [Kang] responded to, right on the outside of those golf balls, maybe not all the way into the middle of the void, as Evan [Heit] pointed out.

But we also have this tension of what is expectation for it. So I'm going to talk a little bit about our structure. We, at this currently we have three academic units. We have three schools. Those are the official ones. We have a School of Natural Science, a School of Engineering, and a School of Social Science, Humanities and Arts. This is partially for the people that aren't so familiar with it. So last year we developed a process for approving new academic units. Smaller groups of faculty that can vote on their peers for promotion and tenure and also organize under degrees.

So let's just step back and look at what we have. And this is the tension that I think is captured very well in this diagram. We have the school structure. And you can look at those gray boxes, the rigid ones, as thinking of them as majors or it could be academic units. And those currently are fitting inside the schools, because that's our resource allocation scheme. And those are well defined, and that's often how we distribute our faculty lines. Those amorphous cross hatch structures are our graduate groups. They often, many of them are interdisciplinary. They go across majors. Some of them go across schools. And we have a few faculty that have split appointments that go across schools. You can see the dead person lying down.

That person has an expectation of teaching in both schools and meeting both processes. And we've experimented. We have two junior faculty that have that, as well as two very senior faculty.

I will say it wasn't one of those split junior faculty but it was a junior faculty who came up with the idea that that person should be horizontal. But the tension is, is that as far as the schools go, we have to roll out those degrees. What we have is as few as five faculty in some majors. And so those people can barely offer their undergraduate courses let alone start building a graduate program. We have other majors that have more faculty but they have a tremendous student load. Biological sciences is a very popular major and the student-faculty ratio, depending on your count, can be looking at one to 80 or one to 30, if you include instructors.

So they have a tremendous load. And we have really difficulty building up our research programs. So with that, let's just switch to the question, how do we promote cutting edge research in a system that right now is dominated a lot by populating undergraduate degrees? We've heard in the previous panel the wonderful things that undergraduates offer, but we also have the practical reality of rolling out courses. And admitted, this question has gotten very important in these times of limited resources. And particularly for Merced. You know, we started with 50 faculty instead of the initial 100, and we're still playing catch-up in trying to populate.

And this is one model for doing it. We have a strategic academic vision that you were all given. And there were six areas of excellence that had been identified. And are these the right areas? I can't tell you. One way we started to do it, we had one identified ORUs on the Sierra Nevada Research Institute, which Mark Yudof alluded to. We have some nascent ORUs [Organized Research Unit]. Health Science Research Institute. MERI, Merced

Energy Research Institute. Some of them just span one of these areas. Some of them span multiple areas like spatial analysis is coming up. And I will say if I had drawn this diagram as a circle, as Steve [Kang] alluded to, circles you get your linkages better, there are some limitations in putting it on the flat ground.

But with this I just want to end with...this is a bureau. You can spend a lot of money to buy it. We think of bureaus as being very straight pieces. This one, you can put whatever size storage you want, whatever organized. But it does have an outer constraint on it. So I want to think about what structure we can have that is going to promote research excellence and that's flexible so that we can change as research areas go, and that really allows us to take advantage of opportunities and new areas of research. And with that, I'll open it to the panel to make some comments and then we'll draw from the audience. So, Michael [Drake] will you start?