

Background

I was appointed as UCR's first Associate Provost in September 2015. At the time, the position was envisioned as one of two direct reports to the Provost, both located in the Provost's Office, with the second being the Provost's Chief of Staff. This arrangement lasted for about one year but when the Chief of Staff left, I encouraged the Provost to reorganize by merging the higher-level Chief of Staff responsibilities into the Associate Provost position and collecting the lower-level responsibilities into an analyst position. We have been operating with this arrangement for the past four years (a complete organizational chart is available [here](#)).

The Associate Provost is a member of the campus senior leadership team but the role is relatively unique within this group because it is one of only two members (the other being the Associate Chancellor) who is not a unit leader. It is thus a less public role and perhaps also less well understood by faculty and staff across campus. I see four main categories of responsibility for the Associate Provost.

1. **Project management.** A variety of projects, sometimes assigned by the President or the Chancellor, are managed directly by the Provost's Office rather than being delegated to someone outside of the office. The Associate Provost has a leadership/management role for many of these projects. Examples from the past five years include: the cluster hiring initiative, academic elements of the UC Budget Framework Agreement, campus reaccreditation, enrollment management, online course development (including [LTI courses](#)), University Innovation Alliance projects, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act policy development, cohort tuition planning, non-resident recruitment organization and funding, course scheduling policy redesign and implementation, data dashboard development, strategic planning, and instructional elements of capital projects and renovations (e.g. the Student Success Center).
2. **Advice and consultation.** A standard role for any Chief of Staff is serving as a confidante and sounding board to the executive. The Associate Provost often helps the Provost examine and debate complex issues before making a decision.
3. **Liaising on behalf of the Provost.** Another standard Chief of Staff role is "extending the bandwidth" of the executive by serving as a surrogate. This can involve meeting with direct reports of the Provost to strategize, work through problems, and develop plans; consulting with direct reports who are looking for guidance from the Provost's Office but are unable to meet with the Provost (perhaps due to scheduling conflicts); delivering information, decisions, and requests on behalf of the Provost; and attending meetings and events on behalf of the Provost.
4. **Staff and workflow management.** Most of the immediate staff in the Provost's Office report to the Associate Provost. This includes the Executive Officer for the administrative unit (SEAT) that supports the Chancellor's and Provost's organizations, the Director for Evaluation and Assessment, an analyst and an administrative assistant. The Executive Director for [UCR Palm Desert](#) also reports to the Associate Provost. The Associate Provost thus supervises the work done by these staff, which includes assessment and accreditation activities, the annual faculty hiring call and other requests for proposals (e.g. instructional equipment funds), recurring communications and website management, all activities at the Palm Desert Center, and office support functions such as HR, finance/budget, travel, procurement, reimbursements, etc. A total of 30 staff currently report up to the Associate Provost through five direct reports.

I hope this makes clear that the Associate Provost primarily supports the Provost in a variety of ways to help advance their vision and priorities for the unit and the campus. The Associate Provost also has an opportunity to help shape the vision and priorities but not to the same extent as a unit leader does.

Self-Assessment

I have organized this self-assessment around the 14 Criteria for Evaluation, with embedded links to supporting information.

1. Contribution toward the overall goals and vision for the University of California-Riverside.

The guiding document for the Provost's Office is the campus strategic plan. The current strategic plan has four strategic goals: *Academic Excellence*, *Access*, *Diversity* and *Engagement*.

UCR's **Academic Excellence** goal refers to specifically to research excellence, and I have led two projects that directly advance this goal. One of my first major responsibilities, in 2015, was to implement the campus plan to significantly grow our research faculty through a large cluster hiring initiative. There was no precedent for this kind of hiring initiative at UCR so I established an advisory group to develop structures and procedures to facilitate the hiring effort. We solicited feedback from faculty and staff and made adjustments to improve the process after each year. Ultimately, more than 90 new faculty joined UCR through this initiative. The second, more recent, project is to make better use of our available data. I have been leading a group of staff and faculty administrators to implement data dashboards as a decision support tool for academic leaders across the campus. The dashboards will allow easier access to both instructional and research data to help deans and others promote and support excellence by making informed resource allocation decisions.

Many of the projects I have led or managed have furthered the campus goal of extending **Access** to a quality UCR education. In 2017, I began serving as the campus liaison to the University Innovation Alliance. The UIA is a group of 11 large public research universities committed to improving outcomes for low income, first generation and under-represented students. In this role, I supervised campus-level student success projects related to proactive student advising, predictive analytics, completion grants, and career advising, all of which are still ongoing at UCR. In 2019, after working on our institutional reaccreditation effort, I began serving as the campus Accreditation Liaison Officer. During the past year, I have been working closely with the Director of Evaluation and Assessment to redouble (and in some cases, restart) our assessment efforts to help ensure we are able to monitor learning outcomes and make adjustments to improve student achievement. The Director and I have been engaging with the Senate to strengthen our collaborations and increase efficiency. Later this year, I expect to lead the implementation a new IT platform that will make assessment activities and reporting easier and allow us to spend more time learning from the evidence we collect. Other student-success-related efforts include leading the enrollment management workgroup to help ensure students have access to the classes they need to make timely progress to degree, chairing a committee that redesigned our course scheduling process to promote efficient use of classroom space and avoid conflicts that delay student progress, and working on multiple capital projects and renovations to increase our seat counts and provide high-quality learning spaces for students.

With respect to advancing **Diversity**, I am most proud of the role I had in further diversifying the faculty during and after the cluster hiring initiative. Just prior to 2015, UCR averaged around 10-13% under-

represented minorities in each incoming faculty cohort. Since 2015, and in part due to changes in hiring practices that I helped to implement with Ameae Walker and Mariam Lam, we have averaged 22-24% and have also seen a significant increase in the proportion of women in each cohort (more information is available [here](#)). This required a substantial, sustained, campus-wide effort over multiple years, and so it has been gratifying to see that the improvements have now been sustained over several cohorts.

Supervising the activities at UCR Palm Desert has given me multiple opportunities to advance community **Engagement**. Foremost, I worked with the Executive Director to create a new policy that requires any lessee who receives a “sponsored rate” for their space to implement a community engagement plan as a condition for continuing to receive the discounted rate. This advances a key goal of the Palm Desert Center – to provide community-oriented programming to the Coachella Valley—while also providing inexpensive, high quality space to UCR researchers and other groups. One of these groups is the California Indian Nations College (CINC). For the past several years, UCR has been supporting and advising CINC during its formation and development into a degree-granting institution. Currently, CINC’s administrative staff is based at the Palm Desert Center, and I am one of two principle contacts for their staff. We are currently drafting a MOU with CINC that should lead to even greater collaboration between our two institutions, including a commitment to foster and encourage matriculation of CINC graduates into UCR degree programs. Looking ahead to future opportunities, UCR Palm Desert is currently engaging with UC Cooperative Extension leadership to determine if we might serve as a home base for their staff who work with communities throughout the desert region.

2. Establishment of clearly defined goals and vision for the unit, in support of the broader campus and university mission, and communication of those goals to both members of the unit and the campus community at large.

The Associate Provost’s role is more one of supporting the Provost’s goals and priorities than establishing these, but nonetheless there are still opportunities to help set and shape this high-level vision. Foremost is the leadership role I have in our ongoing strategic planning effort. But more germane for this review might be the strategic planning exercise that I facilitated with the Executive and Assistant Directors for the Palm Desert Center. As the campus strategic planning process got underway in fall 2019, we initiated a similar but smaller effort to identify ways to align teaching, research and outreach activities with regional needs in the Coachella Valley. We conducted a SWOT analysis and considered alternative visions for the Palm Desert Center that ranged from a research/innovation center to an extension-oriented instructional center to a heavy emphasis on events, performances, exhibits and community engagement. Ultimately we decided that a “satellite campus” model with three key objectives was the most compelling: (1) Facilitate UCR research, focusing on relevant issues for the desert region that have the potential to engage the community and offer opportunities for local high school and community college students to participate; (2) Extend UCR instruction, particularly to high school and community college students who may become future UCR transfer students; and (3) Build community relationships through outreach and events. We have shared this plan with the Chancellor and Provost and are taking next steps with potential partners (e.g. UCR School of Medicine, UC Cooperative Extension, College of the Desert) while also keeping an eye on the evolving campus strategic planning process.

3. Provide leadership to program heads and/or department chairs to achieve the goals of the unit.

I have two direct reports who are supervisors themselves: the Executive Officer for SEAT and the Executive Director for UCR Palm Desert. I have weekly meetings with the Executive Officer and biweekly

meetings with the Executive Director. In both cases, I frequently listen to challenges they are facing and help talk through options to surmount those challenges. For more than a year, I have been helping lead SEAT through a challenging phase due to some personnel issues, and I also had a significant leadership role in the strategic planning effort for UCR Palm Desert and in the identification of promising new partnerships to help this unit work towards its strategic objectives. Occasionally direct reports to the Provost also will seek me out for consultation on specific issues, and I think I have established a reputation as a helpful adviser for some of the leadership challenges they face.

4. Recruitment, retention, and development of diverse and high quality staff, administrators, and faculty (as appropriate).

I've already mentioned my roles in the cluster hiring initiative and in our successful efforts to further diversify our faculty. To these, I would add the contributions I made to developing and implementing the Provost's Faculty Leadership Program which ran for two years before taking a hiatus due to other priorities (reaccreditation, strategic planning) and turnover of key staff. This was not a program that I led myself, but I helped in designing the structure, shaping the curriculum, and advising the staff member who ran the program. In addition to these faculty-related efforts, over the past five years, I've had a formal role in around 20 searches for UCR staff and administrators, ranging from administrative assistants to vice chancellors. For some of these, I've been the chair, other times a committee member, and often I serve as the Provost's representative in support of searches for direct reports to the Provost. I bring to these searches what I've learned from my efforts to promote diversity in faculty hiring and try to ensure each is conducted in a fair, inclusive and collegial manner. I've also tried to facilitate opportunities for my immediate staff to develop professionally. These include trainings for supervisors, conference speaking opportunities for staff, and in one case, enrollment in an advanced degree program.

5. Stimulation and facilitation of innovative approaches for the achievement of unit goals and objectives, and the development of creative solutions to challenges.

As an undergraduate engineering major, I studied the curriculum in Stanford's D-School before it was called the D-School and learned the "design thinking" process without labeling it as such. More recently, after starting this position, I completed a program called the Academy for Innovative Higher Education Leadership and was reacquainted with design thinking. This is a powerful process for reinventing a product or service and making it more efficient, effective and user-oriented. The challenge is that it takes time to implement this process properly. Over the past five years, the Provost's Office has periodically tried to carve out time for brainstorming new projects we might take on to try to improve the campus for faculty, students and staff. Inevitably, pressing issues cause us to convert those meetings to other uses that seem too urgent to be postponed. This is something I think we can and must to do better because our office needs to be working for both the short and long-term success of the campus. However, on one occasion, I was able to implement design thinking to re-engineering an important campus process. In 2016, at the request of several department chairs, I led a workgroup that redesigned our course scheduling process. Over several months, our group of 15 faculty and staff used design thinking principles to completely deconstruct and rebuild the process with an emphasis on student success, equity, predictability and transparency. Our recommendations received positive reviews from the Senate and the Provost, and have since been implemented. More recently, I have been doing a lot of creative thinking with our Assessment Director about how to improve and facilitate learning outcomes assessment

activities campus-wide. We have developed a multi-year implementation plan and are currently working with Senate colleagues to try to get some of these ideas put into practice.

6. *Efficient management of unit operations, including budget administration, personnel reviews, and other administrative responsibilities.*

I think I have developed a reputation for being responsive and efficient in administrative matters, but I look forward to receiving feedback on this since others are in a better position to judge.

7. *Maintenance of effective communications with the unit, campus community, Office of the President, and external constituencies as appropriate.*

At the unit level: Previously I mentioned that I meet at least every other week with my two direct reports who are supervisors. The Provost's Office holds staff meetings with the same frequency, where each team member has a chance to provide an update on their ongoing work to the rest of the group. Recently we created a Google sheet that lists all of our ongoing projects with relative priority levels, statuses, milestones and responsibilities, as a way to help us stay organized and create opportunities for those with relatively lighter workloads to help those who are busier. Lately, I also have started attending the staff meetings for the SEAT unit for 10 or 15 minutes to foster two-way communication deeper into that unit, and I try to visit UCR Palm Desert and meet with the entire staff once each year.

At the campus level: The Provost's Office has a very important responsibility to communicate with the campus about a variety of issues related to the academic enterprise. We do this in various ways. For specific, time-sensitive topics of relevance to large numbers of people, we send Scotmails to the campus (we also post the more recent messages [here](#)). Our office also moderates the faculty Scotmail list and thus has a role in shaping the campus messaging from other offices. We are always trying to balance the benefit of more communication against the downside of overwhelming faculty and staff with too much email. We also use email for our periodic Provost Updates, which provide more detailed summaries of projects and initiatives that we want the campus to be informed about. I encouraged the Provost to start sending these periodic updates in 2016 and we have continued doing so since then. Initially I had a very significant role in selecting the topics and writing the text, although more recently our communications analyst has started doing more of this. We deliberately keep these updates text-heavy and informative, as opposed to a lighter newsletter format with pictures that link to other resources, believing that our academic audience appreciates hearing details first-hand from our office. Based on the positive feedback received, we decided to borrow the Provost Update format for periodic strategic planning updates, as well. These are sent to the campus monthly, after each steering committee meeting.

We communicate with the campus community in other ways, as well. Around three years ago, I felt that we needed to provide an opportunity for better engagement with the campus on significant long-term projects. This led to the creation of an Ongoing Projects page on our website (now called [Strategic Initiatives](#)) where we post detailed information that is intended to both inform and invite feedback. Two years ago, we started hosting the winter quarter Town Hall meeting. I have a role in helping to prepare topics and materials for this but it is mostly the Provost and our staff who make the event happen. I am personally invited to talk to groups across the campus, including academic senate committees, chairs and directors meetings, and sometimes even staff meetings in other units. Such face-to-face meetings are great for two-way communication but the numbers of people who have a chance to speak is always limited. Therefore, we often use Qualtrics surveys to solicit broad campus input on important topics,

including course scheduling, online teaching, executive searches, and others. During the initial phase of the Student Success Center project, I helped to develop and lead a campus-wide forum at the Alumni and Visitors Center to collect input on elements of the building design. We received positive feedback on the format of this event, and so we have since used it to collect input on other projects including, most recently, strategic planning.

At the system level: Our office is in regular communication with the Office of the President (OP). Much of this is done by the Provost but I also make important contributions. I am in regular contact with the Chief of Staff to Provost Brown, as well as the other Chiefs of Staff around the system. I participate in our campus enrollment management calls with OP, and I represent UCR on the system-wide working group for cohort-based tuition that is led by AVP David Alcocer. I help to review presentations the Chancellor will make to the President and the Regents, and I substitute for the Provost when he is unable to attend system-wide meetings in Oakland.

8. Promotion of diversity, inclusiveness, and civility.

Previously I mentioned my role in changing our faculty hiring practices, which helped to further diversify our incoming faculty cohorts. This was a significant team effort that I helped to lead over multiple years. During the first year (2015-16), I led hour-long workshops with only the chairs of the cluster searches to emphasize diversity in hiring as a campus priority, motivate and explain this priority in the context of UC's diversity mission, and clarify what can and cannot be done under Proposition 209. In the second year, I worked closely with Ameae Walker and Mariam Lam to expand the curriculum to two hours to help all search committee chairs (both cluster and departmental) learn how to evaluate diversity statements and use them in the candidate evaluation process, and how to avoid and address implicit bias in hiring. In the third year, we worked with campus HR and Bella Merlin in the Department of Theater, Film and Digital Production to develop an online version of the legal and policy information. This allowed us to reduce the workshops to 90 minutes and focus more time on interactive elements in a flipped classroom for all search committee members (rather than just the chairs). Everyone involved in this project devoted significant time and effort to it, so it has been extremely gratifying to see lasting improvements in the diversity (both racial/ethnic and gender) of our incoming faculty cohorts (data is available [here](#)). In addition to this project, I also helped to implement a UCOP-funded faculty hiring program in BCOE that ultimately recruited six women and minorities into engineering in 2016, and I served on the oversight committee for the system-wide faculty diversity program that funded this and other campus efforts across the UC system.

With regard to students, I served as UCR's liaison to the [University Innovation Alliance](#) for about two years. The UIA is a group of 11 public universities that is focused on effectively serving large numbers of diverse, low income students. The UIA functions like a higher education research network, testing new ideas on our campuses and determining which are worth scaling-up. Projects to-date include predictive analytics (a data-driven "early warning" system for students who are becoming at risk), proactive advising (applying predictive analytics through the student advising infrastructure), and completion grants (micro-grants for students with small unpaid balances). I also served on the organizing committee for the UIA's first national convening that was held in Atlanta in 2018.

I find it tremendously rewarding to help extend opportunities to those who have faced steep uphill climbs to get to where they are, so they can keep climbing. I view equity as a guiding principle that every

educational institution must have, and I view diversity, inclusiveness and civility as campus assets that need investment and cultivation if members of the campus community are to benefit from them.

9. Service as a collegial, collaborative, and contributing member of the campus senior leadership team.

I think that the number and variety of projects and responsibilities in my portfolio over the past five years speak to my collaborative nature and meaningful contributions to the leadership team. But, similar to my comment about administrative efficiency, I look forward to receiving feedback on this since others are in a better position to judge.

10. Leadership in the long range planning and development of the unit.

The vision for the Provost's unit is largely that of the Provost and the Chancellor. However, in practice, the Provost usually consults with the Associate Provost on issues that affect the long-range trajectory for the unit. Examples of when I believe I've helped to influence the trajectory include: merging the Chief of Staff responsibilities into the Associate Provost position and creating a new analyst position; assuming the role of the campus Accreditation Liaison Officer and helping to bring the Director of Evaluation and Assessment into the unit; determining a permanent home and sustainable funding plan for our international recruitment and partnerships activities (currently in the Provost's Office but moving to International Affairs); and helping to develop Key Performance Indicators for the unit.

11. Support of UCR's Principles of Community and a positive campus climate.

I think I have a reputation for collegiality and leading by example in supporting a positive campus climate, but this is also something for others to judge and provide feedback.

12. Representation of the campus with the Office of the President and related senior UCOP officers.

I mentioned previously that I help to keep our office in regular contact with OP. This includes liaising with the Chief of Staff to Provost Brown, participating in conference calls and working groups organized by leadership at OP, and substituting for the Provost when he is unable to attend meetings in Oakland.

13. Representation of the unit and UCR at community, state and national levels.

Occasionally I have been asked to step in for the Provost when scheduling conflicts arise with community events, but such representation is primarily the Provost's responsibility especially at the state and national levels.

14. Build productive partnerships on behalf of the campus.

I try to take a team-oriented approach to everything I do, and so I am always looking for mutually-beneficial partnerships both on and off campus. Some campus-level partnerships that I've helped to build and/or maintain include:

- **System-wide Provost Chiefs of Staff.** This group has monthly conference calls and meets as a group biannually. There is a cooperative spirit and a wealth of knowledge among these colleagues, and I regularly seek out advice from this network and respond when advice is sought by others. UCR will host the next in-person meeting of this group in the fall.

- **University Innovation Alliance.** I served as the campus liaison to this group of 11 public research universities for around two years. Similar to the Chiefs of Staff group, this partnership also has an emphasis on collaboration and information sharing. I often contacted my fellow liaisons with requests for information and tried to be responsive when they did the same. Examples of how UCR benefitted from my participation in this network include the following: I worked with Arizona State University and the University of Central Florida to understand, at a very detailed level, how their online education initiatives developed, grew and currently operate. I worked with ASU to allow UCR faculty to enroll in their online master teaching course for free, given the absence of a similar course at UCR. And I worked with Oregon State University to understand their decisions on classroom design for a new instructional facility that informed decisions here at UCR for the Student Success Center. For both ASU and OSU, we brought teams of UCR faculty and staff to those campuses and spent a full day in discussions with colleagues.
- **WASC.** When I began serving as UCR's Accreditation Liaison Officer in 2019, it became apparent to me that recent staff turnover had weakened our relationship with our regional accreditor, and this had had a negative impact on the campus. Since then, I have worked with Director Omar Safie to rebuild this relationship through more regular communication including biannual meetings with our WASC Vice President. We have received very positive feedback from WASC, including an invitation to make a presentation at the annual academic resource conference, and all indications are that this partnership is back on track.
- **UCR Palm Desert.** Building community relationships through outreach and events is one of three key objectives for the Palm Desert Center. Executive Director Tamara Hedges and her staff deserve the lion's share of the credit for their efforts in this area, but I have had an important role in stewarding our partnership with the California Indian Nations College and in pursuing a new partnership with UC Cooperative Extension. I mentioned both of these previously.
- **CSU Chancellor's Office.** In 2018, I visited the CSU Chancellor's Office with Vice Provost Jennifer Brown and staff from Undergraduate Education to share student success strategies and discuss how data can be used to improve student achievement. This engagement led to [a team from UCR](#) participating in the 2019 CSU Student Success Analytics Certificate Program.
- **Riverside Community College District.** UCR has a close relationship with RCCD. Over the past five years I have engaged with RCCD administrators to help increase the number of RCCD students who transfer to and successfully graduate from UCR; and to share strategies for rapid migration to remote learning due to COVID-19.

Looking Ahead

The most pressing priority for the Provost's Office will be to continue navigating the COVID-19 crisis and repercussions, including what is likely to be a significant long-term financial impact. In addition, we will continue to lead the campus strategic planning process, which remains on track to be completed by the end of the calendar year, and then begin to implement the plan. We will continue to make improvements in our campus assessment infrastructure and in the use of assessment results in decision-making at all levels of the institution. We also will continue working with Vice Chancellor Bomotti on adjustments and improvements to the campus budget model and related budget process. Capital planning will be slowed by the crisis and the failure of Proposition 13 but it will be important to continue managing ongoing projects, especially those that improve our research and teaching infrastructure and allow us to serve students appropriately and grow responsibly.