



Search for the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Engagement
University of California, Merced
Merced, California

The University of California (UC) Merced, the youngest campus in the world-renowned University of California system, seeks an experienced and collaborative leader to serve as its next Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Engagement (VCSAE). Reporting to the Chancellor, the VCSAE will join an institution in rapid ascent as it grows enrollment and implements an ambitious [strategic plan](#) that aims to establish UC Merced as a national hub for transformational research with a substantial impact on the Central Valley, the state of California, and the world. The VCSAE will work with a very diverse, academically gifted and driven student body, many of whom are first-generation and Pell-eligible students, as well as highly dedicated and passionate faculty, staff and campus leadership to achieve UC Merced's mission of promoting learning, discovery and engagement. The VCSAE will ensure all students are engaged and feel they belong at UC Merced.

A top research university and the fastest-growing public university in the nation, UC Merced is on the cutting edge of sustainability in campus construction and design and supports high-achieving students from the underserved Central Valley and throughout California. The university community comprises more than 9,100 undergraduate and graduate students across three schools and has close to 500 tenure-track faculty members and lecturers teaching across approximately 60 [majors and minors](#). More than 99% of undergraduates are from California, and approximately 70% are first-generation college students. UC Merced is proud to be a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) recognized with the Seal of Excelencia for its efforts in promoting Latinx student success, and also rates as an Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), based on enrollment and engagement of students from these groups. UC Merced promotes and celebrates its rich [diversity](#) and is ranked fourth nationally for social mobility of students by *U.S. News & World Report*, and in the [top 10](#) for economic mobility.

The new VCSAE will join UC Merced at a significant inflection point for even greater impact with the implementation of the strategic plan underway and the recent appointments of a new Provost, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, an inaugural Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management, and multiple other new deans and campus leaders who will be strong partners in evolving students'

engagement and co-curricular experiences. Working closely with a talented team of student affairs professionals, the VCSAE will have a tremendous opportunity to reimagine how the Division of Student Affairs proactively partners with faculty and staff across the campus to provide more compelling programming and a more comprehensive and engaged student experience. As the student body continues to grow, the VCSAE will ensure the infrastructure and programming necessary for all students to feel a deep connection and sense of belonging to UC Merced, their classmates, faculty and staff. This includes development of a range of high-level strategies to support and retain both undergraduate and graduate scholars. The VCSAE will provide leadership on several exciting upcoming institutional initiatives to assist with UC Merced's evolution and growth, including the construction of a new 400-bed residence hall designed to house a growing population of transfer students, and will aid the Department of Athletics as it transitions from NAIA to [NCAA Division II](#).

The VCSAE will also be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

- Create and implement a vision that promotes a more vibrant campus life, increasing student engagement and success
- Serve as a highly visible and approachable champion for all students on campus, in the Merced community, in the UC system and beyond
- Provide inspirational leadership for a complex administrative unit
- Advance a culture of inclusion, proactive student services, crisis management, assessment and data-informed decision-making
- Broadcast UC Merced students' stories widely for increased visibility and fundraising

Isaacson Miller, the national executive search firm, is supporting UC Merced in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations and applications should be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

UC Merced was founded as part of an effort to increase access to the UC system for California's top achievers, enhance the UC's presence within the rapidly growing San Joaquin Valley, and strengthen and diversify the economy of one of the world's most productive agricultural regions. Following a careful and competitive selection process, the UC Board of Regents chose the site in eastern Merced County as the location for the 10th campus of the University of California. Faculty members began to arrive in 2003, with the first graduate courses beginning in the fall of 2004, and the campus celebrated its official grand opening and the arrival of the first class of undergraduate students on Sept. 5, 2005. Since UC Merced's doors opened, the UC system has continued to invest in the newest campus, most recently with significant financial support for the Merced 2020 Project campus expansion. A high level of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research by faculty and a strong graduate student presence on campus nourishes undergraduate learning. Much of this research focuses on issues of major importance to California's

Central Valley, thereby building a foundation for students to improve local conditions while also exploring the ways that academic disciplines understand and grapple with the world's most pressing challenges.

The impact of UC Merced's growth and trajectory reaches beyond campus and continues to transform the region academically, economically, and environmentally. In its teaching and research, UC Merced maintains a focus on sustainability, diversity, and community. It leads the UC system in the percentage of students from underrepresented ethnic groups, low-income families and first-generation scholars and has been designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. UC Merced is becoming well-known nationally for its state-of-the-art facilities and extensive growth plan, its talented and diverse student body, and its already well-established research programs in fields such as agricultural technology, biomedical and behavioral health sciences, climate sciences and sustainable environmental systems, inequality and social justice, and cognitive, computational and data sciences. UC Merced undergraduates experience education inside and outside the classroom, applying what they learn through research opportunities, service learning, and leadership development. As apprentice scholars, graduate students build their understanding of and ability to conduct independent research in their chosen fields as the groundwork for entering professional life. Lifelong learners continue to hone their knowledge and workplace skills.

Medical training launched last fall at UC Merced as the campus welcomed its [inaugural class](#) of the [San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education](#) (SJV PRIME)+ B.S. to M.D. pathway. Students in the pathway will complete their Bachelor of Science at UC Merced over four years, and then complete their Doctor of Medicine degrees at UC Merced and UC San Francisco's Fresno campus over the following four years. UC Merced is accredited by the Licensing Committee on Medical Education to deliver medical education as a branch campus of the UCSF School of Medicine and is committed to training a diverse range of future health professionals prepared to serve their communities and promote health in the Central Valley. UC Merced recently garnered funding from the State of California to build its inaugural [Medical Education building](#), which broke ground this year and will serve as the first building dedicated to supporting medical training on the UC Merced campus.

Outside of the classroom and laboratory, UC Merced students engage with approximately 240 [clubs and organizations](#), 20 social and professional [fraternities and sororities](#), and a wide range of athletics teams and recreational and outdoor adventure activities. UC Merced has a long-standing partnership with nearby Yosemite National Park. This affords students enriching outdoor experiences, research opportunities and leadership training. The university offers a vibrant campus life experience with 10 on-campus residence halls and 15 [Living and Learning Communities](#) that unite students with similar interests and educational goals with academic, social and personal resources across the campus community. Approximately 40% of students live on campus, and most others live near campus. The university is firmly committed to fostering a campus culture that values access and inclusion and is guided by a set of [community principles](#) that were developed by the Chancellor's Advisory Council for Campus Climate, Culture, and Inclusion in collaboration with the campus community nearly a decade ago.

Juan Sánchez Muñoz, UC Merced's fourth chancellor, began serving in May 2020. A California native whose parents immigrated from Mexico and whose father worked in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley, Dr. Muñoz has deep roots in the UC System and the Central Valley region. He launched UC Merced's first comprehensive campaign, now halfway to its 2030 goal of \$200 million, and oversaw the creation of its first Strategic Plan and a university rebranding. Enrollment has risen every year since 2020, and the campus is [ranked](#) highly by [national organizations](#). He has driven a project to increase the number of undergraduate program offerings, and to expand aggressive brand and admissions marketing throughout the region.

THE DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

The [Division of Student Affairs](#) works to support the campus's mission and to assist undergraduate and graduate students to achieve excellence inside and outside the classroom and laboratory. It strives to be a leading model of innovative approaches for student-centered initiatives as it deliberately grows to meet the expanding needs of UC Merced's richly diverse students, alumni, and community. Within the Division, staff work to advance the university's commitment to student success by providing support, guidance, and resources that equip students with the tools to successfully accomplish their academic, career and personal goals. The [guiding principles](#) of the Division of Student Affairs are transformational, inclusive, nimble, and impact.

Several units comprise the [Division of Student Affairs](#), including the [Dean of Students Office](#), [Center for Educational Partnerships](#), [Health Services](#), [Auxiliary Enterprises and Fiscal Innovation](#), [Student Involvement](#), and [Recreation and Athletics](#).

ROLE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENGAGEMENT

Reporting directly to the Chancellor, the VCSAE ensures the overall quality of student life and engagement at UC Merced. They are responsible for the development, assessment and improvement of services that meet and support the needs of all students and the university's mission. The VCSAE analyzes issues, with the cooperation and collaboration of students, faculty and staff, and identifies creative and innovative initiatives that result in a living and learning environment that fosters the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural, ethical and career development of a diverse student body at UC Merced.

The VCSAE works closely with the Provost, Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management, the Vice Provost & Dean of Undergraduate Education, the Vice Provost & Dean of Graduate Education, Vice Chancellor of Equity, Justice, and Inclusive Excellence, and the deans of the three schools to advance the recruitment, retention and success of all students at UC Merced. In addition, they ensure that the student experience includes a wide range of internship options with industry and state and federal government agencies, as well as opportunities for all students to participate in research.

The VCSAE is proactive around crisis management and in charge of internal and external communications for all student crisis matters. They convene the Protest Oversight Group to collaboratively oversee peaceful assemblies and protests on campus, manage all conduct appeals, and are responsible for coordination with schools, extramural agencies, public and campus offices, and the Academic Senate on student affairs matters.

The VCSAE oversees an operating budget of approximately \$70M and 295 contract and career employees, including 10 [direct reports](#). The VCSAE is a member of the Chancellor's executive cabinet of advisors and a member of the University of California Senior Management Group. The VCSAE represents the campus' student affairs interests at system-wide meetings.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENGAGEMENT

It is a pivotal time for the VCSAE to join UC Merced, given the university's ambitious growth plan and the opportunity to build on a strong foundation. The VCSAE can have a strong positive impact on undergraduate and graduate student experiences and outcomes by addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Create and implement a vision that promotes a more vibrant campus life, increasing student engagement and success

The new VCSAE will join an innovative and forward-thinking community eager to define a new vision for UC Merced's student experience and reimagine how the growing student body engages and creates meaningful and enriching experiences outside the classroom. The VCSAE is expected to create a more vibrant campus life that attracts and retains a talented and diverse student body of varying interests and backgrounds, especially as UC Merced seeks to recruit California's top talent in a competitive higher education marketplace. To be successful, the VCSAE will be creative and find new ways to evolve campus programming, merge student and academic life, increase student involvement, promote student wellbeing and belonging, facilitate connections with the Merced community, and positively guide students to succeed. The campus aspires to create a new student engagement hub to help support these efforts. The VCSAE will also innovate and build new programs, listening closely and responding quickly to student feedback about how the university can develop and support in-demand learning and engagement services and create new traditions that ensure that the campus is a place where students are excited to learn, spend time, make memories and engage with their peers. As the VCSAE works to enhance the culture around engagement outside the classroom, they will leverage data and assessment to understand which programs are most impactful and will sunset ineffective programs and services. The VCSAE will ensure that the Division of Student Affairs is nimble, consistently shifting strategy and adapting programming to meet students' changing needs.

Partnerships and collaboration will also be key to their success. The VCSAE will build strong relationships across campus through regular communication, especially with the new Provost, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management, Vice Chancellor of Equity, Justice and Inclusive Excellence, and deans, to cultivate the co-curricular experience, find efficiencies and synergies in programming and promote more seamless support for students. Ultimately, UC Merced has the opportunity to become a model for the nation around how to best engage and serve a diverse and talented student body well, and this Vice Chancellor will lead that charge.

Serve as a highly visible and approachable champion for all students on campus, in the Merced community, in the UC system and beyond

The VCSAE will provide an approachable presence for all students, interacting openly and genuinely in a variety of settings to help ensure their connection to the campus and administration, solicit their feedback when appropriate, and find new ways to augment the student experience in response to their feedback. The VCSAE will ensure that students from all backgrounds and experiences feel welcome and have a strong sense of belonging at the university. They will keep a pulse on student needs, especially those of historically marginalized communities, including low-income, first-generation, international, undocumented and immigrant, LGBT+, students with disabilities, re-entry, transfer and veteran students, among others, and be a strong voice for students at the Cabinet level. The VCSAE will educate the campus regularly regarding the specific needs of UC Merced students and the resources available to support their success. The VCSAE will have an informed and nuanced understanding of the complexities around students' basic needs, including food and housing insecurity, mental health challenges, and the structural inequities many students face, and equip the campus to anticipate and respond to students' issues with compassion and in a timely manner. They are also expected to have a data-informed approach to their work, adapting services and programming regularly to best serve all students.

The campus has a strong relationship with the community, and the new VCSAE will build on that relationship by expanding partnerships that benefit both UC Merced students and the City of Merced. This will include showcasing the many opportunities for the community to engage with students on and off campus, working with the community to provide services that can support students beyond what the university can provide, and augmenting experiential learning and internship opportunities for students to have an even greater impact in the city of Merced and beyond. Additionally, the VCSAE will serve as a champion for UC Merced within the UC system, advocating for funds and resources that enhance the student experience while ensuring new policies and programs mandated by the UC system meet the unique needs of Merced's diverse student population.

Provide inspirational leadership for a complex administrative unit

The VCSAE will lead a talented and high-performing team eager to help develop and implement a vision for Student Affairs that can best engage and support UC Merced's diverse student body. The VCSAE will serve as a strong and visible advocate for the Division and team, leveraging their talents and expertise where possible, and empowering them to create a nimble and highly responsive Division. The Division will be expected to continually adapt its procedures, infrastructure and services to best respond to student needs and wants as the institution continues to grow, and data-informed decision making will be the key to their success. The Division will need to be nimble to respond to immediate changes, such as the construction of a new residential facility being built in partnership with Merced College and the transition to NCAA Division II Athletics, but also be anticipatory and plan for the future, focusing on what UC Merced hopes to become for students as it matures. The VCSAE will foster a culture of trust, transparency, collaboration, professional development, innovation, excellence, inclusion and community. This will involve championing and recognizing staff excellence across the Division, cultivating the team to fulfill a new vision for Student Affairs, managing complex budgets, fundraising for resources and advocating for space to support their ambitions, building bridges with other units on campus to facilitate new and impactful collaborations, encouraging professional development, and facilitating an inclusive and flexible workplace where staff can do their best work.

Advance a culture of inclusion, proactive student services, crisis management, assessment and data-informed decision-making

In close collaboration with campus leadership the VCSAE will foster a campus culture that values open communication and is proactive in responding to student concerns and student needs. The VCSAE will encourage constructive dialogues, brainstorming solutions and ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and valued at all times, and that data is readily available and considered in their decision-making. The VCSAE will also work collaboratively to ensure campus policies and procedures are clear, transparent and consistently applied. In an era of increased student activism and protest, the VCSAE will work closely with leadership to proactively prepare for and deftly navigate complex issues related to free speech and other forms of risk management, leveraging the expertise of legal professionals when needed. The VCSAE will be expected to balance professional and legal obligations by emphasizing educationally informed approaches to manage campus crises and campus safety while also ensuring students' voices are heard.

Broadcast UC Merced students' stories widely for increased visibility and fundraising

The VCSAE will be a powerful storyteller, highlighting students' stories on campus and externally to illustrate the impact and transformational nature of a UC Merced education to garner increased visibility and new resources. They will support the capital campaign, *Boldy Forward*, while also finding new ways to supplement revenue, including through grants, community partnerships, and leveraging other assets of Student Affairs, such as the enthusiasm around NCAA athletics, to ensure sufficient resources to best support students' financial and wellbeing needs as the campus continues to grow. Serving as an engaging

and passionate ambassador, the VCSAE will be an important partner through all stages of the donor cultivation cycle and will support alumni engagement. As UC Merced is a young campus, the VCSAE must understand the importance of cultivating a loyal and generous alumni base by engaging current students and promoting a culture of giving. The VCSAE will also enhance the visibility and recognition of UC Merced more broadly, including nationally and internationally.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will have at least 10 years of progressive leadership and managerial experience in student affairs administration and at least a master's degree in higher education, student affairs or a closely related field. They will be an energetic, innovative, creative, student-focused professional with a high level of cultural competence, who can facilitate change, generate synergies, and work collaboratively within and across departments. The VCSAE will also have many, if not all, of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Expertise in the areas of improving student life and the student experience.
- Demonstrated knowledge of administrative support areas, including fiscal, human resources management, auxiliary enterprises, student health and psychological services, intercollegiate athletics and recreation, dining and student housing, and fraternity and sorority life.
- Strong communication skills and a record of commitment to shared governance.
- Proven ability to work collaboratively with a diverse faculty, staff and student body and with all members of the academic and campus-wide communities.
- A record of creativity and noteworthy success in initiating and implementing programs that attract and retain a diverse student body, and initiatives that improve student life and experience, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.
- Commitment to building strong community relations and community partnerships that benefit UC Merced students.
- Demonstrated experience in successful crisis management.
- Significant experience in establishing collaborative initiatives that bring students, administrators, faculty and staff from multiple departments together to creatively study and identify avenues to address issues.
- Proven track record of success in strategic planning and managing a sizable budget.
- Ability and enthusiasm to fundraise through grants and gifts to support student affairs initiatives.
- Sophisticated knowledge of student development theory and demonstrated ability to apply this knowledge to foster student engagement through social, cultural, leadership, educational and recreational experiences.
- Must be a good listener and eager to seek the input of students and student organizations' elected or appointed representatives.
- Successful experience in change management and program improvement.

Compensation and Location

The University of California, Merced, is required to provide a reasonable estimate of the compensation range for this role. This range takes into account the wide range of factors that are considered in making compensation decisions including but not limited to experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, education, licensure and certifications, and other business and organizational needs. It is not typical for an individual to be offered a salary at or near the top of the range for a position. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience. The budgeted salary range that the University reasonably expects to pay for this position is \$300,000 - \$340,000.

The UC Merced Campus is located approximately 7 miles from downtown Merced, about an hour north of Fresno, two hours south of Sacramento, and two hours southeast of the San Francisco Bay Area and Silicon Valley. As the county seat, the city of Merced is a highly diverse and youthful city that is home to theaters, galleries, museums, numerous restaurants and frequent cultural events. The campus is located adjacent to Lake Yosemite, an ideal setting for swimming, walking, barbecues or other activities. Merced is known as the “Gateway to Yosemite,” and it is common for students to take the 90-minute trip to Yosemite National Park to hike, snowboard, rock climb and camp overnight. Learn more about Merced [online](#).

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with cover letters and statements of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: [Vice Chancellor – Student Affairs & Engagement | Isaacson, Miller \(imsearch.com\)](#). Electronic submission of materials is required.

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UC Merced is an EEO/AA/Vet/Disability/Minority Employer.