

# Academic Assembly Council President's Report: February 2023

## University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

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*Annemiek Schilder  
Multiple Academic Titles Committee Chair*

*Rebecca Ozeran & Ben Faber  
Welfare & Benefits Committee Co-Chairs*

*Whitney Brim-DeForest & Julie Finzel  
Rules & Elections Committee Co-Chairs*

*Michelle Leinfelder-Miles  
Personnel Committee Chair*

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

Dear UC ANR Academic Assembly:

This quarter's report consists of the short committee reports and the tentative agenda of academic assembly meeting scheduled for April 24, the first day of ANR statewide conference. You are all invited to the 2023 academic assembly meeting!

AAC has formed an Ad-Hoc Working Group to address concerns within ANR. The main goal of the group is to list, categorize, analyze, and prioritize concerns that Academics have expressed with the intent of finding resolutions where possible. The group has already held three meetings and sent out a survey to all ANR academics so that concerns of all academic titles to be considered in this resolution process. The survey results and a summary of findings will be shared soon. The findings will be discussed during the academic assembly meeting as well. AAC will take the findings of this survey and future findings from the facilitated discussion planned during the assembly meeting as a baseline information to work on suitable resolutions. We shared some of the concerns found in the conducted survey with VP Humiston and Interim AVP Meyers during the AAC meeting. A summary of this conversation can be found in this report.

AAC is currently working on some non-substantial modifications of the Bylaws proposed by subcommittees. In response to the FY 2023-24 budget call, AAC proposed a considerable budget package for the next three-year period to secure funds for the Professional Society Meeting Travel Awards of advisors, specialists, and academic coordinators as well as for the Distinguished Service Awards.

Thanks for reading!

Sincerely,

*Ali Montazar*

Ali Montazar  
President  
Academic Assembly Council

For more information about the UC ANR Academic Assembly Council, including travel awards, committees, and publications, visit our website at:

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCAAC/>

## Rules and Elections Committee

The Rules and Election Committee is currently holding an election for four vacant seats on three AAC committees. The election will end on March 6, 2023. Please take a couple of minutes to vote. Election results will be announced in the next newsletter.

~ Whitney Brim-DeForest & Julie Finzel

## Advisor Representative Committee

This quarter the Advisor Representative Committee, received 3 comments through the ARC survey and 2 comments via email after the survey closed. The issues raised were as follows:

- 1) There was a request that senior leadership go into counties and meet with advisors to better understand their programs and how policies influence their programs.
- 2) There was a question about whether position descriptions will need to be updated again once we have permanent people in various senior leadership positions.
- 3) There was a concern about advisors needing to use their personal cell phones for work.
- 4) One advisor requested a summary of items ARC is working on so people know which issues not to bring up in the survey.
- 5) One advisor suggested that ARC should not send out a survey right after AAC sends out their survey.

In response to item 4, ARC has analyzed and prioritized issues that have been brought up over the past 5 years and has presented the data to Daniel Obrist. ARC invited Daniel Obrist to the February and March ARC meetings so we can identify issues that senior leadership is willing to work on with ARC. Once we have the list of issues identified, ARC will send a survey to advisors asking them to prioritize that list. Once it is prioritized, ARC will begin working on 1 or 2 issues and will let advisors know what those issues are.

For responses to the remaining issues brought up, please contact Devii Rao at [drorao@ucanr.edu](mailto:drorao@ucanr.edu).

~ Devii Rao

## Welfare & Benefits Committee

The Welfare & Benefits Committee is going to propose a new ad hoc committee to be dedicated to doing exit interviews. The proposal should be ready for the next AAC meeting.

~ Rebecca Ozeran & Ben Faber

### Program Committee

The program committee assists with disbursement of professional travel funds to academics by soliciting requests twice a year and ranking those for funding. Our use of funds has been quite variable over the last three years because of Covid-19 shutdowns of in person conferences. But judging from the request we receive, in person travel is back. For the most recent solicitation for the second half of this fiscal year (January through June 2023), we received 41 requests for the \$650 travel scholarship and were able to fund the 37 that ranked as high and medium priority.

Because of a temporary supplement to our permanently allocated budget, we were able to send another request for funds out for the fourth quarter of 2023 with applications due February 24, 2023. We plan to return to the quarterly system of calls for funds moving forward since knowing specifics about conference attendance six months ahead of time is a challenge for many.

The other main task of the program committee is to administer the UC ANR Distinguished Service Awards. For the full list of our impressive awardees in 2022 see <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=53440>. We will offer these awards again in 2024.

~ Susie Kocher

### Personnel Committee

We can all breathe a sigh of relief for another year. The Project Board/Annual Evaluation/Program Review deadline has passed. Ahead of the February 1st deadline, the Personnel Committee hosted four trainings to assist academics with the academic advancement process. Two trainings were held in December. The first training was directed toward new ANR academics who are within a year of their date of hire. In that training, we oriented folks on the alphabet soup of the advancement cycle, describing AEs and PRs, the deadlines, and the requirements. The second training was intended for first-time PR writers and took a deep dive into the Ebook and how to write a thematic program review. Both trainings were new for the Personnel Committee, but given the number of new hires, we thought it was important to develop trainings for these audiences. In January, the Committee hosted two more trainings, which were intended for anyone. At those trainings, we covered changes to the Ebook and feedback from previous reviewers, and then the floor was opened to questions and answers from the audience.

~ Michelle Leinfelder-Miles

### Multiple Academic Titles Representative Committee

The AAC-MAT committee met via Zoom on 1/31/23 and was attended by Lorrene Ritchie and Annemiek Schilder. The other members (Larbi, Pathak, Moritz, and Diaz-Rios) were not available. The following items were discussed at the committee meeting:

1. Lorrene joined the committee in 2022 and replaced Doug Parker who retired. An overview of AAC and AAC-MAT Committee, including meeting schedule, was given.
2. The represented list was updated with new hires and academics that left. Currently the committee represents 30 academics. An email message was sent to all represented explaining the mission of the Academic Assembly Council and the MAT committee and asking to share issues and express interest in becoming a member of the committee.
3. As more employees are returning to the office, there is a need for training in properly running Zoom and hybrid meetings. People run into various issues, especially with hybrid meetings, in relation to set-up of multiple laptops to capture the room and remote attendees, local internet, sound issues, and tips for properly sharing Powerpoint presentations (including with embedded video clips). We also need to understand the rules and instructions around using UC ANR Webinar license, especially if expecting more than 300 attendees, support from Program Support Unit, etc.
4. This has been brought up before, but the wage parity continues to be an issue in the Bay area. For new hires, the salary analysis for an ANR project scientists has consistently come back lower than for exactly the same title at UCSF or UCB. This has resulted in failed searches and does not serve ANR well.
5. The field of Public Health and Nutrition is not well paying anyway and is not very diverse (mostly white women). More outreach and promotion is needed to less-represented groups.
6. We discussed low interest in committee membership among our represented academics. Some it may be due to the fact that our committee is heterogeneous. Most project scientists are soft-funded and not required to do extraneous things. They may also be employed for a limited time before moving on to another position. Maybe we need to make the invites more appealing or more regular to get on people's radar? It would be good if incoming academics received information about the AAC-MAT committee during the onboarding process.
7. Onboarding of new academics is going well. However, is there consistency in the onboarding process to their respective units, e.g., the REC, Institute or Statewide Program? Some guidelines should be prepared to ensure uniformity.

An all-represented Zoom meeting is planned for March 2023 and election of new members in April 2023.

~ Annemiek Schilder

### **AAC Report on Survey of Concerns of All Academics**

Academic Assembly Council spent an hour in conversation with VP Humiston and Interim AVP Meyers discussing issues and concerns shared in the survey conducted by AAC. While we had hoped to discuss

each issue shared in the survey, there simply was not enough time to address them all. If no response from UCANR Admin is shared below, it was not discussed with VP Humiston or Interim AVP Meyers.

### Specialist Concerns

- *PayScale no longer matched to (OR/IR) paycales*

Response from UCANR Admin – decoupling these was a decision made when ANR was in a difficult financial situation. Budget cuts were made as equitably as possible to all areas of the budget with the express intent of not impacting the overall mission of ANR. Further, the difference between the two salaries when this decision was made was 1%.

- *Onboarding process unclear (including gaining access to the portal)*

Response from UCANR Admin – Working to provide better support to all new academics through the new mentoring program.

- *Loss of ANR grant funding.*

Response from UCANR Admin – this was a decision made when ANR was in a difficult financial situation. At this point, if ANR was to reinstate these funds the budget would need to be reduced in another area to fund the grant program.

- *Recommend a formal mentorship program for specialists, especially those based on a non-land grant campus.*

### Academic Coordinator Concerns

- *Encourage hiring ANR leadership from within the division to mitigate turnover in leadership positions and reduce 'learning curve.'*
- *Expected Cost of Living increase from UCOP?*

Response from UCANR Admin – The VP is not part of these conversations and has no information to share.

- *Academic Coordinators not provided with PDSL funds.*

These funds were part of strategic budget reductions.

- *Lack of clarity of job expectations...disparity in how AC's do their job (some supervise staff, run extensive programs, some do very technical research...)*
- *Difficult to hire and retain staff.*

Suggested solutions from Academic Coordinators – provide PDSL funds and/or allow Academic Coordinators to be eligible for salary savings.

Advisor Concerns – Many of the Advisor concerns overlap with those shared via the Advisor Representative Committee quarterly survey. As a result, they have been heavily summarized, and the

primary emphasis placed on responses from UCANR Admin. Please know that we read and heard every comment submitted and they are all important to us.

- *Will there be a cost of living increase from UCOP (salary not keeping pace with inflation)?* – see response above under Academic Coordinator Concerns.

- *Propose geo-region pay.*

Response from UCANR Admin – Geo-region pay is something decided at the UCOP level and historically, UCOP has not been in favor of adjusting payscales based on area.

- *Onboarding/orientation unclear (suggested to survey recent hires for specific needs and concerns)*

Response from UCANR Admin – Vice Provost Obrist is actively addressing these concerns. All Advisors are encouraged to sign up for the mentorship program as either a mentor or a mentee.

- *Difficult to hire and onboard staff.*
- *Limited admin support for Advisors in some counties, pulls Advisors away from running a program.*

#### Suggested solutions

- Fund an HFC data analyst position.
- Clear expectations for Specialist and Advisor collaboration.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party review when Advisors get denied for merit/promotion after majority support from PRC.

~ Julie Finzel (on behalf of the Ad-Hoc Working Group)

**Academic Assembly Meeting  
UC ANR Statewide Conference, Fresno  
April 24, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

**Tentative Agenda**

- Welcome and overview of Academic Assembly (10 mins) – Ali Montazar
- Personnel Committee Update (10 mins) - Michelle Leinfelder-Miles
- Advisor Representative Committee (ARC) Update – (10 mins) - Devii Rao
- ANR Academic Needs Assessment Ad-Hoc Committee (55 mins) - Steven Worker, Van Butsic, Michelle Leinfelder-Miles, Josh Davy, Ruth Dahlquist-Willard, Devii Rao, Julie Finzel, and Ali Montazar
  - Academic Assembly Feedback Survey (January 2023) Summary (10 mins) - Julie Finzel
  - Facilitated Discussion – (30 mins) – Steven Worker, Julie Finzel, & Devii Rao  
Break into groups, discuss the survey feedback. Ask each group to have a notetaker and summarize bullets on the flipcharts. Discussion prompts:
    - *What are the highest priority concerns and their potential (and feasible) solutions? [goal: determining realistic plan-of-work for the AAC.]*
    - *What might the AAC do differently to be more effective (within the mission of AAC and organizational constraints)?*
  - Groups report out one or two main concerns and potential solutions (15 mins)
- Next step - Thank you (5 mins) – Ali Montazar and Van Butsic