

Our University

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT FOR THE UC COMMUNITY



January 2009: Printer-friendly version

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UC's 2009 Space Odyssey
UC has produced 20 U.S. astronauts, including two who will fly on the next shuttle launch.
Read more about the university's NASA connections. ►

UC's 2009 space odyssey

When the space shuttle Discovery launches next month, it will carry two University of California graduates on board.

For astronaut John Phillips, a UCLA alumnus, the flight will mark his third journey into space. Former middle school math and science teacher Joseph Acaba, a UC Santa Barbara graduate, will be taking his first trip into orbit. The two are on a 14-day mission, scheduled to blast off on Feb. 12, to deliver a giant solar panel to the International Space Station. That addition to the space station will increase its electricity-generating capacity, allowing larger crews to live and conduct research on the craft.

This is just the latest contribution UC alumni and researchers have made to advance the physical and intellectual frontiers of space. Beginning with Apollo 7 flight-crew member Walter Cunningham, who graduated from UCLA in 1961, 20 UC alumni have become astronauts. In addition, many UC research labs have made important contributions to the NASA program. In addition to the many campus space-related academic programs, UC San Diego is headquarters to the California Space Grant Consortium, an education and workforce development partnership between NASA and 19 affiliated universities. UC Santa Cruz partners

with the NASA Ames Research Center to manage a university research center at Moffett Field in Silicon Valley.

Lure of space travel. "A surprising number of students do aspire to be astronauts," said Christopher Russell, a professor in the UCLA Department of Earth and Space Sciences and in the Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics. "Not all of them will make it, of course, but it is a motivating factor for young people to go into science."

Those students benefit from UC's affiliations with the space program by the wealth of thesis-subject material the research collaborations create, Russell said. But the relationship is mutually beneficial.

"The government labs have difficulty bringing young people in, and their researchers are getting older," said Russell. "We have a core of young researchers and great faculty. We've got great people working at the university, and that's an asset to NASA."

UC training ground. Both Acaba and Phillips credit their UC connections as a factor in achieving their dreams of space travel.

"I always wanted to get into the exploration business," said Phillips of his boyhood aspirations. "If I was born 100 years ago, I would have been an arctic explorer."

Phillips was 7 years old when Congress created NASA in 1958, a year after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first manmade satellite to orbit Earth.

Phillips first applied to the astronaut program after graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy and serving as a pilot. He applied again as a graduate student at UCLA, where in 1984 he earned a master's in geophysics and space physics and a doctorate in those fields in 1987. His thesis was on the Pioneer spacecraft, and Russell was his mentor. Afterwards Phillips landed a fellowship at the UC-affiliated Los Alamos National Laboratory and then joined the lab's space program.

"I'm sure those experiences helped me get selected as an astronaut," he said.

In orbit. Phillips joined NASA in 1996 and took his first space flight five years later. In 2005, he lived for six months on the space station as its flight engineer, and he's looking forward to getting back to his old digs even if it's for a much shorter time.

His job on this mission is to operate the robotic arm that will move the solar panel into place on the space station. Space travel never gets dull, he said.

"A lot of times, unless something goes wrong, the shuttle launches are on the back pages of the news," said Phillips. "That makes it sound like it's boring and routine. But every time, it's hard and challenging and dangerous."

A word of advice Acaba said he is getting from veterans like Phillips is to take the time to enjoy the experience of being in space.

Role models. Acaba joined NASA in 2004 through the educator-astronaut program, which trains K-12 teachers for space travel. Even if he didn't make it, Acaba said, just the application process was a great learning experience for his Florida middle school students. One special motivating teacher can make such a difference in a student's life, he said.

Acaba earned a bachelor's in geology at UC Santa Barbara and remembers Arthur Sylvester, now an emeritus professor of earth science, for encouraging him to earn a master's degree and for helping him get a scholarship to the University of Arizona.

"Your time at a university has a huge impact on your life," said Acaba, a California native who along with his brother was the first in his family to attend a university. "At any grade level it takes that special teacher to motivate students. UC Santa Barbara has a whole bunch of those kinds of teachers."

Understanding our universe

NASA's Dawn mission is a journey in space and time. That's how Christopher Russell, the mission's principal investigator, conceived of this groundbreaking trip through the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

The unmanned spacecraft, launched in 2007, is the first mission to orbit two planetary bodies: the dwarf planet Ceres and the asteroid Vesta.

Russell, head of UCLA's space physics group, first proposed the mission in 1994 and spent the next several years refining its objectives and scale to get NASA funding for the eight-year, 3-billion-mile expedition.

"Finally, the stars aligned, so to speak," Russell said. "Vesta and Ceres came closer together, and it became possible to explore one and then the other. That idea intrigued NASA."

The Dawn spacecraft is expected to orbit Vesta in 2011 for nine months before reaching orbit around Ceres in 2015. The two bodies were among the first formed in Earth's solar system. Scientists working on the mission – including those from Los Alamos Lab – believe they hold secrets to the formation of the planets.

"What we're trying to do is explore backwards in time," said Russell. "We're doing planetary geology. The inventory is interesting, but we're not going to find a planet paved with gold."

However, Russell believes Ceres may have a large supply of water and could someday provide an oasis for space travelers.

Russell has been an investigator on NASA missions since 1973. The International Astronomical Union in 2008 recognized his work by naming an asteroid after him.

Ask it!

Chances are there's something you've always wondered about, meant to look up or wished someone would explain. Now is your chance to satisfy that curiosity. E-mail [donna.hemmila@ucop.edu] your question, and we'll find the UC brainiac who can answer it. Science, health, culture, language - whatever your question, don't be shy. Just Ask it!

Q. "How do I explain to my 15 year old son the value of knowing the quadratic equation in everyday life?"

Read the answer to this question and others.

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/19401>

People

Crossing cultural barriers

UC Irvine's new Cross-Cultural Center director, Kevin Huie, welcomed civil rights lawyer Lani Guinier to the MLK Day symposium. The event is just one of the many diversity-promoting programs offered at the 35-year-old center, the first of its kind at a UC.



By Donna Hemmila

When the Cross-Cultural Center opened at UC Irvine in 1974, it was the first program of its kind in the UC system.

Now a model for university campuses, the center celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. For Kevin Huie, appointed director in August, the multicultural mission that inspired the center's creation has even greater value to offer today's students.

In the 1970s a multicultural movement in higher education grew out of the civil rights movement of the '60s. Educators, Huie said, recognized a need to provide a safe place on campuses for students of color to feel safe and welcome.

"We've evolved through the last couple of decades," said Huie. "The model has progressed so the multiculturalism experience has expanded its mission beyond its social activities to secure inclusiveness and diversity throughout a campus."

The center provides a "home away from home" for individual students and five umbrella ethnic student organizations: the Afrikan Student Union, Alyansa ng mga Kababayan, American Indian Student Association, Asian Pacific Student Association and Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan. Dozens of other student groups use the center's services and meeting spaces.

"The students want to have fun when they come here," said Huie. "They want to walk into a stress-free zone. It's an escape from the rest of the campus."

The center also sponsors academic, outreach and retention programs aimed at enhancing campus diversity and cultural awareness. The annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium, held this year from Jan. 19 to 22, included a nonviolent-resistance teach-in; volunteer activities packing boxes for the local food bank; a march and rally; and a lecture from civil rights lawyer Lani Guinier, the first tenured black female professor at Harvard Law School.

"I think the center is important on campus because it's a safe place for different people to explore who they are," said Matty Espino, a Filipino student who works as a center intern. "It's a chance to reconnect with your roots and where you come from and to connect with where others come from."

The center has 10 student interns, 30 volunteers and 25 peer educators in the Reaffirming Ethnic Awareness and Community Harmony program, known as R.E.A.C.H. The program provides workshop and group discussion leaders on topics such as gender and LGBT issues, cross-cultural communication and socioeconomic and class differences. The facilitators participate in student-parent orientations, student housing, R.A. training and other campus and community events.

To see how students develop their leadership skills and learn to be open-minded about other cultures are two of the things Huie most appreciates about his new job.

Huie grew up in the Chicago area and graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a bachelor's degree in history in 1994. He graduated from Loyola University Chicago with a master's in educational leadership and policy studies in 1997. Before joining UC Irvine, he served as director of the Department of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at Loyola. He's worked at Notre Dame and DePaul University and is a former high school teacher. He has worked as a

diversity trainer and consultant for a variety of nonprofit and educational organizations including the Chicago Public Schools.

Throughout his career, Huie said, he has been aware of all the cutting-edge research and diversity programs that have come from the University of California. Working for UC was an exciting career decision for him.

"I'm multiracial myself," said Huie. "I think people need to spend time with people outside their own cultural group. Having that experience with others is going to help with experiences after graduation."

Donna Hemmila is editor of Our University.



Palm Desert Graduate Center

This satellite campus serves as UC's ambassador in the Coachella Valley offering students convenient graduate education.

Read more about the Palm Desert campus.

<http://www.insideucr.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/display.cgi?id=1064>

Systemwide News

2010 contribution restart proposed

Regents will consider a plan to restart employee and employer contributions to the UC Retirement Plan in April 2010, after a two-decades-long contribution holiday.

UC Regents will consider a plan to set the employee and employer contribution rates to the UC Retirement Plan at their Feb. 5 meeting. Under the proposal, contributions would begin around April 15, 2010.

If approved, the plan calls for a 2 percent employee contribution and a 4 percent university contribution. Contributions from union-represented employees are subject to collective bargaining. Initially, there would be no impact on the net take-home pay of employees: The mandatory payments to the DC (defined contribution) Plan – 2 percent for most employees – would be redirected to the UCRP.

The plan Regents will consider calls for gradual yearly increases in the employee contributions of 1 percent from both the university and employees. The long-term approach to how UC and employees share the cost of UCRP benefits is expected to be consistent with the state's approach to CalPERS contributions. Currently, most CalPERS employers contribute 16.5 percent. CSU employees currently contribute 5 percent, an amount that has not changed since the 1970s.

For more details of the proposed UCRP contributions plan, visit <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/feb09/j3.pdf>.

If approved, contributions would start nine months later than had been anticipated when Regents agreed in September to restart contributions. A shortfall in state funding for the employer contributions requires the start date to be pushed back. UC had requested state funding of \$228 million, but the governor's January budget proposal included only \$20 million for employer contributions to the fund in 2009-10.

At their November 2008 meeting, UC's actuary had recommended total combined contributions from both UC and employees to total around \$875 million. That amount is needed to meet the future payout obligations of the fund. There have been no contributions made since 1990 when the plan had a funding surplus.

For more information about the actuaries' report, www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/nov08/f10.pdf

Looking ahead, the plan also proposes creating a presidential task force to develop a long-term approach to post-employment UCRP and retiree health benefits. This task force would include representatives from a cross-section of stakeholders. Their recommendations will be incorporated into the 2011-12 budgeting cycle.

For more background information about the restart of UCRP contributions, visit www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/ucrfuture/welcome.html

UC shares the pain

What does the state's fiscal crisis mean for the University of California? Patrick Lenz, UC's vice president for budget, answers questions about what is happening with the budget and how it will impact the university.



Q: How would Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed 2009-10 state budget affect UC?

A: The governor's 2009-10 state budget is not able to support UC's compact funding to provide the money we need for enrollment growth of 2.5 percent or 5,400 students, compensation and health benefits (an increase of 4 percent in UC's base budget), increasing utility costs, or core academic support such as instructional technology and equipment, library resources and building maintenance. The budget does provide the university with \$20 million for UC to restart the retirement contributions; \$2.5 million for UC to increase the number of MD and nursing students; and \$11.3 million for retiree health benefits.

Q: UC Regents just approved plans to trim enrollment and freeze senior management pay. Why were those steps necessary and how much will they help?

A: The Regents' decision to curtail enrollment was based on the lack of enrollment funding from the state in either the 2008-09 or the 2009-10 state budget. UC is currently 11,000 students over our state funded enrollment target at a cost of \$121.8 million to the campuses. Even with the Regents' approval of UC President Mark Yudof's enrollment recommendation, UC enrollment will still grow by approximately 700 students. That includes an increase by 500 students in the number of community college transfers we will enroll. Regarding senior management pay, it is important for everyone to realize that all segments of the university community must make sacrifices to preserve the quality of our educational offerings. Freezing the salaries of UC's highest-paid employees is just one of the cost-saving steps we're taking.

Q: What additional actions are being considered to address UC's budget shortfall?

A: At this point, we are waiting for the governor and the Legislature to conclude their actions as part of the special session on the state budget before making any additional recommendations to address UC's budget shortfall. The Regents in the coming months will be considering increasing student fees, and President Yudof has been meeting with each campus chancellor for purposes of understanding their decision-making process and recommendations to reduce campus spending in the 2008-09 and 2009-10 fiscal years.

Q: What is happening with UC capital funding?

A: We are advising UC campuses of the State Treasurer's Pooled Money Investment Board decision last December to not provide state funding to any state capital construction projects. For UC, this means over \$1.1 billion in projects will be impacted by this decision. The Office of the President is working diligently with the board and the Department of Finance to get some claims paid and identify critical projects in the UC that will need state funds or face other costs to shut down the project. We are also working with our campuses to

encourage them to use non-state resources (gifts and other private donations) to continue construction on a given project until the state has resolved the fiscal crisis or the board amends or reverses its previous decision to not fund state capital projects.

Q: What's next in the budget process?

A: The next step in the state budget process is really based on the decisions of the governor and the Legislature in the special session. We are closely monitoring recommendations in the president's economic stimulus package to better understand the operational support and capital facilities funding that would benefit UC.

Cutting-edge cures



A patch to cure heart disease, AIDS, Alzheimer's? Those goals are drawing closer. UC Irvine researchers are behind the world's first embryonic stem cell study using humans. Their work offers hope for spinal cord injuries.

By Donna Hemmila

Imagine a patch that could repair the tissue damage of a heart attack. Or something that could save a diabetic's limbs from being amputated or reverse the damage done by lung cancer. Cure for AIDS, Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's? All of these possibilities and more are on the agenda at the University of California's stem cell research labs.

Hundreds of UC researchers are delving into the mysteries of both embryonic and adult stem cells, and the outcome of their work has the potential to revolutionize the practice of medicine. Every UC campus has faculty engaged in stem cell research and the equally important mission of training future researchers and doctors in this fast-developing field of regenerative medicine.

Hope for spinal cord injuries

UC research is behind the [world's first embryonic stem cell study](#) using humans. The U.S. Federal Drug Administration has just approved human trials to treat acute spinal cord injuries. The therapy is based on the research of Hans Keirstead, co-director of UC Irvin's Sue and Bill Gross Stem Cell Research. Menlo Park-based Geron Corp. is conducting the trials. [Listen to Keirstead's views on using stem cells from embryos.](#)

"This trial was approved only after rigorous safety testing and consultation of countless experts in the field," Keirstead said. "Any benefit to the patient, even an incremental one, would be a resounding victory."

Keirstead and colleague Gabriel Nistor developed a technique for prompting human embryonic stem cells to develop into spinal cord cells. When those cells were injected into rats with spinal cord injuries, they could walk again. Other UC researchers see similar successes on the horizon.

"The field is very young, and this new generation of scientists are the ones who will reap the benefits of this research," said Arnold Kriegstein, head of UC San Francisco's Eli and Edythe Broad Center of Regeneration Medicine and Stem Cell Research. "We're in a transformative moment."

Kriegstein studies how embryonic and the more developed progenitor nerve cells produce the structures of the nervous system. His work has applications in the treatment of brain disorders such as autism and Parkinson's disease. This exploration of the brain and nervous system is only one of the several research pipelines active at UC campuses. The work is breaking ground in both the understanding of disease and clinical treatments.

At UC Merced, tissue engineer Kara McCloskey believes such research can produce an additional benefit for California in the form of new business ventures. McCloskey is working on what she calls a living cardiac patch that will enable damaged heart tissue to regenerate.

"The goal is to replace the need for heart transplants by repairing the damaged heart," said McCloskey. "I think we can develop the technology in five to 10 years."

The number of people who stand to benefit range from those in need of heart transplants to the thousands of patients who suffer heart attacks each year and face a lifetime of medication and impaired physical activity. The heart lacks the ability to heal its own scar tissue effectively after it's been damaged, and scarred tissue can't handle the workload of the heart. The result is congestive heart failure.

McCloskey is focusing on developing functional progenitor heart cells and finding a way to deliver the "cardiac patch" to a living heart.

"We still have a lot of the rejection factors we face with organ transplants," McCloskey said. "How do we get the host body to accept the donor cells? It involves tricking the body into accepting foreign cells."

If her efforts prove viable, McCloskey said, startup companies – maybe even one she founds herself – could license the technology to manufacture the patches.

California's pioneering effort

UC's research effort is thriving thanks to California voter approval of Proposition 71 in 2004. That ballot measure created the California Institute for Regenerative

Medicine and a \$3 billion pot of research funding aimed at finding cures for dozens of fatal and debilitating diseases and chronic conditions.

Collectively, the University of California's 10 campuses have received more grants from the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine than any other university or private research center in the state. UC has received a little more than half of the number of grants dispersed and the dollar amounts given out. That money is funding the building of new labs, hiring new faculty and developing technology and tools to further the understanding of how stem cells develop into different human organs.

UC researchers are anticipating their efforts will take another major leap forward when President Barack Obama makes good on his promise to lift the federal restrictions on stem cell research. In 2001, former President George W. Bush issued guidelines that prohibited the use of federal funds for any stem cell lines not on an approved list. Those restrictions have hampered research, said Kriegstein, head of UC San Francisco's stem cell research center, one of the largest in the nation.

"I think there has been an opportunity lost for the last eight years," he said. "That's time lost that will be difficult to regain."

The federal restrictions have cost research centers in California both time and money. Research funded with National Institutes of Health grants has had to be strictly segregated from the work being done using new stem cell lines not on the approved list. Researchers have to work in separate labs or even buildings. That often means having to spend precious grant money on buying duplicates of expensive equipment.

"You have to be careful you don't pick up even a pipette bought with NIH money," said Jan Nolte, director of the UC Davis Stem Cell Program.

If federal restrictions are lifted, she said, California researchers will be able to collaborate with more U.S. researchers in states that only have had access to the federally approved cell lines, which many researchers believe are not as potent as newly created cell lines. She's hoping more federal funding will start flowing as well.

"The ability to get NIH funding is dwindling," she said. "That completely leaves out junior investigators. We're terrified we're losing a generation of young researchers."

Training future researchers

Another important component of UC's stem cell research has been the CIRM-funded training programs. Eight UC campuses have formal programs to introduce students, postdoctoral and clinical fellows to the field of stem cell

research. The training program is set to expand, Nolta said, by establishing an internship program with UC researchers for California State University students.

UC Davis has established a Good Manufacturing Practice Lab to produce cell therapy materials to use in clinical trials. That facility will offer training certificates, Nolta said, for students who want to work in the clinical trials and startup companies set to grow out of the research discoveries emerging today.

UC Prop 71 Support

Total CIRM grants: 253

Total UC CIRM research grants: 125

Total UC CIRM facilities grants: 19

Total amount CIRM grants: \$636 million

Total amount UC CIRM grants: \$392 million

Source: California Institute for Regenerative Medicine

Donna Hemmila is the editor of Our University. This story first appeared in Your University. <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/youruniversity/>

Record numbers apply to UC

Demand for a UC education remains high. UC Riverside, UC Davis and UC Irvine saw the biggest gains in total applications for fall 2009 with UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz experiencing small declines.

A blue rectangular graphic with the words "Admissions Update" in bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines: "Admissions" on top and "Update" below it.

By Donna Hemmila

UC applications for fall 2009 have reached all-time records despite an expected leveling off of California high school graduates and university plans to curtail freshman enrollment by 2,300.

"The rapid growth we see in high school graduates is slowing down, but we did see a slight increase in applications," said Susan Wilbur, UC director of undergraduate admissions. "It's good news for us to see so many students want a University of California education."

A total of 98,002 students applied for admission as freshmen in fall 2009, a 2.9 percent increase over last year. Most of those students – 80,730 – are California residents. Although demographic forecasts show California's recent boomlet of

high school-age students beginning to decline, resident freshman applications increased by 1.6 percent. Freshman applications from out-of-state students increased 2 percent while international applications jumped 28.9 percent. Read details of all application statistics at <http://www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/2009/09app.html>

Transfer applications rise. Applications among transfer students increased 11.2 percent to 28,699. Out-of-state transfer applications dropped 7.8 percent, and international transfer applications rose 19.9 percent.

"We welcome growth in transfer students particularly from California community colleges," said Wilbur.

UC has been making an effort to increase the number of California transfer students as a way to increase access for low-income students. Efforts include boosting fall '09 admission spots by 500 while freshman admissions will be curtailed. More UC counselors have been deployed to California community college campuses, said Wilbur, and the university is expanding its guaranteed transfer programs to more campuses.

Freshman enrollment cap. On Jan. 14, UC Regents approved a proposal from President Mark Yudof to cut freshman enrollment by 2,300 students to cope with the chronic decline in state funding.

"It is an excruciating decision to reduce opportunity for students in any way, but the lack of sufficient state funding leaves us no choice," Yudof told the Regents. "This actually is a modest reduction in that it aims to bring our enrollments into line with our resources over several years rather than in a single year."

Currently, UC has 11,000 students enrolled for which it receives no state funding. That resulted in a shortfall of \$121.8 million. Even after the 2,300 enrollment cut, UC will still be significantly overenrolled in fall.

UC still will maintain its commitment to offer every eligible California resident a place at a UC campus, said Wilbur, but eligible students may find they are not admitted to the campuses for which they applied. That will likely lead to some deciding not to enroll at a UC campus.

Application trends. The economic downturn may be causing families to keep their students closer to home. All UC campuses saw an increase in total applications except UC Santa Barbara and UC Santa Cruz. More students may be wanting to attend universities close to home so they can commute to classes and save money on housing, Wilbur said. Those two campuses are more residential and less conducive to commuting than others.

The largest increases in total applications were seen at UC Riverside (7.4 percent), UC Davis (5.4 percent) and UC Irvine (5.2 percent). The Riverside and Irvine campuses are located in densely populated areas with high numbers of high school seniors, said Wilbur, and that could account for their application jumps. UC Davis, she said, has many unique academic programs (viticulture, veterinary medicine, organic farming) and demand for that campus is always high.

Donna Hemmila is editor of Our University.

More News

UC, AFSCME reach tentative agreement

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/19410>

Obama taps UC scholars

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/youruniversity/story2.html>

Apply now for Staff Advisor seat

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/19291>

More aid for low-income students proposed

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/19341>

Interim Berkeley Lab chief named

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/19349>

Celebrate the Year of Science

<http://scienceatcal.berkeley.edu>

UC garners sustainability awards

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/youruniversity/story5.html>

Working at UCOP: Stories for and about Office of the President staff



Staff assembly deals with new reality

The UC Office of the President Assembly aims to help employees cope with the stress of restructuring.

As the University of California Office of the President restructures, it's a challenging time for employees. The staff assembly is working to make it a little easier.

From hosting workshops to sponsoring other events, UCOPA is stepping up efforts to foster communication and build community at the Office of the President.

"Our emphasis now is how do we deal with this new reality of a smaller Office of the President," said UCOPA Chair Chris Rivers.

UCOPA is an organization for staff dedicated to promoting the interest and welfare of all staff employees. With so much change happening, the group is trying to be a resource for stressed-out employees.

It hosts programs such as the workshop "Keeping it Real: How to Negotiate Your Emotions and Take Care of Yourself During Turmoil."

In February, the staff assembly will co-host a town hall for UCOP employees with UC President Mark Yudof. It's a forum for the president to address employees and a chance for staff to ask him questions.

It's also a sign of the open lines between UCOPA and the administration. Indeed, Rivers credits President Yudof with helping to spark renewed interest in UCOPA. Last spring, the staff assembly was struggling to receive enough applicants for its steering committee. Then nominations flowed in after the president indicated his support for the group.

“The staff plays a critical role in the success of the University of California, and I hope to work closely with you and the UCOP Staff Assembly Steering Committee,” Yudof wrote in an April letter.

The UCOPA steering committee now has 11 members: Rivers, Ravinder Singh, Doris Parham, Debra Richerson, Kenneth Feer, Trish Hare, Thomas Herz, Kathy Mendonca, Michael Tomasello, Eric Zarate and (non-voting member) Jennifer Damico. Its next election will be held this spring. Its monthly meetings are open to UCOP staff.

Hare, associate director of administration in academic affairs, sees UCOPA as “a voice both up and down the ladder.”

Rivers, a senior writer and resource development analyst with the Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement program, joined UCOPA’s steering committee in 2006, seeing a leadership development opportunity.

“I enjoy it because I have a lot of passion around the work that people do at OP,” said Rivers, a UC Davis graduate.

Rivers and Singh also serve as delegates to the [Council of University of California Staff Assemblies](#).

“We do value the CUCSA connection as a way to communicate and collaborate with the staff councils at all 10 campuses and, ultimately, the Regents,” Rivers said.

In addition to workshops and the town hall, UCOPA plans a series of forums for employees to meet new departments such as the business resource center. The group also sponsors a book club and crafts group and staffs a table at the first Friday breakfasts.

For more information, contact mchris.rivers@ucop.edu.

Hopes for the Obama presidency?

UCOP employees share their desires for what the new president could accomplish.

What are your hopes for the Obama presidency?

Our University asked a few Office of the President staff members to tell us what their hopes are for the Obama presidency. Here’s what they had to say.

Athelynne Robinson, President’s Office



"That he'll take his experience, his knowledge and he'll be led by wisdom. And that he keeps the needs of the people and the country up front."

Annette Holmes, Academic Information and Strategic Services

"My hopes are the same as what he promised – a change in health care, new jobs, cleaning up the environment and affordable education for all. And for us to get our troops out of Iraq."

Lloyd Lee, Office of the General Counsel

"My goal is that good sense will prevail as opposed to the politics of greed and corruption. I'm one of those people who cried when he was inaugurated."

Mark Sondag, Office of Research and Graduate Studies

"That he'll follow through on his promises and get us out of Iraq and do positive things like allow us in California to implement the higher emissions standards and that we'll actually get some more collaboration from Congress instead of two sides pitted against each other."

Save the dates

OP Town Hall meeting with President Yudof

Feb. 19, 2 to 3 p.m., Kaiser Center Auditorium

Feb. 20, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., Elihu Harris State Bldg.,
15th and Clay streets.

Did You Know?

The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest general scientific society, elected 75 UC-affiliated researchers among 2008's new fellows.

That brings the total of UC's AAAS fellows to approximately 650.

The White House awarded eight UC-affiliated researchers Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers. The awards honor promising researchers just beginning their careers.