

8 March 2018

Professor Dylan Rodriguez, Riverside Division Chair
University of California Academic Senate
231 University Office Building
CAMPUS

Dear Professor Rodriguez:

I would like to thank the Senate for careful consideration of the [Summary White Paper on RUSD STEM High School](#) on the campus of the University of California, Riverside. Several committees expressed enthusiasm for the project, including the GSOE Executive Committee, the Committee on Research, the School of Business Executive Committee, the CHASS Executive Committee, the SOM Executive Committee, and the SPP Executive Committee. The full Senate response is available [here](#).

Many of the responses focused on the concern that our current constraints on parking, food services, and unscheduled spaces would be exacerbated by an on-campus STEM High School. Similarly, several responses assumed that UCR's growth goals conflict with dedicating campus space to the proposed STEM High School. While these issues must be thoughtfully addressed throughout the planning process, it is important to frame both our plans to grow and our obligation to use our resources efficiently with the need to better integrate UCR with the Riverside community and to develop a more genuinely porous campus. The proposed STEM High School would be a critical piece of our growth plan rather than a hindrance to it, while simultaneously improving our relationship with the community and school district.

The proposed STEM High School will be more than just a school. It will be a community hub for developing and hosting community outreach and professional development, a vehicle for achieving many of the university's community engagement goals as described in the 2020 Vision (see below), a testbed for innovative teaching in direct partnership with GSOE, and a showcase facility for UCR research.

The proposed STEM High School on the UCR campus supports many of the goals and recommendations within the UCR 2020 Plan:

Goals of the Vision 2020 Community Engagement section:

- Foster academically-focused partnerships that benefit the university and community
- Merge academic inquiry with sustained civic engagement
- Encourage and coordinate experiential/service learning for our students
- Advocate volunteerism

Also, at least two of the Vision 2020 **Recommendations** are relevant:

2. Establish partnerships and alliances with business, government, education, arts, and other groups that are productive and mutually beneficial (4.1)

3. Develop academic programs that provide both meaningful and distinctive educational experiences and opportunities for community engagement (4.2)

Crucially, the proposed STEM High School project is developing in tandem with the many building and development projects in progress that will ease the resource constraints our campus is currently facing. These include the North District, the Student Success Center, the Mobility Hub, and the Barn complex. While there have been some misconceptions that these building projects depend on funds that could otherwise go to building research space, it is important to note that each project is funded through a combination of sources that are not eligible for research space including housing fees, P3 (public private partnerships – where UCR’s land but not our finances are involved), state-funding earmarked for classroom space, city-funding, and funds from auxiliary units. All of the funding for the STEM High School construction and on-going maintenance would come from the school district, and not UCR.

UCR faculty also shared concerns about diversity at the proposed STEM High School and worried that it would not mirror that of UCR. RUSD revised the STEM Academy lottery process to better support diversity at the Riverside STEM High School, which now matches the District demographics and is very similar to UCR in the areas of Education Attainment, English Language Usage and Estimated Median Income by household.

At a time when many of us are deeply concerned about diversity in higher education and ultimately in academics, especially STEM fields, UCR has the unique opportunity to tangibly contribute to improving this situation. UCR, as one of the most diverse public university campuses in the country, sits within Riverside and the Riverside Unified School District. 70% of RUSD’s students identify as underrepresented minorities (63% Hispanic and 7% African American). But the percentage of students going to 4-year colleges from RUSD is only 29% and to 2 year colleges is 37% (per National Clearinghouse Data). Given the robust academic infrastructure of Riverside (including a UC campus, RCC and several private institutions), this should not be the case. The high school to college transition is a critical juncture and part of the issue is that some students do not have the opportunity to visit and experience research institutions. Though many UCR faculty and students already work with STEM Academy students, and the engagement of UCR faculty and student resources in the proposed STEM High School would be entirely voluntary, the presence of a STEM High School on a UC campus would begin to address these difficulties.

As stated in the white paper, the RUSD STEM Academy is a Blue Ribbon School (one of only 12 in California) and partnership with such an excellent high school provides many benefits. In particular, the opportunities for grant partnerships, student teaching placement, and innovative community engagement will all be immediate advantages of the proposed STEM High School. These benefits align well with our campus growth goals and our ambition to raise UCR’s national profile.

This project is still evolving and the feedback received from campus members and the community has influenced the decision to explore alternative sites to the Watkins location identified in the white paper. The next opportunity for input will be a town hall meeting on April 16 from 12:00-1:00 in HUB 302. I look forward to continuing this conversation there and further addressing the issues outlined above.

A number of specific issues are addressed in the FAQs on the [provost’s website](#).

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Larive". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Cynthia Larive
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

cc: Kim Wilcox, Chancellor
Gerry Bomotti, VCPB
Mary Droser, Professor of Earth Sciences