



**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED
AUDIT AND ADVISORY SERVICES**

March 3, 2022

To: Charles Nies, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
E. Edward Klotzbier, Vice Chancellor, Chief External Relations Officer

Re: Systemwide Admissions Data Analytics Review, UC Merced Report No. M22A006

Vice Chancellor Nies and Vice Chancellor Klotzbier:

Our UC Merced Admissions Data Analytics Review conducted as part of the University of California systemwide audit is completed. The audit was conducted in accordance with the fiscal year 2021-22 UC Merced audit plan.

The University of California Office of Ethics, Compliance and Audit Services (ECAS) oversaw the systemwide audit and a common audit program was used across all campuses.

Our audit work was conducted in accordance with the Institute of Internal Auditor's Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and the University of California Internal Audit Charter.

Thank you to your staff for their cooperative efforts throughout the audit. Please do not hesitate to call on Audit and Advisory Services if we can be of further assistance in this or other matters.

Respectfully reported,

Sheryl Ireland
Internal Audit Director

Cc: Senior Vice President and Chief Audit and Compliance Officer Alex Bustamante
Chancellor Juan Muñoz
Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor Luanna Putney
Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Jill Orcutt
Associate Vice Chancellor, Philanthropy & Strategic Partnerships Lisa Pollard



**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED
AUDIT AND ADVISORY SERVICES**

**Admissions Data Analytics Review Report
Report No. M22A006**

March 3, 2022

Audit Conducted by:
Shelton Autry – Senior Internal Auditor

Audit Reviewed by:
Sheryl Ireland – Internal Audit Director

Admissions Data Analytics Review Report

Introduction and Background

As part of the annual fiscal year 2021-2022 audit plan, Internal Audit completed a retrospective review of donations to UC Merced and local Senior Management Group (SMG) personnel data to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by these donations or personnel. This review was initiated in response to a recommendation from the June 2019 systemwide internal audit of undergraduate admissions.

Objectives and Scope

The objective of this review was to perform data analytics to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by donations to UC Merced or the applicant's relationship to an SMG member.

The scope of the review included the following:

- Donations received by UC Merced during the period January 1, 2018 through August 31, 2021.
- SMG personnel active from January 1, 2018 through August 31, 2021.
- Applications for undergraduate admission submitted from November 1, 2018 through March 31, 2021 for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years (date range includes both the regular and late application periods).

Approach

To conduct this review, Internal Audit performed the following procedures:

- Obtained a dataset of donations received during the audit period.
- Obtained a dataset of local SMG personnel active during the audit period.
- Obtained a dataset of applications for undergraduate admission submitted during the audit period.
- Performed data analysis to identify admissions of applicants who may be related to donors who made cumulative donations of \$10,000 or more and/or SMG personnel active during the audit period. Data fields compared across datasets to identify "matches" included all or a subset of the following:
 - Names of donors and donors' spouses
 - SMG employees and/or SMG employees' spouses
 - Names of admitted students and parents
 - Addresses
 - Email addresses
 - Phone numbers
 - Foundations or businesses with the same name as the admitted student
 - Campus ID number

The donations portion of the analysis was limited to cumulative matching donations of \$10,000 or more received during the audit period.

- Reviewed data trends and other available information to assess the risk of questionable admissions decisions (i.e., those at risk of being influenced by donations or applicant’s relationship to an SMG member) for the “matches” identified. Criteria/factors considered as part of this assessment included all or a subset of the following:
 - Dollar amount of the donation
 - Pattern or timing of giving
 - Communication with donor or SMG employee
 - Timing of personnel actions under SMG employee’s authority
 - Applicants admitted by exception
 - Applicants admitted to a school with impacted majors
 - Applicants who were recommended for admission on basis of special talent
 - Lack of participation in special talent for which the application was recommended
 - Low application review scores/ratings
 - Department or program to which donations have been directed as well as their specified purpose
- Provided the results of the risk assessment to the Locally Designated Official to determine whether to further investigate any matches identified, if appropriate.

Overall Conclusion

Internal Audit’s analysis identified no admissions of applicants who may be related to the 210 donors who gave a cumulative amount in excess of \$10,000 during the audit period. Further, Internal Audit identified no admissions of applicants who may be related to SMG personnel active during that time. Accordingly, Internal Audit did not flag any admissions for the Locally Designated Official to prioritize for further analysis and/or investigation¹.

¹ Referral to the Locally Designated Official for further analysis is not necessarily indicative of improper influence or actions associated with the admissions decision.