

ASUCM Strategic Investments Proposal, November 15, 2015

Project Title: Blum Center Collaborative Work Space

Proposal Lead: Stergios (Steve) Roussos, PhD, MPH, Blum Center Executive Director,
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What the project is

The UC Merced Blum Center seeks ASUCM support to create **a Collaborative Work Space** using its indoor and outdoor facilities. This project builds on the Blum Center's strategic location (SSM130, all-glass corner and patio) that attracts hundreds of students each week. Students use the space to share a meal while getting to know each other, support each other on school projects, and join in Blum Center projects to improve our campus and region. The project will leverage existing Blum personnel and resources to create a space that makes it easier for students to work together on Blum Center projects to benefit the campus and community.

UC Merced Blum Center is part of a UC-wide, 10-campus initiative launched by UC Regent Richard Blum and UCOP. The overall mission of the Blum Center is to catalyze the "Power of 10" (UC campus) to end poverty worldwide. This mission is not about the study of poverty. Instead, it is about the mobilization of the world's largest public research university to create scalable and sustainable solutions in partnership with communities. Driven by this mission, each Blum Center is shaped by its own, campus-specific goals while benefitting from the power of collaboration across the UC system. Our Blum Center has a mission to transform poverty into prosperity for the San Joaquin Valley and nearby Sierra Nevada. This is our home. Poverty and its consequences have been long-standing, wide-spread and severe in this region. This was a primary motivator for founding UC Merced here. Our Blum Center was born as an antidote to this challenge by synergizing the hope, resilience, and empowerment of our campus community and the people of our region.

Since opening its doors in Spring 2014, the Blum Center has used its space to recruit, train and engage students as community-engaged problem solvers in campus, local and regional concerns. Dozens of individual and group projects have tackled topics in education, economic development, environmental stewardship, health, and civic engagement. The new Minor launched Fall 2015 in Community Research and Service was facilitated by our Blum Center as a way toward preparing students.

The Blum Center's convenient and highly visible location has helped to create a great sense of community on our campus. Weekly, students comment on how wonderful it is to have a place to share with peers, and build relationships. This sense of community is critical to our campus well-being. As a volunteer-driven initiative, the Blum Center used donations to purchase Costco patio tables and chairs, furniture was borrowed from other campus departments and from the UCM Warehouse, and a mix of plants, supplies and other items were accumulated by friends and colleagues. We have watched how important these investments have been starting new and strengthening student collaborations.

Therefore, we wish to use this ASUCM opportunity and a couple of other well-timed investments to formally create a Collaborative Work Space at the Blum Center. The Work Space will

offer student teams the physical space, resources, and personnel to examine new projects and work on new projects tied to the Blum Center mission and objectives. The Collaborative Work Space will include furniture, materials and Blum personnel to help students interested in working on group projects that help our campus and community.

Why this project is needed on our campus

Creating a sense of community on campus is among the most important ways to ensure a high quality of life and well-being for students. Given recent unsettling events of violence on our campus, this sense of community may be more important now than ever before. Indoor and outdoor spaces where students can meet, play and work together are critical to creating a sense of community at UC Merced. There are too few public or open areas for students to sit (with tables) and work with each other on campus. And, there are even fewer spaces that have the resources and are designed to help students work together. In the last 19 months of the Blum Center being open, students constantly praise having the outdoor tables and indoor working area of the Blum Center. In a brief survey of over 200 students working in the Blum Center patio, the majority of students reported that this was one of the few places with tables to work outdoors with peers and to share a meal. Students emphasized how wonderful it was to have a place to be with others, and how we needed more places like this throughout campus.

Along with a place to sit, students have reported needed some very basic resources to make collaboration easier. These include white-boards and flip charts, and places to charge their laptops, phones and devices.

The Collaborative Work Space at the Blum Center will provide these things, plus personnel who can support teams and facilitate the use of equipment for meetings, use of the Blum Center refrigerator to help with meals and refreshments, and support with printing for projects.

Campus impact of the project

Formerly converting the Blum Center's current setting into a Collaborative Work Space will create new and strengthen existing student teams working on projects to improve our campus and community. Such a space – one that includes resources and personnel to help teams – is rare on campus. The Collaborative Work Space will allow the Blum Center to increase the number of students that it engages on community problem-solving projects, and make it easier for teams to be more productive together. As a result, more students will gain valuable hands-on experiences as community-based problem solvers on and off campus. Yet, among the most important impacts may be the less tangible: the relationships, bonding and sense of community that is nurtured when people have a commons space to share each other's company.

What the project encompasses and other information critical to describing the project

The project request these resources from the ASUCM Strategic Investments:

- 1) Four campus-approved outdoor working tables and chairs in the Blum Center patio, similar to what exists in the SOE/Engineering buildings. The current patio tables are designed for writing

and working, and are too small for teams. The new tables have been approved by campus Facilities and the Fire Marshall.

- 2) One mobile campus-approved outdoor umbrella for shade when needed.
- 3) One mobile gas-powered heater for warmth when needed.
- 4) Forty foldable chairs for trainings and meetings.
- 5) Four portable, combination white board/flip charts that can be used outdoors and indoors for project teams.
- 6) One portable speaker system with a wireless microphone to facilitate outdoor trainings.
- 7) One internal electrical plug and data port position at the out-facing window to support charging of laptops and other equipment of teams.
- 8) Three 10-USB port charging stations to support charging of smaller devices of teams.
- 9) One mobile battery pack (75 hours) for charging equipment outdoors.

These resources will complement the existing furniture, materials, resources, and personnel at the Blum Center to create the Collaborative Work Space. ASUCM sponsorship will be displayed proudly throughout the space.

Key project personnel

Stergios (Steve) Roussos is the Executive Director of the Blum Center. He will be responsible for the overall project by managing volunteer and paid personnel, developing and supervising student projects, and ensuring the quality of all project activities. Dr. Roussos has been working with UC Merced since 2003 to help establish various programs and initiatives on and off campus that support student learning and impact.

Sophie Vo is the Social Enterprise Coordinator of the Blum Center. She will be responsible for helping teams to organize and implement projects aligned with the Blum Center mission so as to improve conditions on and off campus. Sophie is one the Blum Centers new team members supported through the UC Merced Student Success Internships.

Daniel Sabzehzar is the Blum Center Director of Public Relations and Outreach. He will be responsible for raising awareness of the Collaborative Work Space among students, for ongoing communication to ensure the space meets the needs of students, and for marketing the work and successes of the Collaborative Work Space on and off campus in ways that can generate new sources of funding and support.

All collaborators involved (i.e. additional departments)

The Blum Center currently collaborates with many other campus departments and units to develop and support student teams that address Blum goals. These include OSL (and many Student Clubs), the Bright Success Center, the CCPA, the Office of Research and Economic Development, the ESL program, and all three Schools. The Collaborative Work Space will engage our current partners and reach out to others who may benefit from using the space.

Campus knowledge of the project

The idea for the Collaborative Work Space has emerged out of conversations with students and campus partners interested in improving how the Blum Center can better serve students. It is not clear if this project is widely known or advertised, but the idea for this project has been growing over the past year.

Timeline of project

Activity	Timeline
Purchase and set up equipment, furniture and other identified resources (Note: the cost of items has been identified with Facilities and campus purchasing.)	December 2015 thru February 2016
Begin advertising the space and helping student projects to use the space.	January (as semester starts) through June 2016 (and ongoing)
Sponsor events and trainings on co-working and team projects with the Blum Center to raise awareness and use of the space.	March through June 2016 (and ongoing)
Market and raise awareness of projects, people and accomplishments through the space using on campus and off campus media channels.	March through June 2016 (and ongoing)

A detailed budget for the project

Budget Requested for Blum Center Collaborative Work Space	
Item	Amount
1) Four campus-approved outdoor working tables and chairs in the Blum Center patio, similar to what exists in the SOE/Engineering buildings. The tables have been approved by campus Facilities and the Fire Marshall. One mobile patio umbrella for use as needed.	\$14,236
3) One mobile gas-powered heater for warmth when needed.	\$2,200
4) Forty foldable chairs with carrying tray for trainings and meetings.	\$1,000
5) Four portable, combination white board/flip charts that can be used outdoors and indoors for project teams. (\$150 each)	\$600
6) One portable speaker system with a wireless microphone to facilitate outdoor trainings.	\$300
7) Internal electrical and data ports support charging of laptops and other equipment of teams. Installed by UC Merced Facilities.	\$4,075
8) Three 10-USB port charging stations to support charging of smaller devices of teams.	\$120

Budget Requested for Blum Center Collaborative Work Space	
Item	Amount
9) One mobile battery pack (75 hours) for charging equipment outdoors.	\$140
Total	\$22,671

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8) Three 10-USB port charging stations to support charging of smaller devices of teams.	\$ 120
9) One mobile battery pack (75 hours) for charging equipment outdoors.	\$ 140
Total	\$ 22,671