

Good Evening ASUCM Senate, my fellow students, and members of the public,

It has been brought to my attention that there were some comments made last week during the discussion of a particular bill. As elected officials, we have the privilege and honor to represent a diverse student body. UC Merced has been acclaimed as the leader of diversity within the UC system. We pride ourselves on our diverse student population. Unfortunately, during last week's Senate meeting, negative comments were made toward the Black student community that showed some flaws in our diverse campus. We have a lot of work to do not only in our student government, but in our student body as a whole to improve the levels of respect and appreciation for our diverse campus community. As elected officials, it is important that we understand the implications of our comments that are made here at the table. I do not believe the negative comments last week were made with malicious intent, but instead they were made due to ignorance.

On Monday, I had the opportunity to sit in on the town hall that was hosted by the Multicultural Student Council, and it was truly a learning experience. I was present, not as an active participant, but as a silent observer because I wanted to be educated on the issues affecting the Black student community on our campus. It's efforts such as these that will bridge the gap between ignorance and knowledge, and it is your duty as ASUCM officials to support these efforts. It doesn't just begin with our work as a student government. There are many student organizations, campus administrators, and general students that are working hard on their own to foster a culture of respect and awareness around our diversity at UC Merced. On behalf of the Associated Students, I would like to apologize to all these dedicated individuals, organizations, and all others who were offended by last week's comments here. The Associated Students welcome all efforts to better the lives of students of color on our campus and to grow this culture of respect and awareness.

In other news, I am currently working with the Office of Student Life to plan for the future long-term relationship between ASUCM and OSL. As many of you know, a couple of weeks ago I mentioned that I intend to draw more support from the Office of Student Life, especially in the area of finances. After initial discussions, it looks like we're going to be able to start a financial plan this semester, and I look forward to developing goals that will be beneficial for both parties. Ideally, we'd like to establish this partnership for a span of eight years, and we hope to begin saving money for our own ASUCM professional staff further down the road. I will keep you all posted as our plans continue to develop.

On Monday, I met with the Editor in Chief of the Prodigy and we talked about the space at the Tri-College. The discussion went well and the Editor in Chief intends to bring the discussion to her executive board. I am looking forward to their response, and I will update you all on that as soon as possible.

Lastly, this past Monday at the ASUCM Executive Board meeting, we discussed a constitutional amendment to discontinue ASUCM Fall Elections, starting Fall 2016. This is a discussion we've been having for a long time now, and we believe it is time to take action. We all know that the current election system in place hinders the work of ASUCM, as our Senate table is empty for half of the fall semester. This prevents us from working at our full capacity for a substantial amount of time. Imagine the work that we could accomplish if we were to

have all sixteen Senators present at the beginning of the fall semester. Not only would this increase the productivity of the AS, but it would also focus more attention on the Spring Election, with the likely chance of higher voter turnout. The Executive Board held an informal vote regarding our support for this constitutional amendment and it was 7 to 1 in favor. We believe that removing the Fall Election is what is best for ASUCM and for the student body. Senator Quanstrom will be introducing legislation next week to add the amendment to the Spring Ballot. I encourage all of you to reach out to your constituents and educate them, not only about the pros of this amendment, but also about the potential cons. My office intends to host informational meetings about the constitutional amendment if it gets placed on the ballot by the Senate.

I will be in Oakland tomorrow and Saturday for meetings, but I am always available via email and phone if anyone would like to discuss anything that I have reported on. I look forward to a good meeting tonight.

Best,
Ivan Flores