

LETTER BI

VernalPools.Org

dedicated to saving California's vernal pool landscapes

SEP 18 2001

September 13, 2001

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UC Development Office
3351 "M" Street
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Ric Notini, Environmental and Permitting Manager
University of California, Merced
1170 West Olive Avenue, Suite 1
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Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Reports - UCP and UC LRDP

VernalPools.Org is a grassroots conservation group dedicated to saving California vernal pool landscapes. For the record, VernalPools.Org is in favor of a 10th University of California campus in the San Joaquin Valley. We are however opposed to the poor planning, inadequate and piecemealed environmental review, and mishandled public review process which has accompanied every aspect of the UC Merced project. As one of the world's most prestigious institutes of higher learning, the University of California should be setting an example instead of trying to cut corners.

BI-1

I live in a University of California-associated town. Yes, I enjoy certain benefits from being in a community adjacent to an academic research institution. I also endure numerous negative impacts caused by this proximity. For example, the UC Davis main campus is a superfund toxic cleanup site due to illegal disposal of radioactive research animals. After 12 years, they still have not succeeded in cleaning up the extensive contamination. They were also recently sued for discharging both chemical and wastewater pollutants into Putah Creek which runs through the campus and community. And last summer, they flagrantly violated their own Long Range Development Plan by proposing a new facility in designated open space (the campus reserve) even though there is ample room in core campus for this building. Additionally, the community of Davis is developing prime ag land at an alarming rate in order to accommodate anticipated growth in the student and support community population. Each of the other eight campuses has similar incidents of disregarding the environmental laws that protect our air, water, and other natural resources. If we allow UC Merced to cut regulatory corners now, will we be able to prevent more flagrant violations of the law in the future?

BI-2

While my formal comment letter will address specific deficiencies in the proposed plan and its environmental review, I would like to take this opportunity to comment upon the process. Besides being a clear violation of the resource protection and public disclosure laws, it is unconscionable for the University of California and the County of Merced to piecemeal the environmental review of this project into numerous multiple documents prepared and presented over a prolonged period of time. You are denying the citizens of both Merced County and the State of California an opportunity to understand the full environmental impact of this proposed project and all of its components. I urge the University of California and the County of Merced to jointly develop an EIR/EIS that addresses all impacts to all resources (wetlands, endangered species, ag land, air, water, sprawl, etc.) for all aspects of this project (campus, campus community, campus parkway, and related infrastructure).

BI-3

Sincerely,



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COMMENT LETTER BI: CAROL WITHAM VERNALPOOLS.ORG

Response to Comment BI-1:

Please see Master Responses 3 and 6 for a complete discussion regarding the relationship of the UCP EIR to the LRDP EIR and the public review process, respectively.

Response to Comment BI-2:

The comment does not address the UCP or its EIR, or indicate how UC Merced cut corners. The UCP Draft EIR thoroughly analyzes all of the impacts that could result from implementation of the UCP.

Response to Comment BI-3:

The comment does not identify what “clear violation of the resource protection and public disclosure laws” has been committed by the University or the County. For discussions of the EIR process, the reason that the Campus and University Community are considered separate projects, and the CEQA and NEPA processes, please see Master Responses 2, 3, and 6.