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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED  
P.O. BOX 2039  
MERCED, CALIFORNIA 95344

June 23, 2008

Dr. Steve Kang

Chancellor University of California Merced

Chancellor's Office

P.O. Box 2039

Merced, CA 95344

**Subject: Graduate Student Researcher Parking**

Dear Chancellor Kang,

The Graduate Student Association would like to express our disappointment in the removal of graduate student researchers (GSRs) from the faculty/staff parking permits. The removal of GSRs from the faculty/staff parking permit unfairly targets this small group of UC Merced employees. The decision to put GSRs in student parking creates a disparity between the compensation and amenities received by GSRs and the graduate students working as teaching assistants (TAs), who retain their parking privileges behind SE1. All the graduate students should receive equal parking benefits as the faculty and staff since we have the similar responsibilities of research and teaching as these two groups.

The removal of approximately 60-70 permits will not help to alleviate the parking problem. Based on numbers from TAPs, there are approximately 240 faculty/staff parking spaces on the main campus. During the 2007-08 school year, approximately 610 faculty/staff parking permits were purchased. This will grow with the addition of more lecturers and more TAs next school year. Consequently, if the proposed removal of GSRs parking privileges moves forward, it would be unfair to maintain the current fee structure. If a hierarchical parking structure remains, an in-kind fee structure should be followed. It is simply unfair to charge GSRs the same fees as staff and faculty and not allow them the same access to parking spaces..

Cat Tracks schedules are developed with little input from graduate students. Admittedly, our laboratory and research hours often are difficult to coordinate with bus schedules. However, those of us that do not have alternate means of transportation can and do adjust to the Cat Tracks schedule. We feel as though our usage requirements are not considered in scheduling routes and times. The current summer schedule was developed in part by an email survey that went out only to undergraduates registered for summer session and did not reach out to any graduate students. The result is that Cat Tracks are only running during the time that classes are in session leaving graduate students without alternative transportation.

The daily work schedules and routines of staff members are more likely to coincide with daily bus schedules. Therefore, Cat Tracks could potentially be used by the staff and faculty to help alleviate parking problems. This avenue needs to be looked into not only to alleviate parking problems but also to build our status as a green and sustainable campus. Another avenue to alleviate some of the difficulties with having so few parking spaces near the main buildings is to increase the number of 30 minute loading/unloading parking spots. An additional 5 loading/unloading parking spaces could go a long way to help faculty, lecturers, and TAs when carrying large loads of grading in the event they cannot find parking. It would also be a tremendous benefit for researchers and GSRs who need to load and unload samples or field equipment.

Thank you for your understanding and time. We hope that you will take the above issues and suggestions into consideration.

On behalf of the Graduate Student Association of UC Merced,

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Joel Beutel	External Affairs
Nelson Rivera	Academic Affairs
Heather Bryan	Treasurer
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