Dear Colleagues,

On January 18, we will commemorate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a national day of service. As a salve for the destruction our country suffered on January 6, what better way to channel our energy than to respond to ?The Urgency of Creating the Beloved Community [1]?.


Of course, the work of anti-racism doesn?t happen on one day only ? it?s a 365-day commitment. The need to eliminate institutional racism is urgent, as we are seeing its impact play out with the new COVID-19 vaccines. It?s not that trust in science and health care has been eroded ? for many, it never existed.

Published on November 26, 2020, before the vaccines were approved in the U.S., this perspective piece, ?Trustworthiness before Trust ? Covid-19 Vaccine Trials and the Black Community [4],? in the New England Journal of Medicine poses and outlines how researchers must respond to the question, ?What can we do to earn and deserve increased trust?? It applies to the COVID-19 vaccine and also to how we must proceed in all clinical research, let alone the provision of care. This tweet by Dr. Eugenia South [5], assistant professor of Emergency Medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and the Presbyterian Medical Center of Philadelphia, is an example of the outreach and testimony that it will take ? but how do we reach those who aren?t on social media and might not have access to computers, who do not have access to the information that is at our fingertips?

We need to help educate the public and restore faith in science, tackling the big issues ? the pandemic is not over yet, many people are still hurting financially. For updates about the vaccine at UCSF, please visit the online COVID-19 vaccine hub [6].

So, after a momentary exhale as we sweep 2020 out the door, let?s all take a collective deep breath, count our blessings, and get back to the much-needed work we all must do to lessen suffering in the world.

This month?s topics:

- Addressing the Tipping Point: UCSF?s Safety Task Force
- Stopping the Clock: Easing COVID?s impact on faculty promotions
- Fond Farewells: Lindsey Criswell and Liz Watkins take new directions

Also on the horizon this month, Chancellor Sam Hawgood wrote us that the UC Regents will be voting on the Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan [7] (aka CPHP) ? more to come as
Addressing the Tipping Point: UCSF?s Safety Task Force

This seems like a fundamental truth: without safety and security, no one can fulfill their maximum potential.

That?s why I welcomed the opportunity to co-chair UCSF?s Safety Task Force with my colleague Renee Navarro, vice chancellor of Diversity and Outreach, to examine these overall issues at our campuses, along with the specific role of our university police and security forces. The task force released its preliminary report a few weeks ago. You can read the article about it as well as all of the recommendations in the full report.

In many ways, it?s a delicate issue. The UCSF leadership has heard the calls for racial justice and to ?defund the police? not only in our country but also on our own campuses. We know that we need to take action to combat systemic racism in all the ways it presents itself. Accounts from people of color who have been asked by UCSFPD or security for ID when entering a building, while white people are not, is only one example.

At the same time, we know our police and security perform a valuable function. We feel there?s a clear benefit in providing this service without having to rely on the city police force if someone in our hospitals, clinics, or campus poses a threat to our community. We are grateful that Chief Mike Denson and his department are committed to the UCSF community and the people we serve, and strive to do what they can to provide the holistic, measured response we require.

?Holistic? is the key word for me. Many services here at UCSF contribute to people?s safety ? wellness, mental health, de-escalation, security, and policing. People need to feel secure, welcomed, and safe. That, to me, is the definition of safety. And if that?s the goal, it goes beyond a need for uniformed police and requires different training than they typically receive. The task force?s recommendations include calls for specialized training, better use of wellness and mental health resources, and a reorientation of security forces as public safety ambassadors.

I have an image in my mind of how this holistic, integrated approach can work. Our uniformed police would regularly get together with the staff who oversee our wellness and de-escalation programs, creating an environment in which each person can be aware of what?s going on in the other?s world, and facilitating their working as a team.

The crux may be in what I think of as ?tipping point? situations ? those innumerable instances in which there?s a disruptive event of some kind. They happen more often in a clinical setting, but can also include, for example, when one of our learners witnesses unusual behavior by a
At a critical juncture, a decision needs to be made. The situation could go in one direction or another. It all depends on how individuals interpret the situation, whether they feel threatened or not, whether they understand the policies. And it can escalate quickly, triggering a series of decisions that lead to either a call to security or the police? which could result in an unnecessary encounter with an armed police worker? or in the other direction, perhaps to a call to a charge nurse or mental health specialist. The tipping point is the dividing line between escalation and de-escalation.

Our colleagues on the Benioff Children? s Hospital Ad Hoc Steering Committee were assigned by the task force to develop a pilot project to address and improve de-escalation events with patient, families, and staff members on the UCSF Mission Bay Campus. Recently they held a town hall about their pilot, so I checked in with colleagues Jamie Phillips and Sanica Bendre to learn more. Collaborating with a diverse interdisciplinary workgroup and working through the lens of trauma-informed, mental-health-informed, and anti-racist care, a 24/7 De-escalation Team is being developed to provide the necessary skill set to aid in emotional and behavioral crises. Currently, tailored training is being conducted with select pilot units with plans to launch the De-escalation Team in early 2021. Once the pilot is completed and refined, there are additional plans to continue the roll-out throughout all UCSF Health campuses.

I am excited about the progress being made in this new direction as well as the chance to positively impact our staff and the care we provide to our patients, families, and the community. The potential for this team is vast and my hope is that this approach to holistic wellness and safety will better utilize de-escalation in those many instances when we?re at that tipping point. If we can succeed, the idea could spread to other police departments. That would be quite a UCSF contribution toward advancing health and well-being everywhere. It can and will start here.

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Stopping the Clock: Easing COVID? s impact on faculty promotions

Tick?.tock?.tock?.tock?. That?s the clock that starts on day one when a faculty is appointed into an Academic Senate series and embarks on the path to promotion. Instead of hours? this clock marks the passing of years.

They may serve eight years in their role before they need to take some other action, i.e., be promoted, transition into a different faculty series, or move on. For most of our faculty, it? s not an issue. Most are promoted well before the eight-year mark, and nearly all of our faculty receive promotions, which are based on performance measures, such as publications, teaching contributions, and research grant awards. But 2020 has obviously been a year like no other. There are countless stories of the way the pandemic has disrupted our lives, including our careers and ability to fulfill these usual criteria? perhaps that article didn?t get published or the grant didn?t come through or was re-routed to the COVID-19 response. Perhaps you needed to stay home due to dependent care? or you lost ground due to illness
In other times when faculty face hardship, we would tell you to just state your case, explain the situation, and an accommodation is typically made. But we don't think that should be necessary this year. For faculty subject to the eight-year rule (i.e., Assistant Professors in the Ladder Rank, In Residence, and Clinical X series), we're automatically granting a one-year extension. Women in particular have had to take on primary caregiving roles during the pandemic and allocate their time to other activities not related to advancing their career, and we hope this policy alleviates some stress related to potential gender bias in the promotion process.

'It speaks to our desire to eliminate any stigma that might be associated with having to make the request,' says Emerald Light, assistant vice provost of Academic Affairs. Some people may have felt that, just by virtue of making the request, they were implying that they were not being productive, and no one wants to give that impression. 'By uniformly applying it to everyone, there's no judgment, no implication, no evaluation of need,' Emerald adds.

Full disclosure: Brian Alldredge, vice provost for Academic Affairs, notes one result of taking advantage of the Stop-the-Clock policy is that it puts your promotion off for a year and that impacts overall career progression; therefore, I encourage you to put your packet together if you have the capacity to do so. You can still demonstrate how the pandemic affected your work and productivity, and reviewers will take that into account. The process includes many layers, so you can check with your department head, your associate dean, or with the Academic Affairs office to get advice on how to proceed. You can also refer to the guidance we issued on preparing your CV and personal statement [12], as well as the letter we issued explaining the policy [13].

Overall, faculty promotions have long been perplexing. People have always wanted to know exactly what they need to get promoted, but there's never been a hard-and-fast formula. 'It has nothing to do with COVID,' Brian says. 'But, justifiably, there's more anxiety now due to the impact of the pandemic on productivity and careers.'

As a result of the work done around the Stop-the-Clock policy, the Office of Academic Affairs is also working out many details of the Escher-like promotion process. To that end, Brian and Emerald will be participating in a retreat in early February with the vice and associate deans of the four schools and the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) to sort out some of the issues. Everyone is aware of the markedly complex layers and will be taking collaborative steps to address them.

More to come after the retreat? so stay tuned.

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Fond Farewells: Lindsey Criswell and Liz Watkins take new directions

It's always bittersweet when a treasured colleague departs for another institution. Such is the case with the impending departures of Graduate Dean and Vice Chancellor Elizabeth Watkins
and Vice Chancellor Lindsey Criswell. Both have been members of the UCSF community for many years and have had stellar careers contributing greatly to the University. And neither one was looking for something new when opportunity knocked in a big way. While I am sad to see them go, I’m very excited and happy for them.

Liz has been a critical leader in our efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Under her leadership, we hired our first director of Diversity and Learner Success in the Graduate Division, which is now an assistant dean position. It’s important to have visibility for staff working in this critical field, Liz says. We’ve also added five new DEI courses just this year alone, developed ten different mentoring workshops for faculty, and worked to improve equity and inclusion in the labs. Within a year of being appointed as dean of the Graduate Division eight years ago, Liz took on the role of vice chancellor of Student Academic Affairs. Wearing both hats, she oversees the operations of 18 functional units that serve graduate and professional students alike, including the Registrar’s Office, Student Financial Services, Student Health, Student Life, and the Office of Career and Professional Development (which also serves postdocs and other trainees).

Another of her contributions is the Food 4 UCSF Students app, which seeks to address student food insecurity by alerting students to catering overages following campus events and reduce significant food waste. Under her leadership, the Student Food Market at UCSF was launched, and it is still providing food for our students during the pandemic.

Liz thanks UCSF for supporting her as co-chair of the Coalition for Next Generation Life Science and as a board member of the national Council of Graduate Schools. She extended herself to serve in these capacities and her contributions and experiences have benefitted UCSF.

She is leaving UCSF to become provost and executive vice chancellor of UC Riverside. Don’t let the similarity to my EVCP title mislead you. Consider this: while UCSF has about 3,000 students, all graduate and professional, UC Riverside has 25,000 — most of them undergrad — and is projected to hit an enrollment of 35,000 in 10 years! And Riverside has about a dozen deans and a variety of vice provosts. They all report to the provost and executive vice chancellor. Read more about Liz’s appointment on the UC Riverside website.

Likewise, Lindsey is moving on to take the helm of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, one of 27 institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health, where she’ll oversee a $625 million research budget. The Rheumatologist has a nice story about Lindsey’s new role, which points out that she is the first woman to head that institute.

While it’s a tremendous tribute to both Lindsey and Liz, it’s also something of a feather in UCSF’s cap to see two of our best leaders move on to further their potential where they will make an even greater impact on research and higher education. It speaks well of our system of support and mentorship.

When I was offered the position as the vice chancellor of research at UCSF, I had never aspired to such a prominent leadership role, Lindsey says. So, it’s really hard for me to wrap my head around the fact that I have now been recruited to direct an institute at the NIH. Having a UCSF leadership role not only gave Lindsey an edge over other outstanding researchers who might have been considered, but she says her UCSF experience will make a huge difference in my ability to get up to speed in my new role. I’ve learned so much in
During Lindsey’s tenure as vice chancellor, which began in 2017, she launched many ambitious initiatives, from improving communication about research by starting the ReSearch ReSource newsletter [19], to working diligently to decrease the time needed to get a clinical trial started. She gave visibility to research administration leaders and staff and devoted a huge amount of effort to the Parnassus Heights revitalization effort, including chairing the recent Parnassus Research Programming Task Force.

Lindsey is particularly proud of how UCSF’s incredibly committed researchers quickly pivoted away from whatever they were working on to address the pandemic, participating in clinical trials and basic discovery research related to the virus. We have so much to be proud of. And her new role will help bring even more national visibility to our great work. She’ll be joining former colleague Eliseo Pérez-Stable [20], director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), who had been chief of our Division of General Internal Medicine and director of our Center for Aging in Diverse Communities. I think it’s fantastic that two of the institutes will be led by UCSF people! Another of Lindsey’s future colleagues heads the NIH Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Maybe you’ve heard of him [21]?

Both colleagues make it clear that their moves are not without some pain, as they talk about how much they truly love UCSF. And as you might imagine, taking a new job in a pandemic is a little wild. Liz didn’t travel to the Riverside campus for any of her interviews or meetings? her last visit was about eight years ago. Instead she had extensive Zoom meetings, and she will take a few months to organize the move. (She’s got some fun plans in the interim including becoming a grandmother for the first time!)

A huge, heartfelt thank you to Lindsey and Liz. On behalf of the University, you have our best wishes for continued success on your new life path.

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Dan’s Tip of the Month
Initially, my intent for this month’s Tip, “Christmas in the Trenches,” a ballad from John McCutcheon’s 1984 album *Winter Solstice*, was to share with you its poignant story about an unofficial ceasefire during WWI known as the 1914 Christmas Truce. I have listened to the song at least a hundred times, and its lyrics about bridging deep divisions never fail to grab my heart and soul. However, after January 6, as I reflect on recent events, I ask myself what it will take for us as a country to finally overcome the divisions that keep us from attaining peace and true freedom for all.