Dear Colleagues,

This month marks a year since the WHO declared COVID-19 [1] a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Chancellor Sam Hawgood then wrote that UCSF would expand and accelerate the use of telecommuting on March 13, 2020, and former Vice Chancellor of Research Lindsey Criswell wrote to the research community to cease research activities. The guesstimates as to when we would be ?back to normal? were (and still are) a moving target. We often heard that it isn?t a sprint ? it?s a marathon. Now it feels like we?ve crossed the 26.2-mile finish line and are being told to run another 10k, and another, and another. But the vaccine is here and in circulation! And, while the instability of the supply has posed a significant challenge, we are making progress. I hope you can take time out to reflect on what you have endured, sacrificed, and given thanks for over the past twelve months, always remembering to continue basic precautions ? washing hands, wearing masks, physically distancing, staying home as much as possible, and taking care of one another.

March is also Women?s History Month and brings us International Women?s Day (IWD) on March 8. Be sure to check out the range of events planned to celebrate IWD at UCSF [2]. I am humbled by the accomplishments of women at UCSF both past and present. One such individual is Dr. Millie Hughes-Fulford, the first woman scientist in space [3]. Millie died on February 2. As I marvel over the Mars Perseverance rover landing last month, I am thankful for what her first flight into space in 1991 signified ? not only for other aspiring female astronauts but also for science. Thank you, Millie.

Here?s what?s in store in this issue of Expresso?

We?re still meeting via Zoom and continue to come up with good ideas on how to improve the experience (read how five minutes can make a difference). And I have a few updates about moving forward with our long-range plans to upgrade our Parnassus Heights campus, along with a new housing opportunity for faculty.

This month?s topics:

- Take Five: Start Zoom meetings five minutes later, reclaim quiet time in your day
- Getting a Green Light: Revitalizing our Parnassus Heights campus
- Making Strides in Housing: New apartments for faculty and down payment help

I encourage you to join UCSF Health and campus leaders and your colleagues on March 25, noon-1:15 p.m. via Zoom [4] for the fourth in a series of quarterly town hall meetings on UCSF?s Anti-racism Initiative. This forum will focus on efforts to address racism at UCSF Health. Also at the end of March, we will honor the life of Cesar Chavez, labor leader and civil rights activist who dedicated his life?s work to what he called La Causa: the struggle of farm workers in the United States. He once said, ?The end of all knowledge should be service to
others.? Indeed!

Perseverance ? it got us to Mars and will get us through this pandemic. Let me know how you will mark the one-year milestone or if you have tips to cope with Zoom fatigue! Please write me at ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu [5].

With best wishes for the coming spring season,
Dan

Take Five: Start Zoom meetings five minutes later, reclaim quiet time in your day

Do you wonder why working from home sometimes (or always?) seems more exhausting than working on-site? Are you squeezing in more meetings each day because there?s no travel involved? After a day of back-to-back meetings on Zoom, how do you feel? Just in time for this story, last week Stanford researchers came out with four causes of Zoom fatigue [6]. No doubt you?ve experienced one or more yourself!

Diane Sliwka, UCSF Health chief physician experience officer, has a simple solution. If you have to schedule a half-hour meeting, cut it to 25 minutes, and start it at five after the hour or half-hour. If it?s an hour-long meeting, cut it to 50 minutes, and start it at 10 after. Doing so ensures that people can come up for air between meetings ? gather their thoughts, stretch their legs, get a snack, meditate, do a crossword puzzle ? or tend to a child who is now tele-schooling and may need a little attention. And let?s not forget the all-important bio break.

Diane tips her cap to Margaret Damiano, associate dean at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, for getting the ball rolling and starting this practice with her team. The issue became critical last March, when the coronavirus spread so rapidly that we all started working remotely.

As we made the transition, we were lucky to have Zoom already in our tech toolbox, which kept us safe while we could continue to meet and see each other?s faces and share our screens. But very quickly, a less-than-optimal side emerged. ?In almost every forum, I could hear this general undertone of, ?Oh my God, I am on Zoom all day long, non-stop, and even before hours and after hours because it?s so easy,? Diane says. ?I was hearing people say, ?This is not sustainable. I cannot keep doing this.? Diane even noticed her hip started hurting from spending so many hours in her chair. In physical meetings, you can stand up or walk to the meeting.

?The other piece of it is that at home, there are new needs,? she notes. ?Lots of people have dependents at home who are waiting in the wings for them as they?re sitting on these Zoom meetings. My 11-year-old daughter is often just lingering outside of the screen, wondering, ?When are you going to pay attention to me? When are you going to answer whatever I need from you?? Having 5 or 10 minutes in between meetings every hour makes it possible for people to attend to those quick little things that need attention at home.
We haven’t made this mandatory across UCSF, but certain groups, including the Chancellor’s Executive Team, have already started doing it, and I have to tell you, I love it!

“It’s just nice,” says Terri O’Brien, associate chancellor. “With those few minutes, I’ll get a little food, or walk around. My son’s classes start on the hour and I need to get him on Zoom, so now I don’t have to try to do both at the same time. So, we’re trying out this new approach before broadening the experiment, but anyone can try it out. There’s nothing stopping you from starting your next meeting at 9:05 a.m. Diane’s hoping we’ll extend the experiment across the campus, because with everyone on the same page, it’ll be easier to avoid conflicts.

And what meeting can’t be five or ten minutes shorter? There’s an unwritten rule of meetings that people will fill whatever time is allotted to them. Diane refers to the book Death by Meeting [7] by Patrick Lencioni. No doubt you’ll recognize the sentiment.

Diane began in her physician experience leadership role in 2014. “The idea of working on people’s experience of work is not new, but it’s relatively new to health care, and it was very new to physicians when I started my role,” she says. She conducted surveys to find where the trouble spots are and has helped the organization prioritize work experience improvements over the years, from optimizing team-based care or the electronic medical record for providers to hiring scribes to take notes during patient encounters (this saves physicians from having to work late on paperwork). Looking forward, one could imagine applying this “take five” approach to patient visits as well, allowing providers a few minutes between patients to summarize the past visit and prepare for the next.

A tip sheet of best practices [8] has been developed to optimize time spent in meetings. Also, check out this Virtual Meeting Wellness Guide [9] created by Campus Life Services. I now routinely switch between sitting and standing during online meetings to avoid that couch potato feeling. And I’ve also found that playing around with this balance board [10] between meetings is a great way to give my brain a chance to focus on something other than work and zooming!

Getting a Green Light: Revitalizing our Parnassus Heights campus

I love our Parnassus Heights campus, which has been my academic home for much of my three-plus decades at UCSF (although my five years at ZFGH were equally meaningful), and I’m very excited to see our ambitious Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan coming closer to fruition. At the January Regents meeting [11], the UC Regents voted to approve the plan, which includes the new hospital, new Research Academic Building, Irving Street arrival, and Aldea housing improvements in the first ten years.

Also in January, UCSF and the City and County of San Francisco signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) [12], in which the University promises to work with the city to invest in community benefits as we implement this plan. This is a big step and the latest testament to
our historic partnership with the city.

The city was concerned about the plan’s impact on the community, including housing, transportation, and workforce, and it wanted to be sure that the project both during construction and with the permanent jobs that follow employs local people, particularly from San Francisco’s most underserved communities. Those requests dovetail nicely with UCSF’s Anchor Institution [13] initiative, in which we seek to improve the long-term health and social welfare of our community through hiring, purchasing, and investing.

“Everything is connected,” says Francesca Vega, vice chancellor for Community & Government Relations, who worked tirelessly on the deal. “It might sound a little bit corny, but it is so true. The work we’re doing on the Anchor Institution is right in line with our partnership with the city.”

We also announced a Community Workforce Agreement [14] between UCSF, the general contractor working to build the new hospital at Parnassus Heights, and organized labor to ensure that the 1,000 jobs created by the $3 billion project will be filled by a union workforce with strong representation of local veterans and apprentices and include job training for people from underrepresented communities.

As Francesca noted, UCSF and the city view each other as lifelong partners. Neither of us is going anywhere. “The pandemic really illustrates the value of UCSF not only to the City but to the region, and it also highlights the need for the new hospital,” says Paul Takayama, assistant vice chancellor, Community & Government Relations. The city could see that we’ve done great work with our current facilities, and so they appreciate what we’ll be able to do with a new hospital, especially when not if the next pandemic comes along.

The synergy comes in many forms. The city would like to see UCSF, as the second largest employer (after the city government itself), provide more housing for its workforce something UCSF is already addressing (see the next item in this month’s Expresso!). “Housing was definitely the most challenging for us,” Francesca says. “We had to lean into workforce housing. The Chancellor has said many times that this is something we need to do for our organization.” We have committed to adding 1,263 total units.

The Community & Government Relations team also worked closely with the Municipal Transportation Agency, as well as our local supervisors, the mayor’s office, and other agencies. We know more patients and employees will be coming to our Parnassus Heights campus, and we’re working to minimize the transportation impact on our neighbors.

One other key area expressed by members of the community was respecting open space. When the Parnassus Heights campus was originally built, this wasn’t a consideration, but now we want to take advantage of our great location between Golden Gate Park and Mount Sutro. Our Park to Peak initiative plans to open up access to both greenspaces for employees, learners, patients, and neighbors.

Now we’re focusing on the hospital design process with the community that we have been engaged with since 2018, as the first opportunity to build on the Park to Peak concept and have a building that connects to Mount Sutro. Many people living in the neighborhood of our Parnassus Heights campus are enthusiastically in favor of our plans, but, admittedly, not all of them are supportive while they may value UCSF, they would like to see us to explore locations further away. I understand their concerns. However, for a variety of reasons,
including the importance of offering quality health care in this part of the city, inter-connected with our amazing research and education programs, and the financial implications, a move is not feasible or advisable.

We have a responsibility to be good neighbors. That’s why we’ve been very engaged with the community throughout this process. (Read more about those efforts on the community partnership website.) This is a major undertaking, and there are undoubtedly numerous challenges ahead, but the transformation of our oldest and largest campus at Parnassus Heights over the coming decade and beyond will be, quite simply, spectacular.

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P.S. One of the first signs of this progress is the construction of the Integrated Center for Design and Construction (a.k.a., ICDC) that will be located within the Millberry Union parking structure on levels five and six. It’s pretty exciting! I encourage you to read more about it and how it will affect traffic flow in the garage.

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Making Strides in Housing: New apartments for faculty and down payment help

In 2015, I delved into the untenable situation of the high cost of housing in San Francisco. The city’s desirability led to out-of-control skyscraper prices for single-family dwellings—rent for half a room was met with groans of commiseration. Many were forced to move farther away. At UCSF it posed a significant obstacle to our recruitment efforts—it was just too expensive. And here we are in 2021, and while there seem to be more “for rent” and “for sale” signs, prices are still the highest in the country. But, I’m happy to report, UCSF is doing something about it.

One of our wonderful philanthropists, who wishes to remain anonymous, gave us something especially precious: a building near our Mount Zion campus at 2130 Post Street. And UCSF has renovated the building, making it seismically compliant with UC policies while modernizing its ADA and life safety standards. Known as Mount Zion Housing, the building has 71 apartments for faculty to begin leasing now, with occupancy starting this summer. It has on-site parking, in-unit laundry appliances, and a fitness center. Rooms feature big windows letting in lots of natural light. Not only is it a mere two blocks from Mount Zion, which is going through some great renovations of its own, it’s also very close to UCSF shuttle lines that can take folks to Parnassus Heights or Mission Bay.

In focus groups, there was a theme among faculty, according to Todd McGregor, our director of Housing Administration. He said, “They want reasonable rents, they want to have the option of having a pet, and they want in-unit laundry. Some units at Mount Zion have more than 1,600 square feet and others more than 1,000 square feet which give people that sense of space and largeness. Also, we took the appraised rental value and benchmarked the units lower than that. They are a really good deal, in a really great location, with all sorts of amenities. I can’t think of why people wouldn’t want to live here.”
You can read more about Mount Zion Housing in this article [18], which includes links to the rental application and other UCSF housing initiatives [19]. While we’re giving priority to faculty, apartments will be made available to postdocs, residents, and staff if faculty don’t rent all units. Another nice aspect is that renters don’t have to pay a security deposit equivalent to first and last months’ rent, or go through background checks (we already know you, and we know where you work!). However, rental terms are limited to five years, because we need the apartments to turn over (the previous limit was two years, but folks said that wouldn’t give some people enough time to acclimate).

Thanks to Campus Life Services, UCSF also launched a partnership last October with Landed [20], a company that helps essential workers (e.g., health care workers and educators) buy homes by providing down payment support in exchange for an equity share in the investment. Within three months of launching the program, ten UCSF employees have purchased a home through Landed and 53 others are looking for homes. Although the Mortgage Origination Program (MOP) program will continue for Academic Senate-appointed faculty, Landed will provide a service to staff and faculty who are not eligible for MOP. See the Campus Life Services website for more information about Landed [21].

Leslie Santos, assistant vice chancellor for Housing and Wellbeing Services, says the Landed program is another outgrowth of focus groups. “One of the challenges we heard from staff and non-Academic Senate-appointed faculty is the ability to produce a down payment.” Landed [22] can provide up to $120,000 in down payment support, and this is often the difference between owning and not owning a home.

We’re also collaborating with UC Hastings on a housing project in San Francisco’s Civic Center, where 230 units of housing that will open in 2023 at the corner of Hyde and McAllister streets will be reserved for UCSF. And we also built nearly 600 small units in two buildings on Minnesota Street near our Mission Bay hospital and campus, known as The Tidelands [23]. Units are currently available for faculty and staff.

While it may seem like, due to the pandemic, housing isn’t the challenge that it once was, we need to remain vigilant and realize that some of the drops in prices are temporary. This is why housing is a large component of our Memorandum of Understanding with the City [12] for our Parnassus Heights plan, particularly affordable housing.

There you have it – some of the great things happening on the UCSF housing front.

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Dan’s Tip of the Month
The Dig [24] is a period film about Sutton Hoo [25], the British archaeological site opened up in 1939. It is set in a world very similar to the one we're living in right now, where there is severe financial insecurity and inequity; systemic class, gender, and racial divides; shifting international geopolitical powers; and a sense that the world is careening and changing on a daily basis. But in a patient way the story reminds us that underneath every part of us is the history of our civilizations, which we can choose to learn from, or ignore, as we're consistently building on the foundations of the past. The film elicits moments of emotion and triumph, especially during the sequences of discovery, and proves how the journey, as well as the destination, brings true victory—a perfect allegory for our work at UCSF.

P.S. Exploring more of the background of the Sutton Hoo discovery reveals the extraordinary skill of two amateur photographers, Barbara Wagstaff and Mercie Lack [26], whose images taken over that summer are a unique record of the archaeological team at work.