

WITH U • FOR U

DFA Employee Newsletter



A message from
Chief Financial Officer &
Vice Chancellor, Mary Lou D. Ortiz

**Managers/Supervisors: Please share this email with DFA campus temporary and contract employees. For those who do not have regular access to emails/laptops/PCs, please print and share this email accordingly.*

Dear DFA employees,

As another academic year comes to a close, it's a natural time to reflect on what we've accomplished together and look ahead to the opportunities before us. Every project we complete, every service we provide, and every challenge we solve contributes to something much larger-supporting UC Irvine's mission of teaching, research, patient care, and public service.

That impact was especially evident during [UC Irvine's 2026 Commencement celebrations](#). More than 8,600 graduates crossed the stage this year, marking an important milestone in their academic journey. While DFA may not always be visible on commencement day, our work helps create the foundation that makes moments like these possible. Congratulations to the class of 2026!

This month also marked an important milestone for our division with the launch of the new [DFA Training Resources Directory](#). Developed through the collaborative efforts of our DFA Train-the-Trainer program participants, this centralized resource makes it easier for the campus community to find training opportunities across our departments while improving the consistency, visibility, and accessibility of our training resources. Thank you to everyone who contributed to bringing this project to life.

In early August, we will share our annual strategic planning update, including implementation progress and our new AI-focused strategic goal. I look forward to sharing how these efforts continue to evolve and support our division's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Beginning Aug. 10, a random selection of UCI employees will also be invited to participate in the [Summer 2026 Co-Worker Experience Survey](#). If you're selected, I encourage you to take a few minutes to share your feedback. Your insights help us continue building a

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 Employee Profiles

 New Hires

Featured Events

Staff Appreciation Picnic
[Tues., Aug. 4 | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.](#)
in Aldrich Park

 DFA Employee Information

 UCI Events

 UCI HR | WORKING Well

workplace where employees feel supported and empowered to do their best work.

I also hope you'll take advantage of opportunities to connect with colleagues this summer, including the [Staff Appreciation Picnic on Aug. 4](#). And for the first time in several years, our [October DFA town hall](#) will be held **in-person**. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Thank you for your continued dedication to DFA and UC Irvine. I hope you have a safe and enjoyable summer, and I look forward to all we'll accomplish together in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou D. Ortiz
Chief Financial Officer
Vice Chancellor, Finance & Administration



DFA's Vision, Mission, and Values

We are **With U • For U**. We are proud to support the UC Irvine community. Our vision, mission, and values set our direction, guide our decisions, and foster a shared culture. [Learn more](#).



DFA-HR Reminders

Workplace Violence Prevention Program

UC Irvine's commitment to creating a safe, respectful, and proactive campus environment is a shared responsibility. UC Irvine's Workplace Violence Prevention Program (WVPP) provides the tools to identify hazards, report concerns, access resources, and support early intervention. Know the PLAN, be part of the solution, and act early to help prevent workplace violence. Every voice matters. Every report helps. Learn more about the [UC Irvine WVPP](#) and follow @uciwvpp on Instagram for more information on how you can help keep your workplace safe.

Article provided by DFA-HR



Continuous Improvement Focus: PDE: Zoom Room Instructions QR Codes

DFA's CPI [project library](#) features process improvement projects from all DFA departments, including proposed, in progress, and completed.

One of the recently completed CPI projects by PDE features [incorporating QR codes for Zoom room instructions](#) in Aldrich Hall's fourth floor conference rooms. Zoom rooms are equipped with printed instruction guides which previously required consistent review and updates to ensure accuracy. Instruction guides were updated with directions for common tasks, while QR codes linking directly to an AI-powered Zoom support website were added to reduce the frequency of manual updates. The review cycle for the instructions was reduced from every four to six months to every 12 months, saving staff time and effort, while the ability to access Zoom's support platform directly from the guide ensures accurate, real-time information and assistance. For more information or to discuss this project, please contact [Sarah Martinez](#).

PDE: Zoom Room Instructions QR Codes



Problem:

Zoom room instructions for Aldrich Hall's fourth floor conference rooms required consistent review to ensure accuracy, which was time-consuming. Any updates to Zoom's platform or features meant the printed guide could quickly become outdated. This created a risk of staff following incorrect or incomplete instructions, leading to frustration and a poor user experience.



Goal:

The goal was to modernize the instruction guide to reduce the frequency of manual updates while keeping users connected to accurate, real-time support.



Solution:

The instruction guide was updated with clear, step-by-step directions for common tasks such as sharing content, joining meetings, and troubleshooting. A key addition was the incorporation of QR codes that link directly to an AI-powered Zoom support website, giving users instant access to the most current information straight from Zoom's platform. This allows users to search for answers to specific issues not covered in the printed guide and receive immediate responses without waiting for staff assistance.



Result:

The review cycle for the instructions was reduced from every 4-6 months to annually, saving time and effort for the team. The ability to access Zoom's support platform directly from the guide ensures users always have reliable, up-to-date information.

Project Contact: Sarah Martinez, PDE

Our goal is to showcase completed projects from various departments which might benefit or inspire others. Please reach out to WithUForU@uci.edu to help us showcase your project.

TAKE CPI ACTION

Incorporate CPI in your daily activities. Identify a bottleneck, own it, and improve it!
View and download the [DFA CPI flyer](#).



Submit Ideas/Projects

Submit information about a [process improvement project or idea in your department](#).



Browse Existing Projects

Explore [DFA's CPI dashboard](#) for current, proposed or recently completed process improvement projects in our division.



Explore DFA's CPI Toolkit

Explore the [DFA's CPI toolkit](#). Contact us at WithUForU@uci.edu with any questions and suggestions for additional tools.

Article provided by DFA Program Development & Execution



ZotSpeak Toastmasters

The ZotSpeak Toastmasters club provides a supportive, positive learning environment where members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth. Participants get to network with others in the UC Irvine community. Staff, students, faculty, and all visitors are welcome. To learn more, visit the

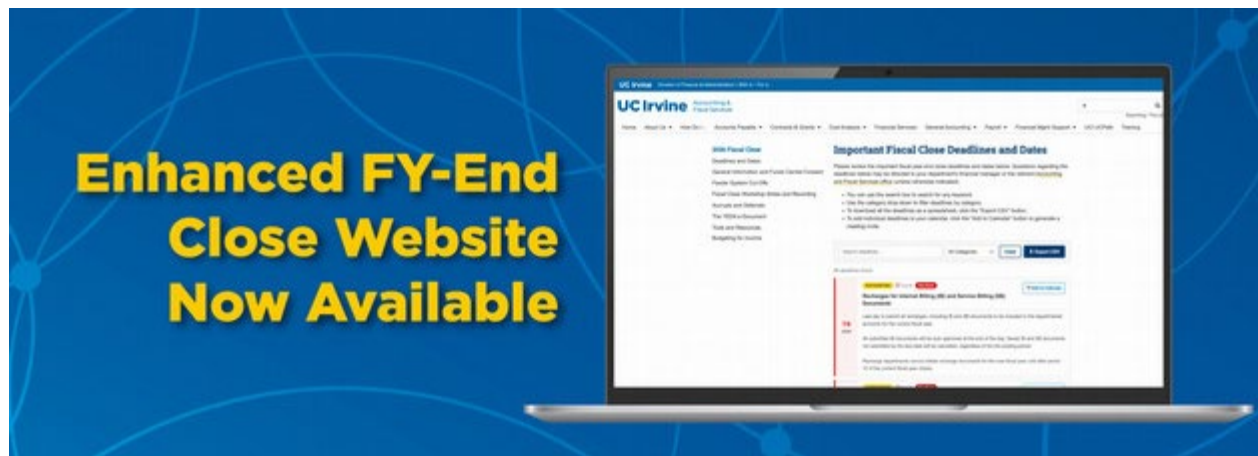


Beach Water Safety

Enjoy the beach this summer, but first make sure the water is safe! The Orange County Ocean Water Protection Program tests 150 shoreline sites weekly for bacterial contamination, issuing advisories or closures when unsafe levels are detected. Before heading out, check ocbeachinfo.com for the latest beach statuses, avoid stagnant areas

[ZotSpeak Toastmasters website](#). For questions or the Zoom meeting link, contact [Bob Hudack](#).

like bays and marinas, and stay at least 100 yards from flowing storm drains and creeks.



Accounting Office Rolls Out Enhanced Fiscal Year-End Close Website

Accounting & Fiscal Services recently upgraded its Fiscal Year-End Close website. Using coding enhancements created with ZotGPT, the new site now [displays important deadlines and dates](#) in an easy-to-read "card" format that is searchable and categorized by topic. The cards are fully compliant with accessibility requirements and easier to read on smaller screens compared to the old tabular format. Each card also includes a button that allows campus financial staff to quickly add the deadline to their calendar. For Accounting Office staff, the deadlines are easier to manage, too. The deadlines can be exported from a master fiscal year-end Smartsheet to the campus-facing website in a matter of minutes – a process that formerly required hours of copying and pasting. Check out the [new deadlines page](#) to see how it works.

Article provided by UC Irvine Accounting & Fiscal Services



Experience the Arts with MuseumConnect

UC Irvine Transportation's MuseumConnect shuttle offers complimentary service to the UC Irvine Langson Orange County Museum of Art, providing a simple and convenient way to access the university's cultural offerings. The wheelchair-accessible shuttle operates Wednesday through Friday with morning and afternoon round trips, giving visitors 1.5 hours to explore the museum before returning to campus.

This strategic mobility enhancement expands transportation systems available to the campus community and strengthens connections across the university. Whether you are looking to recharge during your lunch break or enjoy time away from your desk, MuseumConnect makes it easy to explore rotating exhibitions without the need to drive or park. [Reserve your trip](#) today and discover a new way to experience the arts this summer!

Article provided by UC Irvine Transportation & Distribution Services



From Flagpole to Playground

After 25 years in Facilities Project Management, David Hooks (picture above) is retiring from UC Irvine. It's fitting that his career has come full circle: His first project as a facilities management project manager was overseeing the installation of a flagpole at the Children's Center in Verano, building 6533. His final project was the installation of a new playground at the same location.

Throughout his career, David managed a wide range of campus improvement projects, collaborating with colleagues across the university and supporting facility enhancements that benefited the UC Irvine community. He especially valued the opportunity to work with the Children's Center over the years, partnering with its leadership and staff on facility improvements, remodels and repairs while watching the center grow and evolve.

Ending his career with a project at the same Children's Center where it all began is a meaningful full-circle moment and a fitting close to 25 years of improving campus spaces and supporting the people who use them every day.

Article provided by UC Irvine Facilities Management



Sustainability Corner: Building a More Sustainable Campus

Did you know UC Irvine is home to 33 LEED-certified buildings, including 22 Platinum and 11 Gold certifications? From energy efficiency and water conservation to healthier indoor environments, sustainable building practices help reduce environmental impact while creating spaces that support learning, research, and collaboration. Explore [UCI's green buildings](#) and sustainability efforts to see how UCI is building for the future.



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: UC Managing Implicit Bias Training Completion Goals

DFA has set a goal for all managers and supervisors and a stretch goal for all staff to complete the [UC Managing Implicit Bias Series](#) – a six-course online training series designed to increase awareness of implicit bias and reduce its impact at the university. Part six, [Managing Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process](#), is mandatory for all employees who interview candidates or are involved in the university's hiring process.

Currently, 91% of supervisors and 53% of staff have completed the series, representing increases of 3% and 4%, respectively, since June 2025. This growth follows DFA's partnership with Student Affairs to expand access and inclusivity by providing Spanish transcripts for all six modules through [UCLC](#).

DFA EMPLOYEE PROFILES



Jaclyn "Jac" Higgins
Public Safety Dispatcher, Police Department

I have been at UCI and in my current position for three and a half years. As part of the UCIPD dispatch team, I answer both emergency and non-emergency phone calls as they come into the center from the college campus, as well as the UCI medical centers in Orange and Irvine, and enter calls for service in our computer-aided dispatch system. I then dispatch these calls for service to our sworn police officers, public safety responders, ambassadors, parking services, or community assistants based on the nature of the incident. If the paramedics or fire department are needed to respond, I also call their dispatch. In addition to answering phones, I handle radio traffic not only from UCIPD personnel but from multiple

departments on campus and county-wide. I monitor campus fire, panic, burglary, robbery, and AED alarms, as well as Code Gray and Green Alarms for UCI Health locations in Irvine, Orange, and Santa Ana, then dispatch appropriate personnel as needed. I am also responsible for running checks on subjects for driver's license status, wants/warrants, weapons, officers safety, and relaying such info in a timely manner to officers out in the field. Sometimes, we work solo in dispatch and do all of this on our own!

What has surprised you most about working in your department or UCI? I was most surprised by the feeling of nostalgia I am still randomly hit with in returning to my Anteater community. I graduated as class of 2015 and did not foresee returning to UCI as part of my career. It's interesting to experience the "adult" side of things on campus that I never even fathomed as an undergrad.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? I really enjoy the community within the Police Department. Coming from a large regional dispatch center, I never got to form close bonds or relationships with any officers as we were very disconnected from everyone. Here, I remember walking through the department on my first day and being stopped and greeted by no less than five people who already knew my name and where I had come from. It makes such a huge difference.

What is one accomplishment at work that you are most proud of? Why? This year I won Honorable Mention for Telecommunicator of the Year with SoCal APCO which is quite the accomplishment for me.

Favorite travel spot? Lately it's been anywhere a cruise ship will take me! I think I have entered my cruising era... My most recent cruise was to Alaska and that was just gorgeous. I wish we could've made a u-turn and stayed up there another week! I want to try and convince my husband to book a Caribbean cruise next. Maybe one that starts in New Orleans?

Before your time at UCI, what was your most interesting or oddest job? My most interesting and oddest job was as a scare actor at Knott's Scary Farm in Buena Park. I worked there for the Halloween season of 2010 when I was a freshman here at UCI (not something I would recommend to any freshman in college btw) and have to say it was quite the experience. I was assigned the now defunct "maze" called Cornstalkers as a scarecrow. My costume included a latex mask with sig and hat, a heavy trench coat over a plaid shirt, jeans and boots. I was given a spot towards the rear of the maze and mostly pretended to be fake until an unsuspecting guest walked by, at which point I would jump out at them. I got punched in the face once which was not cool, I got to scare Marilyn Manson which was cool, and generally enjoyed myself people watching and making friends.

DFA NEW HIRES

DFA new hires hired between May 1 - June 30, 2026.

Accounting & Fiscal Services:

- Dustin Dam
- Fahad Ahmed
- Rosa M Aldana

DFA Program Development & Execution:

- Alexa Nunez

Environmental Health & Safety:

- Adrian Escandon
- Matthew Powell

Internal Audit Services:

- Alex Castillo
- Laurie Jayne Liao

Police Department:

- Ansh Arora
- Brand Marantz
- Tri Quoc Minh Vu
- Valerie Toro

Risk Services:

- Matthew J Zumbo
- Robert William Conti

Ysa Ngoctram Lu

Facilities Management:

- Edgar Abestilla
- Isaac Robles
- Pierina De Los Angeles Rosario

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