



VIRGINIA SMITH TRUST

Our Land, Our Children, Everyone's Future
A Trust To Support Scholarships

November 1, 2021

Executive Director

Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D.

Mr. Matthew Serratto, Mayor
City of Merced
678 West 18th Street Merced,
California 95340

Board of Trustees

Chris Chavez
Chairperson

Re: **Virginia Smith Trust Annexation Pre-Application**

Geneva Brett
Vice Chairperson

On behalf of the Merced County Office of Education (MCOE) Board of Trustees constituents, we would like to encourage you to affirm proceeding with the potential annexation of the Virginia Smith Trust (VST) development project that is before the City Council on November 15, 2021. This action is important to ensure that this project, conceived in the mid-1990s when VST pledged its property to entice the 10th University of California (UC) campus to locate in Merced, will develop in the manner originally planned. The VST project is part of the "promise" that the representatives made to the community and to the UC Trustees.

Frank Fagundes
Trustee

Fred Honoré
Trustee

As you know, development of VST property started more than 25 years ago when VST provided the land to bring UC Merced to the community and pledged that its adjacent property would be developed as a university community that was to be developed cooperatively with the county, city, and UC. The University Community Plan (UCP) was developed with the City's cooperation, input, and established the basic framework for development of the VST and Hunt properties that comprise the UCP. This plan provides for the development of a community that is targeted toward supporting the University's staff and students. The project will provide housing to serve all economic segments of the University community. It will be a model for the rest of the state.

Dennis Hanks
Trustee

As you know, planning and eventual development of the VST property will have long-term community benefits including the establishment of a \$100+ million endowment that will provide annual scholarship of \$5 million to \$8 million, 50 times the current level, and for all students of Merced County. This means that high school graduates from throughout the County will become eligible for VST scholarships and will have financial support to attend a community college or get vocational training if that is their preference. We believe that it is time to deliver on the remaining portion of the "Merced Promise" that was made when the decision was made to locate the university in Merced. Your affirmative vote on this matter will make sure that happens.

Sincerely,

Merced County Board of Trustees

[Redacted Signature]

Mr. Dennis Hanks, Trustee Area #1

[Redacted Signature]

Mr. Chris Chavez, Trustee Area #2

[Redacted Signature]

Mr. Frank Fagundes, Trustee Area #3

[Redacted Signature]

Mr. Fred Honoré, Trustee Area #4

[Redacted Signature]

Ms. Geneva Brett, Trustee Area #5

cc: Ms. Stephanie Dietz, City Manager
Mr. Scott McBride, Director of Development
Ms. Kim Espinosa, Planning Manager
City Clerk's Office

