



*“We strive to develop and implement strategies to remove embedded inequities from mindsets, values and practices, and encourage the adoption of broader perspectives on judgments of faculty and student achievement and academic merit.*

*We are also evidence and data-driven (both quantitative and qualitative) and uphold the principles of transparency and accountability.*

# COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

*Not only are we committed to ensuring an inclusive environment for everyone to thrive, but we are also working to build a community of allies and partners who can lead by example and carry on the important and hard work of institutional transformation.”*

**– Michael Yassa, PhD**

Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Professor, Neurobiology and Behavior

# NEW ASSOCIATE DEANSHIP FURTHERS COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

**COVID-19 and the surge in demand for social justice were wake-up calls for institutions, ones that have forever defined 2020 in the collective psyche. The School of Biological Sciences was already well-armed to help combat the pandemic through research underway and new inquiries rapidly initiated. To address the growing call for social reform, BioSci decided to develop a comprehensive approach to improving institutional policies and practices. In October 2020, the school established the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, or ODEI, headed by a new associate dean dedicated to this crucial issue.**

Professor Michael Yassa was appointed as the inaugural associate dean of diversity, equity and inclusion. An accomplished neuroscientist who is well-known and respected throughout UCI and the field, Professor Yassa has a history of commitment to inclusive excellence. He has worked with university leadership on initiatives to improve campus culture, develop diversity training and faculty hiring programs, and support student outreach and recruitment.

Professor Yassa's responsibilities in this new role are many and compelling. They include overseeing the development of a BioSci comprehensive DEI strategic plan and advising school leadership on related issues. He also supervises the school's Minority Science Programs (MSP) and develops new activities to support the success of faculty, staff and students. His office has already launched several new programs and initiatives, including the Promoting Inclusion in the Student Experience (PROMISE) task force, a schoolwide climate council, a comprehensive undergraduate wellness survey and several small grant mechanisms to reward leadership in diversity and inclusion efforts. Most recently, Professor Yassa welcomed to his team Dr. Raven Baxter as director of diversity initiatives. Dr. Baxter has a background in molecular biology, science education and science communication. Her role will focus on building strong communities to enhance and support innovative and diverse science learning, teaching and working environments within the school.



Prof. Michael Yassa



Dr. Raven Baxter