As part of the Southern Sierra Critical Zone Observatory, Professor Stephen Hart, along with fellow researchers will address the hypothesis that soil type, water and rock composition play key roles in determining how deep the surface influences — such as vegetation and climate — drive microbial community composition, diversity and activity.

“Even within a single fire, we have to be able to distinguish between the good and the bad and focusing on area burned doesn’t allow us to do that,” says fire scientist Crystal Kolden. Instead, some fire scientists say public messaging should focus on the community impact: the number of people evacuated and homes threatened.

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Physics Professor Ajay Gopinathan has been elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society (APS). This prestigious recognition is for physicists who have made exceptional contributions in physics research, important applications of physics, leadership in or service to physics or significant contributions to physics education.
UC Merced, which just celebrated the 15th anniversary of its opening in 2005, is already recognized as one of the top universities for both its academic quality and its ability to transform the lives of its graduates. The university is highly ranked by several prestigious publications such as U.S. News & World Report, Washington Monthly, The Princeton Review, Money and others. It is increasingly being recognized for its outstanding academic programs and for its commitment to environmental sustainability.

**RECENT RANKINGS**

- Top 100 | No. 40 among public universities (US News & World Report)
- Top 100 | No. 56 among national universities (Washington Monthly’s 2020 College Guide & Rankings)
- Top 100 | No. 65 globally among universities younger than 50 years (Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2020)
- Top 100 | No. 76 among national universities (Money’s 2020 Best Colleges)
- Top 100 | No. 86 among colleges and universities for Hispanics (Hispanic Outlook on Education Magazine)
- University of the Year (Education Dive’s Dive Awards, 2018)
- "Best 386 Colleges," two consecutive years (Princeton Review)
- No. 1 among public universities in outperforming expected graduation rates (US News & World Report)
- No. 3 in U.S. among universities younger than 50 years (Times Higher Education Young University Rankings 2020)
- No. 5 among all universities in social mobility (US News & World Report)
- No. 8 among all universities in economic diversity (US News & World Report)
- No. 12 most transformative colleges (Money’s 2020 Best Colleges)
- No. 13 among public universities for highest alumni giving rate (US News & World Report)
- No. 19 for social mobility (Washington Monthly’s 2020 College Guide & Rankings)
- No. 51 for least amount of debt incurred by graduates (US News & World Report)
- No. 145 for undergraduate engineering (among Ph.D.-granting schools) (US News & World Report)
- No. 171 for Best Value (US News & World Report)

**SOCIAL MOBILITY**

- No. 1 in the nation for student outcomes (US News Best Colleges 2020)
- No. 1 among public universities in outperforming expected graduation rates (US News Best Colleges 2021)
- No. 5 in the nation for social mobility (US News Best Colleges 2021)
- No. 8 in the nation for economic diversity (US News Best Colleges 2021)
- No. 51 for least amount of debt incurred by graduates (US News Best Colleges 2021)
- No. 19 for social mobility (Washington Monthly’s 2020 College Guide and Rankings)
- No. 12 most transformative colleges (Money’s 2020 Best Colleges)
- No. 8 in the nation for performance of students who receive Pell Grants (Washington Monthly’s 2019 College Guide & Rankings)
- No. 8 in the nation for performance of first-generation students (Washington Monthly’s 2019 College Guide & Rankings)

**SUSTAINABILITY**

- Only university in the nation to have all buildings LEED certified
- No. 1 in the nation for sustainable buildings (AASHE, 2020)
- Tied for No. 1 in the nation for sustainable research (AASHE, 2020)
- Tied for No. 5 in nation for sustainability investment and finance (AASHE, 2020)
- No. 10 in the nation in sustainable waste operations (AASHE, 2020)
- No. 6 overall among doctoral institutions (AASHE, 2020)
- No. 5 in the nation for sustainability (Sierra Club’s Cool Schools, 2020)

*Official Numbers as Fall 2020

**TOP ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

- **School of Engineering**
  - No. 129 in the nation among graduate schools (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
  - No. 145 among Ph.D.-granting schools for undergraduate engineering (US News Best Colleges 2021)
- **Bioengineering**
  - No. 117 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Computer Engineering**
  - No. 106 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Electrical Engineering**
  - No. 129 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Environmental Engineering**
  - No. 84 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Materials Engineering**
  - No. 98 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Mechanical Engineering**
  - No. 117 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2021)
- **Biology**
  - No. 175 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2019)
- **Chemistry**
  - No. 122 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2019)
- **Mathematics**
  - No. 144 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2019)
- **Physics**
  - No. 146 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2019)
- **Psychology**
  - No. 90 in the nation (US News Best Graduate Schools 2018)