

## **2021 UC ANR CE Proposed Position (CE Specialist)**

### **Position Title:**

Cooperative Extension (CE) Specialist in Water Equity and Adaptation Policy. This position will provide regional and statewide leadership in water equity and adaptation policy and planning, with a focus on water quality, quantity, and access for disadvantaged urban and rural communities.

### **Position Description and Network:**

The CE specialist will have a doctoral degree (or international equivalent) related to water policy and planning, with demonstrated expertise and interest in climate adaptation and equity issues. Possible disciplinary backgrounds include: planning, public policy, community development, public health, economics, sociology, political science, environmental science, engineering, and geography.

The CE Specialist will be housed in the Luskin Center for Innovation (LCI), an endowed research center on the UCLA campus with 20+ affiliated faculty and 12 full-time staff within the School of Public Affairs. The LCI has a track record of maintaining rigorous, engaged and impactful water and climate adaptation research programs.

The LCI will facilitate partnerships between the CE Specialist and the regular collaborators that comprise its extensive multi-disciplinary networks. Within UCLA, these include the UCLA Water Resources Group, Department of Urban Planning, Sustainable LA Grand Challenge, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, and School of Public Health; across the UC system, partners include the California Institute for Water Resources and UC Nutrition Policy Institute, among others. Similarly, the appointee will work closely with state and local government agencies, such as the State Water Resources Control Board, OEHHA, Strategic Growth Council, IRWM DAC units funded by the Department of Water Resources, County of Los Angeles, and Community Water Systems, including LADWP. LCI supports and co-produces actionable knowledge a variety of non-profit and community-based organizations such as Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA, East Yards Environmental Justice Coalition, Liberty Hill, Leadership Council for Justice and Accountability, Community Water Center, the Pacific Institute, PPIC, and Mujeres de la Tierra. The appointee would collaborate with these and other local water and urban environmental justice groups.

### **Justification:**

This ANR call for positions represents a unique opportunity for UCLA and the Los Angeles region to build new capacity and strengthen existing ties with the ANR network. The proposed position at LCI advances at least three initiatives emphasized in the ANR 2025 Strategic Vision: water, family health, and ecosystems. LCI serves as a boundary actor between research, policy and advocacy communities in environmental equity in Southern California, and the state more broadly. The highly compatible engaged-research models and close alignment between LCI and ANR approaches, goals, and impacts, together indicate that an ANR CE Specialist housed with the LCI would be able to leverage both networks to maximize effectiveness and reach.

Multiple state and local agencies, including CalEPA, the State Water Board and LA County, individuals within UC ANR, and community organizations have explicitly expressed the need for an academic unit within the state system that has the capacity to provide more research-policy and planning support in the areas of water equity and water-climate adaptation issues in the Los Angeles Area, as proposed here. If awarded, the Specialist candidate and LCI would work alongside the newly-formed Berkeley and Kern County-based positions focused on water equity, allowing ANR to more fully meet the need across the state.

With the addition of the CE Specialist, LCI will be able to build collaboration with UCCE and scale up its ongoing efforts to directly inform the LA area and state's active policy design, implementation and evaluation efforts. In particular, these key priority areas are under-supported in the LA area: (1) drinking water system consolidation for sustainability and equity outcomes; (2) a "Just Transition for Water" Systems framework, including support for small water system source diversification and resilience to heat and fire events, and

addressing water-fire-growth planning concerns; (3) efforts to understand and enhance tap water trust and its relationship to health, especially among youth.

Additional areas of engaged research to support planning and policy efforts include: water affordability assistance, the Human Right to Sanitation, and equitable groundwater use in Southern California. The LCI co-director, Dr. Greg Pierce, recently launched a Human Right to Water (HRW) Solutions Lab to address a need for more research-policy and planning support on water equity and water-climate adaptation. The CE Specialist will enable LCI to make data and training resources collected or generated through HRW research more publicly available, usable, relevant and current, a request that LCI cannot adequately fulfill without further capacity. The CE Specialist would also provide practical support to and increase the visibility of other community, scholarly, and policy partner efforts in advancing HRW solutions. Publication outlets for this research include full-length reports, policy briefs and white papers, as well as academic journal articles.

#### **Extension activities:**

As noted above, the CE Specialist's objective will be to further foster a collaborative, multidisciplinary, cutting-edge research and extension program, similar to the model of UCLA LCI, with UCCE Advisors and Specialists as well as the UCLA community, local, and state stakeholders across sectors. The CE Specialist will partner with key stakeholders to inform equity and climate-centered water and planning work in the LA area communities and beyond. The CE Specialist will also act as a representative to link Southern California, ANR, and UC-wide water research and policy efforts.

The CE Specialist will be expected to produce rigorous, novel, policy-relevant research and prepare targeted policy briefs, reports and journal articles. Extension activities will also include development of workshops and webinars, collaborative symposia, and field visits for technical assistance and training. Outreach responsibilities include supporting local and state public agency planning processes, as appropriate, and making relevant data and resources publicly available and usable on LCI and UC ANR web portals.

#### **ANR Network:**

Building on current collaborations between LCI and units of ANR such as the California Institute for Water Resources and the Nutrition Policy Institute, the CE Specialist will work with and inform the broad UC ANR thematic areas of Water Resiliency and Urban Community Development. More particularly, the Specialist will interact and collaborate with ANR program team and workgroup experts in Water Resources, Climate Change (adaptation), and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice, the LA County office of UC Cooperative Extension, as well as additional cross-cutting initiatives such as Food, Water Security and Health. The Specialist would also contribute to the planned development of the ANR Hub for Urban Living at SCREC.

#### **Support and Expectations:**

UCLA will provide the CE Specialist with an office and sufficient computer laboratory space on campus, as well as a startup package for equipment, computers, and travel needs. With administrative support and training, the CE Specialist will be expected to develop partnerships within UCLA and especially LCI and Urban Planning researchers, UC ANR, and broader academic partner networks to secure extramural funding. Sources include: (1) state-level and local research funders with whom LCI has demonstrated particular success, such as the Water Board, DWR, SGC, LADWP, and LA County; (2) federal funders such as NSF, NIH, NOAA, EPA, and USGS; (3) various philanthropic sources.

#### **Developed and proposed by:**

This proposal was developed by Dr. Greg Pierce, Co-Director of both the Luskin Center for Innovation and Water Resources Group, and faculty member in the Department of Urban Planning. Within UCLA, Dr. Pierce collaborated with the Sustainable LA Grand Challenge and Dr. Bemmy Maharramli, Associate Director for Strategic Initiatives at the Center for Community Engagement. Within ANR, leaders in the Water Resiliency thematic area, program team members and workgroup experts in Water Resources, Climate Change (adaptation), LA County UCCE, and cross-cutting initiatives such as Food, Water Security and Health were consulted.