

Faculty Representative Dan Hare
Remarks to the Board of Regents on
The University of California's Fundamental Existential Question
July 2016

Thank you, Chair Lozano. These are my final remarks before I pass the Academic Senate gavel to Vice Chair Jim Chalfant. To wrap up my year, I want to speak about a question that I have thought about nearly every day that I have been Chair of the Senate. The question is, I think, fundamental to the future, even the existence, of the University of California. How do we fund a selective, high-quality public university out of the public treasury if the public treasury is not prepared to pay extra for quality?

In my 32 years as a faculty member, I have seen many changes. When I started, in 1984, the student faculty ratio Systemwide was about 17 to one. It was not possible to find data for my campus going back to 1984, but for 1990, the Systemwide student-faculty ratio was 18 to one and for my campus, Riverside, it was about 14 to one. In those days, UC Riverside advertised itself as a University with small classes in which students could get to know their professors and receive individual attention. That no longer is true, at Riverside or on any campus. Today, the systemwide student-faculty ratio is over 21 to one. At Riverside, according to campus data, the student faculty ratio has more than doubled from about 14 to one in 1990 to 29 to one today, now higher than the systemwide average.

Although the changes may have not been noticeable on short time scales, on reflection over 32 years, they have affected the quality of education that my colleagues and I have delivered in ways that are quite visible to us. In particular, the increases in the student-faculty ratio mirror my perception that UC faculty have less contact with students than before, something we become acutely aware of when they need letters of recommendation and we realize how much less opportunity we have had to get to know them. Additionally, many professors have moved away from essay or short-answer questions to machine-scored multiple-choice questions in examinations, because class sizes have increased but the time to grade all exams has not. We continue to oppose, though not always successfully, any reductions in teaching laboratories or other means for students to obtain practical experience in their chosen fields. Taken all together, I cannot say that UC today is able to offer today's students the same quality of education as we offered their parents.

Let us now consider changes in how much the University is funded for each student. In 1985, approximately 5.5% of the State's general fund expenditures were allocated to the University of California, whereas now, only about 2.8% of the State's general funds are allocated to the University of California. The chart before you shows that, since 1985, the State's portion of expenditures per student declined in inflation-adjusted dollars from about \$20,000 to \$7,780 today. This is more than a 60% reduction in state support. The increases in student tuition and UC contributions over the same time period made up less than half of that reduction, leaving the per-student average expenditures to decline over \$5,500 from about \$24,410 in inflation-adjusted dollars in 1985 to \$18,900 today. That savings over

the past 30 years might be celebrated as a gain of more than 20% in “efficiency”, by some, but I ask you to consider my earlier point about spending less time with students, larger class sizes, and what that represents about the hidden cost of appearing to become more efficient.

By the way, if you wanted project the linear trend line over past 30 years into the future, then you would predict that all State support for instruction would end in 2035, only 20 years away. But let us not try to look ahead 20 years, but only two or three years.

As you know, there has been much public debate about increasing enrollment of California residents at the University of California. Earlier in the Spring, the legislature considered several proposals to add anywhere from several thousand to several tens of thousands more California students over a relatively short period of time. We have already admitted 5,000 more California undergraduates than in 2014-15 for the Fall of 2016. I am sure you will be hearing about the consequences of taking on those additional students in the coming year. The current plan calls for UC to add 2,500 more California undergraduates in each of the two following years. But neither this year’s State budget nor promised funds for Fall 2017 support these new students at the full marginal cost, because the State is not contributing its historic share of \$10,000 per student. UC was required to make cuts elsewhere in order to make up the difference for this year’s new undergraduates and will need to do so again.

Obviously, this cannot continue indefinitely.

When I spoke to you about enrollment increases in January, I invited you to convert the currency from undergraduate students to campus equivalents, simply by dividing by 20,000, and reminded you that the additional 10,000 students we expect from 2016-17 through 2018-19 are equivalent to half of a medium-sized campus. I remind you of that once again, because even the full marginal cost of instruction per student does not purchase additional classrooms, teaching laboratories, or dormitories. All are essential if UC enrollments are expected to grow without further undermining the quality of a UC education. If we can’t maintain the marginal cost of instruction and also invest in new infrastructure, then I think we need to carefully consider to what type of education to which we are providing access as we expand enrollment. If we cannot maintain the quality of a UC education, then I ask, are we serving students well simply by providing more of them access to UC?

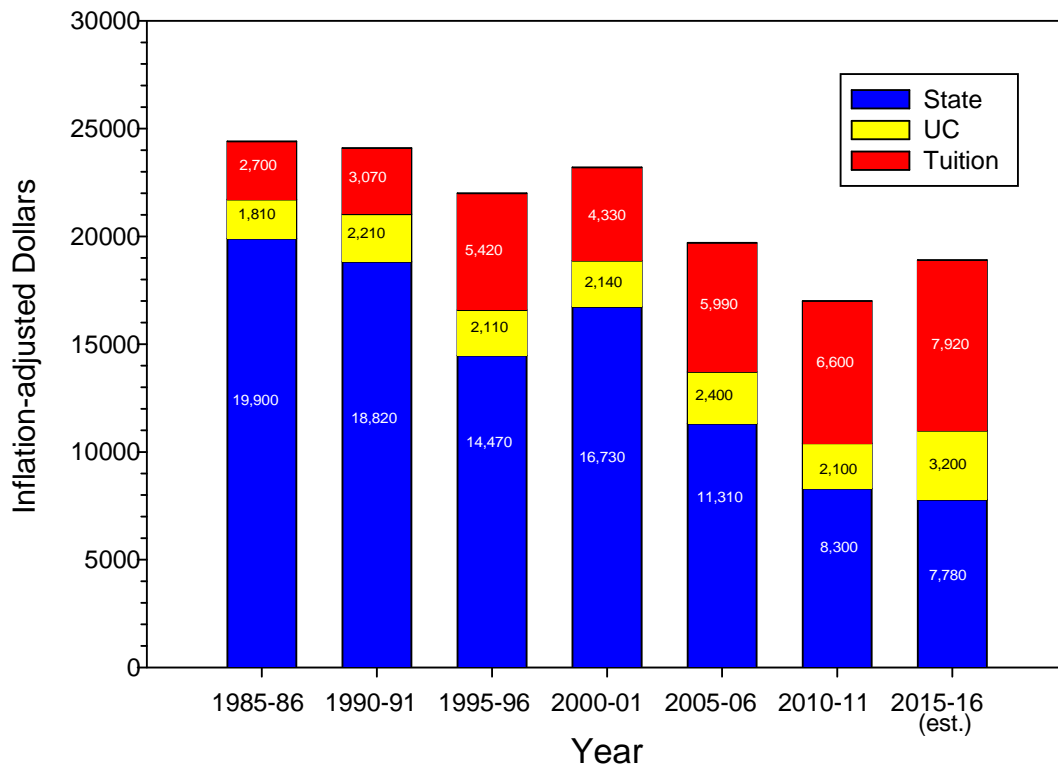
In March, I expressed my concerns that the reduced value of the 2016 Retirement plans may put greater pressure upon our already uncompetitive salaries, if we are to recruit and retain top-quality faculty. I note that the President takes this issue seriously, and I think it is necessary that the salary gap between UC and its competitors be addressed. If the gap is not addressed, then I ask you to think seriously about how UC can continue to offer a top-quality education if it is delivered by a future faculty who are at UC because they could not obtain better-paying positions elsewhere. Do not forget that we compete in a global market for our faculty, not just within California.

In closing, let me restate the fundamental existential question: How does one fund a selective, high-quality public university out of the public treasury if there is no desire to pay extra for quality? If you can

answer that question, then many of our current problems are solved. If you cannot, then we will be providing access to UC in name only. As you consider this existential problem, I know the Academic Senate will remain ready to contribute to a solution, but that solution begins with an acknowledgement of the consequences of the cuts in state funding over my UC career that I have described.

Chair Lozano, I thank you for the opportunity to present this one slide, and that concludes my remarks.

Per-Student Average Expenditures for Education



Source: UCOP Budget Analysis and Planning