OUTREACH: More Faculty Involvement Urged

A new faculty vision for outreach was the topic of a daylong conference sponsored jointly by the Academic Council and the Office of the President held in Oakland on November 7. Faculty members and administrators from across the UC system who are actively engaged in outreach initiatives participated, as well as President Robert Dynes and Provost C. Judson King.

The impetus for the conference came from discussions within the Academic Council last year that called for more faculty involvement in outreach given UC's current budgetary situation, and from the Strategic Review Panel's Report "Forging California's Future through Educational Partnerships" that was presented to the Regents in May. One of the key recommendations in that report was that educational outreach should be incorporated in the University's teaching and research mission and, as a consequence, involve faculty more directly in outreach efforts. How this might be accomplished was the main focus of the program.

In his opening remarks, President Dynes said that faculty are the intellectual core of the University and, as such, an invaluable resource for addressing societal issues. "Faculty have the academic credentials that will command attention, familiarity with the subject matter and with the skills students need for success, and a love of teaching because it makes a difference. This expertise could be a major force in closing the achievement gap," he said. Dynes noted that one critical barrier to faculty involvement in outreach is time away from research.

That outreach activities may not be recognized in the academic review process is a second critical barrier. As one of six panelists asked to discuss the continuing commitment of faculty in UC outreach, UC Regent Odessa Johnson said that faculty are not rewarded in the way that they should be. This was noted by the Strategic Review Panel in their report that educational outreach should be incorporated in the University's teaching and research mission and, as a consequence, involve faculty more directly in outreach efforts. How this might be accomplished was the main focus of the program.

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