

Faculty Representative Dan Hare
Remarks to the Board of Regents
September 2015

Thank you, Chair Lozano, President Napolitano, Regents and colleagues for this opportunity to speak as a Faculty Representative to the Regents. It is a privilege to follow Mary Gilly as Academic Senate Chair, and I look forward to continuing her successful efforts in shared governance. First, I want to introduce the current Academic Senate Vice-Chair, Jim Chalfant. Jim is an agricultural economist and has been a UC faculty member since 1983. He is one of the Senate's experts on faculty welfare and budgetary issues, chairing three different Senate committees, Faculty Welfare, Planning and Budget, and the Task Force on Investments and Retirement over the last decade. He also serves on the UCRS Advisory Board. Jim also served on the finance work group of the President's Task Force on Post-Employment Benefits and the President's Task Force on Rebenchmarking.

For my first remarks to the Board, I want to build upon some of the previous themes that Chair Gilly discussed last year. In March, you heard how closely research and teaching are intertwined, so that it is a mistake to assume that research is a distraction from teaching. In May, you heard about how UC values excellence, and how that excellence needs to be preserved. In July, you heard how frequently and rigorously faculty members are evaluated after receiving tenure. The latest UC Accountability Report shows, once again, that no other public institution can claim as distinguished a group of faculty members as the University of California. According to that report, UC faculty members have won 62 Nobel prizes and 67 National Medals of Science. They include nearly 600 members of the National Academy of Sciences and over 500 members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

My goal today is to discuss how someone prepares to become a UC faculty member and what UC looks for in selecting its new faculty. It is neither quick nor easy to become qualified for a UC faculty position; in fact it requires a long apprenticeship. The average age for assistant professors starting their careers at UC is 36. 36! Because most undergraduates receive their Bachelor's degree when they are 22, you might ask yourselves how those potential faculty members spend those 14 years.

I will try to answer that question from my perspective as a faculty member in a STEM field. Most PhD students now spend five or more years in graduate school. They usually take classes during the first two years, then develop and complete a novel research project, analyze their data, and write their dissertation. They often work as teaching assistants, bringing their experience in research directly to undergraduate students in office hours and discussion

sections. As they near PhD completion, many also contact leading researchers in their fields at other universities about postdoc positions and begin writing grant proposals to support their postdoctoral research. New assistant professors often have two postdoctoral appointments of about three year's duration each before starting at UC. Together, graduate study and postdoctoral training account for that 14-year apprenticeship. Note that pay for such academic apprenticeships is low. Graduate student stipends average approximately \$22,000 per year; postdoctoral researchers receive approximately \$43,000 per year. These numbers lend credence to the statement that "a graduate student is someone who works long hours for low pay in order to become qualified for another position with long hours and low pay."

Obviously, the path to a UC assistant professorship isn't for everyone. Relative to those who pursue professional degrees in business, law, or the health professions, the academic apprenticeship is longer, and salaries are lower. In particular, some of our best students are from underrepresented minority groups and would make the UC faculty more diverse; if their family finances are strained, they can do much better financially in a professional degree program instead of a PhD program. A recent National Science Foundation study reveals that even if those students do enter an academic graduate program, they increasingly are lured from the path to an assistant professorship by higher salaries in the private sector.

Other than persistence, what do we look for in those who do apply for a position as an Assistant Professor? When we review applications, we look for evidence that the research for the degree was innovative and has the potential to advance the candidate's field as well as improve our understanding. The application should demonstrate the potential for additional important and novel research. It should show that the candidate conceived and designed the research as well as performing it. In fields where extramural grant support would be expected, we also look for evidence that the candidate contributed to funding the research by obtaining intramural grants or helping prepare grant proposals to extramural funding agencies. Candidates must also offer evidence of teaching ability through a documented history of mentoring undergraduates.

Why would someone choose a career path with such a long apprenticeship? As a faculty member, I can speak to the rewards. We seek the opportunity to pursue fascinating research questions, to enjoy the thrill of making novel discoveries, to pass on our enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge to our students, and to demonstrate that we can fund that research on our own initiative. And, yes, we also seek financial security for ourselves and our families. Historically, UC has provided its faculty with stable resources that guarantee us these opportunities, and that guarantee over a full career is undeniably the reason behind UC's excellence. UC faculty members generally have not used their faculty position as a stepping-stone to another, better-paying position elsewhere. Instead, most UC faculty members spend

just over 30 years at the University and retire in their late 60's after dedicating their careers to achievements at UC.

The current political climate threatens to undermine the continued development and retention of such a distinguished faculty. It surely would be possible to hire less expensive adjunct professors and temporary lecturers to competently guide students through material presented in textbooks, but these would not be the faculty whose research would be incorporated into the text books. Nor would these be the faculty that would be elected to prestigious learned societies because of the value and significance of their research. As Regents, I hope that you share the faculty's vision of UC as the world's greatest public research university. It takes constant effort to maintain that status, and I urge you to think carefully about what we need to sustain that reputation.

At the last meeting, you heard that the most recent study of total remuneration for faculty found that UC continues to fall below its market comparators. That study was completed before we knew that UC would be obliged to change its retirement options for the second time in three years. The faculty representatives on the Retirement Options Task Force will work to minimize the impact of any new plans on both the competitiveness of UC's total remuneration of active faculty members and the economic welfare of future retired faculty members. Any reduction in either surely will have consequences for the ability of UC to build and retain a future faculty that is as distinguished as the current faculty. As recommendations are brought forward in early 2016, I encourage the Regents to carefully consider not only the budgetary cost of future retirement options, but also their impact on how faculty behave in terms of recruitment and retention. If we are not careful, small budgetary savings will risk far greater costs to the University, our students, and the citizens of California.

Chair Lozano, this concludes my remarks.