

**Remarks to the UC Board of Regents**

Susan Cochran, Chair of the Academic Senate

July 19, 2023

Thank you, Chair Leib, and a good morning to everyone. A little more than a year ago the U.S. Supreme Court in *Dobbs v. Jackson* turned the clock back to the 1960's for women in America. In June of this year, the same Court resolved a case involving two competing interests--a right to equal opportunities for same-sex couples vs. a right to free speech for a web designer who had never been asked to do the work that troubled her. The Court decided in favor of the web designer decreeing that the state cannot "compel an artist to speak or stay silent." In a third case, as President Drake just mentioned, the Court ruled against considering an applicant's race alone in higher education admissions. The Court, however, also opined that universities can still consider the merits of applicants' discussions of the matter of their own race in terms of "challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned." In other words, comprehensive admission review as it is practiced at the University of California has survived.

Social cohesion is spun from three threads: hope, trust, and reciprocity, all of which seem to have been in short supply for the last few years. In a country where opinions have now decamped into opposing and demonized forces, any proposal for moving forward together is readily perceived as one of invidious intent. Fortunately, higher education is a known promoter of social cohesion—the very things we teach and do tend to foster tolerance and informed debate. I doubt I am alone in believing that, given recent events in Washington DC, we in this room need to double down on our commitment to the mission of the University of California.

This year, the faculty have. Despite three years of pandemic-driven isolation and a labor strike in the fall, the faculty have joined with students, staff, and administrators to rebuild our rich community of scholars. Research programs are up and humming. Faculty are increasingly putting in their personnel files for merit and promotion review—which is a sure sign of renewed scholarship and accomplishments. We are writing grants and papers, filing for patents, and creating new showings of our work in venues near and far. Some of us are taking long-delayed sabbaticals to finish up work sidelined by the pandemic, to enrich our skills and creativity, or to weave denser scholarly networks that are the nurseries for innovation. We are also shepherding along our undergraduate and graduate students and post-docs so that they too can launch into a world that will greatly benefit from their coming contributions. This is a much needed season in our post-pandemic healing and renewal.

Concomitantly, we know our students are not the same as before the pandemic. We can see it in the classrooms and our labs. They, too, are healing from *their* pandemic scars, and will continue to do so for many years to come. There has been learning loss and students have had to learn or relearn how to thrive within our academic community.

Last year was also a productive and reinvigorating year for the Academic Senate. Faculty joined with the administration to sprint their way toward the goals set out in the Climate Memorial passed by the Senate and presented to the Regents by President Drake a year ago.

In response to State Assembly Bill 928, the Academic Senate also joined arm in arm with our counterparts from the Academic Senates at the California Community Colleges and California State University to create a new general education pathway for community college students seeking to

transfer to the CSU or UC. The Cal-GETC, as it is known, will provide transfer students with clear guidance on what they need to do while in community college to finish general education requirements for their bachelor's degree. This will simplify transfer.

The Academic Senate also partnered with our administrative colleagues in Graduate, Undergraduate and Equity Affairs to propose a new systemwide admission guarantee for transfer students: Complete the Cal-GETC, complete preparation for 1 of the 20 most sought-after undergraduate majors at UC with a minimum GPA and we will guarantee a place for you at the University of California. We await the outcome of our offer from the Governor's Office and Sacramento.

Looking forward to next year, we already know some of the issues the Senate will be tackling. One lies in the world of transfer. The statewide AB 928 Implementation Committee will be making key recommendations to the Legislature on how to restructure community college preparation for transfer to CSU and UC.

We also anticipate the Senate's Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (or BOARS) will continue its work on developing a proposal for a new ethnic studies course requirement among the A-G subject areas for freshman admissions. In 2030, *all* California public high school graduates will be required to complete at least one semester of ethnic studies. UC has an opportunity here to provide guidance within the existing A-G course framework. Implementing a requirement of our own and clarifying how an ethnic studies course might foster college preparation for *all* students will support high school educators in designing how these courses are taught. The path to developing a new admissions requirement is long with many more steps to go, including Regental approval.

Finally, we expect there will be work to do in the online course offerings space. This past year the faculty Senate modernized the longstanding campus residency requirement to create more flexibility for undergraduates, including those who have stopped out and might be trying to finish their degree. These changes also created an opportunity for the development of online majors. UC Santa Cruz now boasts the first fully approved online major in the UC system—Creative Technologies—a program that was discussed here at a Regents meeting some time back.

As this is my last opportunity to address the Board as chair of the Academic Senate, let me say that I am grateful to Chair Leib, President Drake, and all members of the Board for your indulgence of my comments over this last year. While the 2022-23 academic year may have felt at times like we all somehow checked in to the Hotel California, we are not the Hotel California. We are the University of California and to quote the poet Richard Lovelace, "Minds innocent and quiet take that for a Hermitage."

Thank you, Chair Leib. That concludes my remarks.