



Remarks to the UC Board of Regents

Ahmet Palazoglu, Chair of the Academic Senate

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Good afternoon, Regents, President Milliken, faculty, students, staff, and all members of the University of California community.

When one clicks on the web link for University of California, the message on the landing page states: “Our mission: Improving lives. The nation’s leading public university is dedicated to solving problems that matter to you.”

That is a promise, indeed, a public contract, that the University of California is deeply committed to and passionate about.

The UC faculty’s mission is based on the tripartite pillars of teaching, research and creative activities, and public service. That’s largely how the University’s contract is executed.

Underneath the pillars is the inherent curiosity that contests existing norms and pushes boundaries to offer solutions and innovation pathways for grand challenges that the world faces, to offer new perspectives to re-imagine ourselves and society.

Research at the University of California fulfills the public contract not just by inspiring and problem solving but also by educating and mentoring the future workforce, and by driving policy and social discourse on issues that affect us all.

When UC's research mission is disrupted, our ability to meet the expectations of this contract is also disrupted. Our cybersecurity stance becomes vulnerable, a symphony goes unfinished, searching for a cure for Alzheimer's disease slows down, social justice remedies to inequality are obstructed, farming communities wait longer for sustainable water use practices, doomsday clock moves closer to midnight.

Termination and suspension of federal research grants have already created a temporary disruption for some and a permanent one for others. Our research staff lost their positions; our students had to prolong their progress toward their degrees. Faculty had to navigate a chaotic funding environment, struggling to maintain the research mission.

With the ever-increasing labor costs, we have also seen a troubling trend in the number of graduate students who can be supported via faculty grant awards. As a result, more cohorts of doctoral students have been de-stabilized, with many departments and programs needing to manage their graduate student enrollments differently.

Given all these key points of consideration, one could reach the conclusion that a fundamental change is afoot and a moderated research presence and diminished impact will be the new normal for UC. I do not accept that outcome. WE should not accept that outcome.

I believe that the UC community has the agency to design a future that would not only preserve the public contract but also create a resilient way forward for our teaching, our research and creative

activities, and serving the needs and the ambitions of California and beyond.

The success of state Senate Bill 895, with Senator Scott Wiener as the lead author to create the California Foundation for Science and Health Research, would certainly be transformative. President Milliken announced that UC is co-sponsoring this bond measure on the November ballot, recognizing and underscoring how an investment in the research enterprise is fundamental to the University's future. If SB 895 passes, it will be a strong statement by the citizens of our great state to reaffirm their belief in and support of research that transforms their lives and their communities.

Yet ultimately, it is our collective responsibility as faculty, administration, and the Regents to find ways to sustain our research mission and recommit to our role and destiny as the leading university in the world. As we share the governance of the University, we share the challenges and the successes, we share the pain and the hope, and we share the cost and the return. Thus, we all share this responsibility.

Today, we are at a crossroads in higher education and education more broadly. Education is critical thinking, freedom of inquiry, creativity, liberating of the mind, and most importantly, it is our promise to future generations. UC faculty throughout the system are ready to face the challenge and lead the way. THAT is our public contract.

As former UC President Clark Kerr said in the first volume of his personal memoir, *The Gold and the Blue*, "As goes education, so goes the future of the state of California."

