

Academic Senate Chair Shane White
Remarks to the University of California Board of Regents
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Reinvestment and Alignment are where the University and State must go.

The distinctive mission of the University of California is to serve society as a center of higher learning, providing long-term societal benefits through transmitting advanced knowledge, discovering new knowledge, and functioning as an active working repository of organized knowledge. That obligation, more specifically, includes undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, research, and other kinds of public service, which are shaped and bounded by the central pervasive task of discovering and advancing knowledge. Our mission, thus described in The University of California Academic Plan 1974-1978, is enacted on our campuses through teaching, research and public service. The responsibility for this mission was endowed upon us by one of the truly great documents of our time: A Master Plan for Higher Education in California 1960-1975. The California Education Code, dating from 1976, explicitly demands that the University provide access, quality teaching and programs of excellence, educational equity, and a broad responsibility to the public interest, through our differentiated educational and research mission.

Where do we find ourselves now? Instructional support per student has dropped dramatically in a decade; enrollment has expanded dramatically; “state legislatures are besieged by pressures to meet social needs with high priorities”; “This means that the University must make special efforts to use its resources as widely and efficiently as possible... the need for a highly educated citizenry is as important as many other social goals and that the University will return invaluable economic and social benefits in exchange for the State’s investment”. That scenario and those words were from the 1974 University of California Academic Plan, a self-study prompted by Governor Jerry Brown.

Progress was made then, but it took State reinvestment and some years. Together, let progress be made again. “What can be done? ...the courage to demand more, to demand a public education that is the best in the World.” The answer is a University of California aligned with the State for the youth and people of the State.

We have the most diverse student body in our history. We have more fiscally disadvantaged students than ever before. We have more first generation students than ever before. In these ways we far surpass every other university in the Nation, but this unprecedented access is not enough; we have more to do. We must better reach all the youth of California, to let them know that we want them, to better connect with them in their high schools and in their Community Colleges, to better support their admission routes, to better support their experiences in the classroom and in their lives about our campuses. We must also build a better undergraduate – graduate – postdoctoral – faculty diversity pipeline; the Presidential Postdoctoral Fellows Program must be scaled up.

We, the faculty are engaged in the unending work of improving the admissions process for all. Currently, we are rising to the challenges of building upon the successes of the Transfer Pathways in preparing applicants, to link defined preparatory success to a guarantee. In such ways, the faculty is aligned with

the State's demand for access, equity, and responsibility to the public interest. The University enrolled the largest classes of transfer students in its 150 year history during each of the past two admission cycles. These increases were recorded across the system, but notably at our most selective campuses; in addition, the University increased the proportion of transfer students who are from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups by 24 % in the past 5 years; we also are encouraged by the positive growth in enrollments of transfer students from virtually every region of the State since 2015, with especially strong increases from the Central Valley, Inland Empire and Central Coast. This work, this trajectory will continue.

There are only two major sources of instructional support, tuition and State support; the State needs to support access and teaching. Student tuition is a higher barrier than ever before. It is one thing to admit a student who has travelled a journey and earned that right, but that student should not then be shortchanged by overcrowding, crumbling infrastructure, and the worst faculty to student ratio in our history. This generation, the most diverse ever, must not be given a lesser education than their predecessors. The University has effectively been living on debt, our capital liabilities have grown as current campus operations have been prioritized, but this path is not sustainable. The State has abdicated its capital responsibility for infrastructure; a new bond issue is long overdue. A student experiencing overcrowding, overflowing classes, impacted majors, lines for mental health services, waiting lists for dorms, and deferred maintenance in the raw, sure may not appreciate that what they are experiencing is the tip of the iceberg, but that is what it is – our operational and capital underfunding must not drag future generations down. By all measures, internal and external, it is time for the State to align itself with its righteous mandates and reinvest. But, not only to reinvest, to also respect the autonomy and independence of the University, which responds by accepting the obligations and opportunities of its public trust through accountability, the ultimate responsibility of this Board. It is time to release the University from line-item appropriations to its central core.

The Academic Senate has challenged the central University Administration to more closely align itself with our Mission. The Senate has recommended that to improve clarity, focus and accountability that the current UCOP devolve itself into two separate entities. One unit of Governance to comprise of the Office of the Board of Regents, the President's Executive Office, and the Office of the Academic Senate; and a second much larger unit, that of Systemwide Operations and Programs to support the academic mission of teaching, research and service, as implemented on the campuses. Currently all UCOP Divisions report directly to the President, and a few dually report to the Board of Regents; we recommend that all Divisions now follow a dotted line reporting structure to the systemwide Provost, the officer with delegated responsibility for the Mission, to ensure that the primacy of the Mission be considered in all major initiatives or responses. Additional consolidation and strengthened reporting will also improve efficiency and accountability. These recommendations promote alignment of the center with our Mission.

We are a partnership of the people, by the people and for the people of California. That must not be forgotten as we realign and reinvest. Enable the University to provide access, quality teaching and programs of excellence, educational equity, to fulfil our broad responsibility to the public interest, through our differentiated educational and research mission.