

## **Senate Chair Remarks to the UC Board of Regents**

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Good morning Regents, and a shout out to Regent Leib, my fellow San Diegan who is now leading the Board.

This is the fourth time I have addressed you. Mostly, I have found it pretty straightforward to put remarks together. Not this time. The words have not flowed easily. I'm tired. We may be coming out of the pandemic, but it's been two years of struggle keeping the University operational and keeping our own individual selves together. Students are fried; staff and administrators are fried; faculty are fried; I suspect even Regents are fried.

That we face a climate crisis, we watch one of our political parties becoming essentially authoritarian, and now witness a brutal military invasion in Eastern Europe only adds to the sense of things spinning out of control.

And though we have coped and done pretty remarkable maintenance work vis-à-vis the UC, the problems of the institution don't go away. Indeed, new ones seem to appear on the horizon every week.

While I am heartened that the Legislature has resolved the CEQA challenge to enrollment growth – and I, too, salute the efforts of President Drake, Chancellor Christ, Regents, and folks at UCOP who worked hard on this issue – CEQA merely underscores the many forces at work that threaten to unravel the social contract at the UC.

Let me address last month's incident at UCLA. Disabled students, worried about Covid and frustrated that they have found it difficult to secure needed educational accommodations, occupied the Chancellor's complex for more than two weeks. Among other things, they called for the universal mandatory recording of courses. They also called for mandatory universal and permanent dual modality instruction, in which faculty teach students both in the classroom and either online simultaneously or by recordings for asynchronous viewing.

Faculty understand that the Americans with Disabilities Act is a powerful and righteous law, one that strives to guarantee equal access for those who need it. The law overcomes any abstract assertion of faculty academic freedom. But ADA accommodations are granted on an individualized, case-by-case basis according to need,

not preference. The UCLA students' call would expand accommodations well beyond disabled individuals, beyond the ADA and beyond the spirit of the law.

The mandatory recording of courses raises very serious issues that may not be apparent at first blush. These include violations of privacy, for both students and faculty, and can have chilling effects in the educational setting. Once a class is recorded no one knows where the recording goes. Bad actors can – and do – use classroom comments to go after students and professors in social media attacks.

For students who hail from authoritarian countries, classroom remarks may put them and their families in physical danger. This creates the conditions for students and professors to self-censor and withdraw from classroom participation, which, in turn, undermines the educational process.

At the broadest level, mandatory recording intrudes on faculty judgment on the best way to conduct pedagogy.

The students' demand for mandatory dual modality instruction is of a piece and has spread beyond UCLA to the other campuses. As demonstrated at UCLA, Academic Senate leaders are open to dialogue with students and campus administrators on how to accommodate disabled students and how to work with campus disabilities offices. Faculty are committed to their students' success. But faculty are at a breaking point after shouldering the burdens of teaching under the conditions of the pandemic.

Faculty who have taught in dual modality attest that doing so is more than double the work of teaching a course in a single modality, be it online or in-person.

Look around this room. We are conducting this meeting in hybrid fashion. There are extra cameras, there are several individuals filming and recording, we have extra screens so the Chairs can manage the room. Now imagine doing this with no extra cameras, no extra staff, and only a laptop screen to view the distant participants – *that* is the current reality of hybrid teaching at the UC.

And many faculty testify that the effort is not worth it pedagogically; learning outcomes are not improved. Indeed, data are beginning to show, and many UC faculty report, that remote or online instruction is not a particularly effective pedagogical modality. As we saw in last year's faculty survey, about which then-Senate chair Mary Gouvain and I reported at Regents, a large percentage of faculty who taught remotely during the pandemic testified that learning outcomes were much worse than with in-person instruction.

While some of this might be attributed to the effects of a pandemic and all the upheaval that it caused, it is the case that emergency remote instruction and planned-for online instruction share many common properties. After two years of teaching under the conditions of Covid, in which faculty experimented and innovated pedagogically, the distinction between remote and online instruction is today vanishingly slight.

The current discourse around instruction strikes faculty as inappropriately market-oriented. It is a narrative that conceptualizes students as consumers and faculty as needing to tailor their teaching expectations to meet consumer demands. This approach disregards the authority of the faculty as experts in pedagogy. Faculty know that instruction is not simply the transmission of information over a wire, but a matter of interaction and participation.

Want to know how to fix your toilet? Go watch a YouTube video. Want to understand the history of sewage, disease, and cultural notions of disgust? Or perhaps study how properly recycled night soils can support climate resilience? Or learn the derivation of the phrase “going to the john?” Take a real course with a UC professor. Faculty know that the value of a UC degree derives from the student’s experience on a UC campus learning with faculty and other students in classrooms, labs, performance spaces, and other campus settings – even johns.

If campus administrations want faculty to teach in dual modality they have to provide the resources for it. At UCLA, the administration did not want to have that conversation. Given that dual modality instruction is twice the work, crudely that means doubling the faculty. I’m serious. Without additional investment in resources and the hiring of more faculty to provide this individualized consumer mode of instruction, the University is diverting a faculty hired to conduct research, teach, and engage in public service in favor of a very time-consuming effort in instruction alone. This is not consistent with the comprehensive needs of an R-1 University system; it subjugates two of our missions when all three must be valued equally.

In short, too much time and attention have been devoted to the instruction side of the core mission and not enough to research. As I have shared in previous meetings, it is increasingly hard to engage in research under current conditions. The financial accounting systems – crucial for grant application and reporting – are a nightmare on some campuses. There aren’t nearly enough student-and-faculty-facing staff in general, and those that remain increasingly lobby to work from home where, inevitably, they are less available for consultation. Not only is there is a dearth of fund managers (previously

known as contracts and grants officers), they often work from out of state and in different time zones, so are hard to engage.

The faculty successfully pivoted to intensive remote instruction during the pandemic. But they can't sustain this amount of effort. They are exhausted and feel unsupported. Younger faculty especially feel that no one has their backs. Without tenure, they don't feel safe to complain about expansive expectations for instructional engagement; they worry they will not get their next promotion, which is heavily dependent on excellence in research accomplishments. They are looking around for other jobs. The devalued pension tier isn't good enough anymore to keep their loyalty.

The pandemic has come close to rending the structures that enable students, faculty, staff, and campus administrations to support the social contract that provides the foundation for UC's success. That social contract has made the University of California the envy of the world. We are a *public* university and yet we are also a powerful research engine that rivals many of our private competitors who have far deeper pockets and few mandates to serve society at large. We have succeeded not by breaking into factions, but by learning to pull together and meld our many strengths.

Unfortunately, many are proposing largely individualized solutions that threaten to undermine the integrity of the UC as we know it. We need to reestablish mutual obligations and commitments. We need to remake the social contract within our institution. Perhaps the first step in this is to recognize that no segment of the University is responsible for meeting the individualized desires of another segment. All of us, students, staff, administrators – and yes, faculty – deserve to have our welfare fully considered as we plan our way forward.

Thank you. Chair Leib, this concludes my remarks.