



Remarks to the UC Board of Regents

Steven W. Cheung, Chair of the Academic Senate

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Good morning, Regents, President Drake, faculty, students, staff, and other members of the University of California community. It is spring at the University, a season of senior leadership transition and renewal, for the Office of the President, as well as the Santa Barbara and Riverside campuses. Search committees have been working diligently to recruit the very best talent to assume the critical roles at each of those locations. The Academic Senate has been doing its part in the careful selection of successors to President Drake and Chancellors Yang and Wilcox. I look forward to welcoming the new leaders over the summer and fall and extend heartfelt thanks to the three remarkable outgoing leaders who have devoted their professional lives to the University. I wish them fulfillment and happiness in their next chapters.

For President Drake, this is his final Regents meeting as an ex officio Regent. For me, this is my final Regents meeting with President Drake as ex officio President of the Academic Senate. I serve as ex officio Vice President of the Academic Senate, doubling as its Chair. Professor Doctor Drake has been a dedicated servant leader of the University for roughly four decades. The only break in his long service record is an interval of geographic confusion that benefited the great state of Ohio. President Drake is a champion of shared governance, exemplified by his sincere willingness to consult the Academic Senate on all academic matters, and to consider faculty sentiments on many other matters that materially impact the University. Several of his recent decisions are emblematic of his thoughtful and responsive leadership style. These include

supporting a joint Senate-administration study on a common academic calendar without prejudgment; extending the examination of fully online undergraduate degree programs to allow development of robust assessments; delivering additional home purchase assistance to the faculty through the University's Mortgage Origination Program; and supporting faculty salary adjustments, wherever possible, to further narrow the compensation gap in comparison with our peer institutions. I often think of our partnership in provincial terms as the "eyes and ears" of the University. President Drake does ophthalmological visioning informed by my otological listening. Yet, it is hardly the case that President Drake does not listen. Rather, it is the importance he places on hearing the voices of the faculty. I am optimistic that President-designee Milliken and incoming Senate Chair Palazoglu will build on our reinvigorated shared governance practices to address significant challenges that lie ahead.

Those challenges will likely only intensify given the continuing volleys of chaos loosed upon higher education. Our UC community has remained steadfast in carrying out the mission of the University in the inseparable areas of teaching and mentoring, research and innovation, and service for the public good. However, propagative stress and inventive assaults have already deformed our institution. We find the University operating in an environment of manufactured austerity. Our once reliable compact with federal sponsors of research and education for well over half a century has been turned on its head. Stop work orders, grant award cancellations, program terminations, infrastructure retrenchments, and looming deep budget cuts are expected to have an enduring impact well beyond any overnight miracle. With the loss of human talent, rebuilding in the aftermath of longstanding programs decimation will take several years at best. There is no escape from hard landings and tough choices at this research-intensive public University long supported by extramural funding.

The challenges the University now faces are being addressed by both the Academic Senate and the administration. Standing Senate committees and, in particular, the special Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions or UCAD, have been meeting frequently. The conversations are converging on at least three time-sensitive actions to mitigate harm. The first is to narrow the University's funding gap stemming from federal and state resource shortfalls. The Academic Council supports the administration's proposal to slightly extend the time to full UC Retirement Plan funding in favor of retaining liquidity for campus and health operations. The second is to adopt situational flexibility in the academic personnel review process for faculty promotion and advancement. Faculty research grant awards from a wide range of federal agencies have been abruptly terminated, effectively halting peer-reviewed scholarly work in progress. For those affected faculty, there needs to be a clear and consistently applied method to recognize that academic productivity may be lower than expected because the opportunities to perform research have been disrupted. The third is institutional funding support for students and faculty whose federally funded areas of research have been deemed to be no longer a White House priority. A more orderly wind-down of research projects would enable students to have a brief period of relief for planning their future career moves. Similarly, short-term and bridge funding opportunities for faculty who choose to retool and redirect their research focus would assist with self-determined career adaptations and transformations.

Raising money to support vulnerable students and faculty is certainly worthwhile undertaking. While public funding sources are unrealistic in the current environment, private philanthropic sources — supporters from both within and beyond the University community — may be called upon to make a difference at this critical juncture. Some of our campuses have already begun moving in this direction, and I hope more will follow suit. The Academic Senate stands ready to join with the administration and the Regents in defense of the University.