



## 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.

First, I would like to welcome Regents Areias, Dominguez, Hueston and Robertson to the Board of Regents. Academic Senate is looking forward to working with you for many years to come. I also would like to thank Chair Reilly for her consequential leadership of the Board and her genuine partnership with the Academic Senate. Thank you.

Back in March, I concluded my remarks to the Board with a quote from former UC President Clark Kerr's first volume of his personal memoir, *The Gold and the Blue*, which said, "As goes education, so goes the future of the state of California."

President Kerr actually made that statement on August 24, 1999, as he finished his testimony to the California Legislature's Joint Committee to develop a *Master Plan for Education – Kindergarten through University*. This Joint Committee, chaired by Senator Alpert, was tasked with replacing the 1960 Master Plan, at its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While a new plan never materialized as several committee members declined to sign the report and its recommendations, there are a number of observations that one can draw from the debates, President Kerr's testimony, and UC's response to the committee's deliberations.

President Kerr noted that the 1960 Master Plan was envisioned as a 15-year plan to help prepare the state's education system for the so-called "Tidal Wave" of 600,000 more students expected to enroll in higher education within a decade. Fast forward to today, and we find the Master Plan frequently referenced as the groundbreaking blueprint for the UC, CSU, and California Community College systems. It clearly continues to define the tripartite higher education landscape in California.

Senator Alpert's Joint Committee was one of many attempts to review and replace the Master Plan over the years. All such reviews and related legislative actions have sought or resulted in incremental changes to the Master Plan, questioning but not fundamentally altering the missions of the three public higher education segments.

Since 1960, student enrollment "Tidal Waves" have come and gone. State demographics have changed. We suffered through and survived recessions; some of us worse off than others. The boom-and-bust cycles of State budgets are almost predictable now. California keeps innovating and introducing new technologies, demanding a commensurate workforce. Without any doubt, AI will be a hugely transformative force in our society, raising more questions than providing immediate answers about the future of humanity. Public perception of U.S. higher education is at an all-time low, with our citizens challenging the value of a college degree. Given this context: Is this the time we finally discuss, debate, and design a new Master Plan for Education in California?

In April 2002, a report titled *A Perspective on Developing a New Master Plan* was delivered to the Joint Committee. In that report, the UC Senate-Administration Master Plan Advisory Group, chaired by

then-UC Davis Chancellor Larry Vanderhoef, affirmed that “[t]he University of California recognizes the reciprocal links that bind together its future with the quality of public elementary and secondary education in the state.” Such sentiment still rings true today. It also points to the need to work in partnership across the education segments to reshape the plan in ways that benefit students progressing through the pipeline.

California students, families, and institutions alike are harmed if college readiness is obliquely defined and poorly assessed. What is meant by success gets blurred, and any negative student experiences may lead to anxiety and frustration. K-12 and higher education together are responsible for establishing and executing measures for college readiness, and a strong partnership is essential to evaluate and redefine, as needed, the standards for college preparation. In addition, a solid and streamlined transfer pathway from community colleges to four-year institutions provides yet another vital option for many students. Recent strides that UC, CSU, and community colleges have made in transfer alignment and the collaborative spirit with which the Academic Senates of the three segments pursued the ongoing Common Course Numbering (CCN) initiative should be acknowledged as a powerful push towards ensuring student success.

UC leaders from both the Academic Senate and administration for the past several months have been engaged in joint efforts to reimagine the future of the University in response to short-term disruptions and long-term structural challenges. As we consider how best to deliver our missions of research, teaching, and service in a new higher education landscape, the Academic Senate should be deeply involved in any deliberations about the role of UC in

serving the state, including how UC would rethink and implement a new Master Plan.

Our state's investment in education must be rational, deliberate, and robust. The total cost of education must be articulated and codified in the new Master Plan as a fundamental driver for funding streams. The 1960 Plan explicitly outlined the infrastructure needs to accommodate the initial student "Tidal Wave." Nowadays, following years of neglect, the urgency to build new facilities and modernize the existing ones is even greater to provide the quality of education that all the segments are capable of.

Bond measures such as the one led by State Senator Wiener are critical for sustaining California as the research powerhouse it is and will help UC preserve its research central to protecting jobs, advancing climate research vital to our state's agricultural enterprise, and supporting life-saving medical innovations for our communities. Accordingly, the new Master Plan has to recognize and commit to funding academic research, graduate student training and mentoring, and to support professional degree programs that will benefit California and beyond.

Creating the workforce of the future and shaping and supporting the very industries that have made California the 4<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world is a responsibility for this generation. It can be done by firmly embracing the principles of equity, affordability, and excellence.

Developing the new Master Plan will require a political masterstroke; the new plan will have to be masterfully crafted and executed; and the product would have to be a strategic educational masterpiece.

The citizens of the great state of California deserve no less.