



Remarks to the UC Board of Regents

Ahmet Palazoglu, Chair of the Academic Senate

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

It feels good to be back in UCLA. And it is also very timely and significant. Since the last meeting of the Board of Regents here, we have witnessed an all-out assault on the mission and the values of this precious campus and as a proxy to upending what the University of California stands for. The demands by the U.S. Department of Justice recently made public threaten the heart and soul of this institution and I am not alone when I say that we stand by and fully support our colleagues and friends at UCLA.

This is especially true coming on the heels of the positive outcome of the lawsuit in which the presiding judge issued a preliminary injunction barring the Trump administration from imposing fines or withholding federal grants to the University of California. We acknowledge the efforts of a remarkable coalition involving the American Association of University Professors, all 10 campus Faculty Associations, multiple unions representing over a hundred thousand UC employees, with 25 student organizations filing an amicus brief in support.

Academic Council, the executive body of the systemwide Academic Senate, issued a statement on October 3 that affirms the Council's opposition to any agreement with the federal government that would

compromise the University of California's institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The statement declared, and I quote, "There can be no clearer attack on academic freedom than an attempt to dictate curricular content, research priorities, hiring decisions, and admissions standards. While the financial penalties threatened by the federal government would in effect radically curtail UC's future, acquiescing in the idea that academic freedom, governance, and mission are negotiable would be equally ruinous."

It was gratifying to receive President Milliken's letter in response to the Academic Council Statement which assured us that he shares the Council's objection to any outside interference in the academic freedom, governance, and mission of the University.

The Council statement also underscored the Academic Senate's expectation of meaningful participation in any discussions concerning a potential settlement with the federal government.

This unity of purpose and conviction will help us get through arguably one of the most challenging periods in the history of the University of California.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge President's Milliken's letter sent yesterday concerning the future of the President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program and the hiring incentive associated with it. Academic Senate appreciates the thoughtful and positive response, and we are ready to collaborate on charting a course forward.

Now for today's meeting, I would like to highlight two seemingly unrelated but intricately connected agenda items.

In my remarks to the Board in September, I mentioned how the Academic Senate, back in April, stood up to the external threats and mounted a Senate faculty Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions, also known

as UCAD. The UCAD interim report issued in July offered a draft blueprint, a potential roadmap, a focused conversation starter for reimagining the future of UC. That conversation has now started. You will hear later in the context of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, how the Academic Senate and administration are joining forces to confront the headwinds. The members of the expanded successor task force called UCAD Plus will bring together the expertise and wisdom of faculty and administrative leaders and initiate a systemwide dialogue to chart a resilient, exceptional and sustainable course for the University.

This brave new project will allow us to stand in front of the mirror on the wall and not only ask who we see in our reflection but also who we want to see. Looking inward to tap into our strengths, and to understand our vulnerabilities. Drawing inspiration from what we can envision and seizing the opportunities and possibilities that lie ahead.

We have always been more than simply the sum of our parts. Each campus has its unique footprint within its immediate community and beyond. Our partnership with the National Labs offers a strategic and impactful vision. The Division of the Agricultural and Natural Resources touches every family in the great State of California. Our health systems provide high-quality patient care to most vulnerable members of our community. These parts that make up the whole are our legacy and also our future.

And I know all of you are eagerly waiting for the next agenda item, UC Inspires. After more than 70 Nobel Prizes since 1939, it may seem natural to take such recognition for granted. Some of us were disappointed that this year's literature prize winner had no UC affiliation.

Once again, the public witnessed UC's excellence, impact, and legacy of successful contributions to society and future research inquiry. Once again, by winning the Nobel Prize, we are elevated to a global platform

where we can advocate for new ideas and offer convincing evidence for what one can accomplish with creativity, perseverance and hard work. We set the bar and set it high.

Now it is time to celebrate our fellow faculty members and rejoice in this moment in history. The moment that reminds us and the world who we are. The moment that reminds us and the world what the stakes are. The moment that reaffirms the very character of this institution which we will never give up.

As we look at the mirror on the wall, we shall continue to say, surely and confidently, “yes, we ARE the fairest of them all.”