

**Academic Senate Chair Shane White**  
**Remarks to the University of California Board of Regents**  
**November 2017**

The University of California is a research University, a public research university and one of the very finest. But, what is a research university and what does this mean for our undergraduate students? A research university encompasses the unity of teaching and research, and the unending nature of academic enquiry through academic freedom.

First, the professor and the student are not just to teach and to be taught, but together for the common pursuit of knowledge. Students do not simply master a craft, students learn to think, to create, to generate new knowledge, to develop the tools that will let them adapt, contribute and flourish as technologies and societal needs change multiple times over a single career. What is learned today will likely be outdated in just a few years in the currency of the knowledge-based economy; vocational training is not enough. We teach students how to teach themselves, so that they may create and innovate throughout their careers and have a broader range of career choices, as well as deeper civic and public engagement. Tools for lifelong learning and a deeper understanding of the World will result in more productive participation and in greater happiness.

Second, the nature of scholarship, the arena for the pursuit of knowledge is unending and inexhaustible: abstract art to zymurgy, and other disciplines that are still emerging or not even conceived today. Every discipline confronts and challenges the world's problems. The humanities and social sciences contribute deeply to their dedicated scholars and broadly to all, including the entrepreneur and basic scientist. Clark Kerr coined the term "multiversity", seeing the University as a complex plurality of various, often-competing communities engaged in a myriad of activities with a range of extra-university interests and impacts, much more than John Henry Newman's concept of a dedicated community of scholars pursuing knowledge for its own sake – we are no ivory tower.

Third, academic freedom, freedom from external or internal constraint of scholarship, is paramount. Von Humboldt, the German father of the idea of the modern research university, explained 200 years ago: "the State must understand that intellectual work will go on infinitely better without it." Such ideas define the foundation of a complex relationship. Only the State can guarantee autonomy; in return the University must be of use to the State and the broader public – but not always immediately so. Clark Kerr expressed this foundational underpinning: "The two greatest gifts to the University of California have been the institutional autonomy given to its Board of Regents in the Constitution of 1878 and the unprecedented grant of authority the board assigned to the Academic Senate in 1920. These two gifts constitute the institutional foundation for the growth in distinction of the University of California." These gifts have allowed the University to take a long-term steady view and craft carefully deliberated responses to challenges, fundamental to the enterprise of teaching, research and public service, and the University's overall role in society, and to become the World's preeminent public research university. In this highly polarized time, a narrow understanding of the university's role is a particularly dangerous threat.

In the research university, students are surrounded by world class authorities, not simply those who absorb, transmit and disseminate knowledge, but those who create the state of the art and the frontiers of discovery. Students learn to confront new knowledge that may conflict with their prior beliefs. In the classroom, students are challenged. Outside the classroom, students challenge themselves, take initiative, through participation in the broader “city of intellect” to adapt, work and live together across all divisions. This is much more than the sum of Newman’s traditional English college residential experience and von Humboldt’s concept of combining research and study.

So, the undergraduate student in our public research university is not a widget on a production line in one of 9 cookie-cutter factories, but an individual and unique participant in discovery on a singular campus. Whether a student of the arts or a STEM major, whether or not she participates in active research, she is part of an ecosystem that discovers and advances knowledge. She, yes, the majority of our undergraduates have long been she’s not he’s, is surrounded by professors, lecturers, postdocs, graduate students, and her undergraduate peers, a part of a complex ecosystem. This ecosystem is neither top-down, nor bottom-up, but an interwoven community of authentic individuals together involved in original creation.

Our young applicants understand the distinction between the University of California and other segments of our State’s higher educational system; they have made the choice that best suits them. Our students are prepared to make the additional personal and fiscal commitment to attend one of our 9 undergraduate campuses. They come to us, rather than our private peers, because they understand and value how our wider public engagement and our service mission is a key part of the reason for our being an engine of discovery and advancement. They come to us because we are not walled off from society or separate from the people. They come to us because they know what the public research university means to the process of their education, the critical thinking skills, the learning to invent and discover, to their careers, to their interactions with the wide world, and to their lifelong personal happiness. Our low-income students succeed in the California workforce, earning more on average within five years than their parents’ combined incomes. Alumni who were Pell grant recipients are concentrated in public service, health care and education. By all measures, the University of California is not only the greatest engine of social mobility in our State, but in the nation. We don’t need rankings or statistics to know this, our 200,000 plus undergraduates tell us so.

In the last 20 years, in keeping with our obligation under the Master Plan, our enrollment has doubled – a remarkable achievement, but our applicant pool has tripled; thus the university has become more selective – a growing proportion of young Californians want to attend the University. Our young have voted with their feet, or at least with their applications; the value of a UC public research education has steadily risen. Even as the University has become more selective through applicant pressure, it has better served the people of California. Over the past 20 years, our enrolment of first generation students has more than doubled and our enrolment of underrepresented minority students has more than tripled. The people’s appreciation of education at the State’s public research university has steadily risen; our applicant pool has enlarged dramatically.

The faculty of this great research university can do and will do what the State and the Board want, but let us do it the right way. Well intended, but ill-founded edicts such as applying a 2:1 ratio of freshmen to transfer students, not just systemwide as it was, but at each one of our undergraduate campuses, or by mandating unequal campus caps on nonresident enrollment; hurt our least-resourced campuses and their students, the most diverse in our system. Likewise mandates to enlarge enrollment without adequate funding are not just misplaced, but destructive. Funding is needed for infrastructure, not only the marginal cost of additional enrollment.

There is more to be done and the University of California cannot do it alone, a trusting partnership with the State is needed; enrollment must be funded, as must infrastructure. Our most diverse classes ever must not be shortchanged or denied the quality of education that their predecessors received. All the rust and corrosion that I described in September, poor student to faculty ratios, and large class sizes, denigrate their potential. Californian high school students' graduation rates continue to rise, but huge discrepancies between wealthy and low income communities remain. Likewise, transfer rates from the CCC to both CSU and UC vary by region. All segments and stakeholders must work together to address inequalities. Bob Clark, author of *The Higher Education System*, recognized that "it does not make much sense to evaluate business firms according to how much they act like universities... Nor does it make any sense to do the reverse". Instead, the discovery-centered nature of our task is fostered in diversity of outlook, the autonomy of persons and groups, and endemic uncertainty and ambiguity. We don't make widgets, and while we do regularly invent new technologies, cancer medicines, vaccines and tastier fruit, we are so much more than that. The faculty hear you, the State and the Board, please listen carefully to us. Let the University better understand the State; let the State better understand the University.

Together we go.

Chair Kieffer, thank you, that concludes my remarks.