

Academic Senate Chair Robert May
Remarks to the University of California Board of Regents
November 2018

Thank you Chair Keiffer and members of the Board.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the University of California, and the university has been heartily celebrating with many events during its course. The signing of the Organic Act of 1868, the event being celebrated, brought the University into existence, and we are all justly proud of how it has grown, and what it has become, even if at times the road has been rocky. Integral to its creation of the University, the Organic Act also created the Academic Senate, and so too this year marks our sesquicentennial. In celebration, last month, the Academic Senate held a symposium entitled “The University of California and Higher Education: Its Mission, History, and Goals”. Among the members of the UC community who attended, we were very pleased to welcome the President and the Provost along with many former chairs of the Academic Senate. The presentations traversed topics near and dear to the Senate’s heart: The Master Plan, Shared Governance, Academic Freedom and the Growth of UC in the context of the growth of California. Today, I would like to center my remarks around these themes as they resonated through the presentations by our distinguished speakers.

The interweaving of these themes can be traced to two remarkable events in the history of the University of California. The first, whose centenary we will celebrate next year, is the so-called “Berkeley revolution” of 1919. This event resulted in changes to the Standing Orders (now By-Laws) of the Regents that placed in the hands of the Academic Senate responsibilities for what we call today “shared governance.” The importance of the assignment of these responsibilities to the Academic Senate resides in the Regents’ recognition of the professional role of the faculty as constitutive of the governance of the university. In this context, the Regents acknowledged that it is essential to academic freedom that teaching and scholarship meet professional standards. “The competence of the faculty to apply these standards of assessment is recognized in the Standing Orders of The Regents, which establish a system of shared governance between the Administration and the Academic Senate.” This excerpt is from the Academic Personnel Manual, section 010, together with which the Faculty Code of Conduct, section 015, defines academic freedom for the University of California, and binds academic freedom to shared governance and the Academic Senate in the constitution of the University of California.

The second remarkable event, occurring in 1960, four decades after the Berkeley revolution, was the Master Plan for Higher Education in California. Among the consequences of The Master Plan, two were of central importance. One was the three-way division of higher education in California between UC, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges, each with their own distinctive mission. The other was as a catalyst for fruition of the modern structure of the University of California, designed to deal with explosive growth in the number of students making up the top one-eighth of California high school graduates.

The lessons of growth from that period are instructive, but if anything the tensions are even greater today. Pressure for increased enrollment and degree attainment is unabated, yet our capacity to educate, at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels, only grows incrementally. The story of the decades old disinvestment in the University by the state hardly needs to be told again, and the concerns that arise are not unique to the Senate, but are shared with our partners in the shared governance triumvirate. For the Academic Senate, this means working within its purview on the academic needs of the University to not just maintain, but enhance the educational experience provided to students, undergraduate and graduate, in the context of a great research university.

In response to these pressures, at this meeting of the Regents, and at those to follow, we will be hearing about the emerging multi-year budgeting model for the University. The Academic Senate applauds these efforts, and especially its emphasis on the growth of academic infrastructure. The need for capital improvement and development of our classrooms and labs is evident every day to every faculty member on every campus. Notwithstanding these critical capital needs, buildings are but empty shells without the investment in the growth and maintenance of the professoriate engaged in the core missions of teaching, research, and service. In presenting the case for the development of our core faculty, it is incumbent on the university to present all of what we do, the extraordinary work done in STEM and the health sciences along with the exceptional contributions of faculty in the humanities, social sciences and the arts. It is these latter areas that most fundamentally affect people in their everyday lives – how they think, and what they think about, how they are situated in their society and culture, their financial well-being, their role in the body polity and the moral and ethical decisions that people make every day, among many other issues. Perhaps the value of this work cannot be easily assessed in dollars and cents contribution, but yet its importance to our mission is equally great, and the greatness of our university will be measured by our support of the amazingly broad range of justly lauded research carried out by our faculty and researchers.

Synonymous with the growth and rejuvenation of the UC professoriate in the coming years is its diversification. What is paramount is the importance of the alignment of our faculty diversity profile with that of the students we educate and the society in which we are embedded. At our 150th Anniversary Symposium, numerous presentations emphasized that diversification of faculty does not merely mean the assimilation of historically under-represented faculty to the investigation and teaching of the traditional curriculum. Rather, it portends a growth and rejuvenation of the curriculum, and the emergence of a new critical attitude towards the views it embeds about our history, society and culture, and our approach to research we conduct. The responsibility for the development of the curriculum resides with the faculty, and in its current evolution for the 21st-century we embrace these changes as they reflect inclusiveness, and responsiveness to the lived experiences of our community of scholars and students.

Our Symposium gave the Academic Senate an opportunity to reflect on our historical accomplishments and our contemporary roles in the life and governance of UC. The broad themes discussed underlie the work the Senate does, and our campus divisions and systemwide committees are hard at work day-to-day on a wide range of issues. To skim the surface, the

Senate remains hard at work on developing the transfer guarantee for community college students, and we are currently forming a task force on standardized testing for admission. We are looking into a University-wide policy on posthumous degrees. The Academic Council endorsed developing University policy for protections and obligations for the scholarly, research and teaching activities, along with attendant obligations, of non-Academic Senate academic appointees. It also endorsed an expansion of the President's Post-Doctoral Fellowship Program with recommendations for support of the fellows, and for moving them into permanent faculty positions. The Academic Senate participated in the State Assembly Higher Education Committee's important hearings on UC faculty diversity, and UCOP's Office of Academic Personnel's insightful workshop on faculty salary equity studies. We are currently in open enrollment for employee health and welfare plans, marking the first-year of UC's policy of recognizing, on the initiative of the Academic Senate, domestic partners regardless of age or gender. Discussion continues on our open access policies for scholarly publications. The list continues, but my time is up, so I will defer to our next meeting a more thorough discussion of the current activities of the Senate as we fulfill our share of shared governance.

Thank you Chair Kieffer, this concludes my remarks.