



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.

I am Ahmet Palazoglu, professor of chemical engineering at UC Davis. It is my honor and privilege to serve as one of two faculty representatives to the Board of Regents this year. First, I would like to acknowledge the immediate past chair Steven Cheung from UC San Francisco for his inspirational leadership during a difficult year and thank him for his mentorship and friendship. This year, Susannah Scott, professor of chemical engineering at UC Santa Barbara, joins me as vice chair of the systemwide Academic Senate.

Susannah and I also would like to welcome Chancellor Dennis Assanis to the UC family and to his first meeting of the Board of Regents.

I joined UC Davis in July of 1984. Although my research, at least initially, was on nonlinear systems, my career followed a pretty linear trajectory. As years went by, I was called upon to serve as the department chair, chair of a number of campus and systemwide Academic Senate committees, vice chair and chair of the Davis Division of the Senate for four years, and now the ultimate responsibility, representing and advocating for more than 14,000 faculty members on 10 campuses. I accept it with humility and enthusiasm, with the full recognition and understanding of the challenges we experience every day. Knowing also how, today, anxiety levels are on the rise due to a combination of internal tensions and related external pressures, and that transparency and open communication are essential to keep the UC community intact.

Let me begin my remarks with a reference to the renowned American writer and civil rights activist, James Baldwin, who said..., “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

We just witnessed a change in leadership at UC with President Milliken joining us, along with Chancellors Hu and Assanis at Riverside and Santa Barbara. This is complemented by the annual transition in the systemwide Academic Senate leadership with me and Susannah stepping into our respective roles for this year.

Change is good. It brings new perspectives, new energy, and starts new conversations around what may be possible going forward.

University of California is an engine for change. Our research saves lives, improves our food supply, enriches what we consume. Communities and neighborhoods thrive. Our air and water are cleaner. Farms are more productive and sustainable.

Change is good. When people’s lives change for the better.

Faculty are agents of change. We educate and train our students to become productive members of the community and contribute to the well-being of our state, the nation, and the world. We equip them with skills and knowledge that will serve them for a lifetime. Our students become problem solvers, life-long learners.

Change is good. When it is about personal growth, when it is about seizing the opportunities created and presented, or overcoming barriers standing in the way.

The winds of change have been upon us for some time. Increasing false narratives about the value of a college education. Costs outpacing revenues. Students struggling with housing and food security. Overworked and stressed staff and faculty. And now we are sailing through a hurricane, with seemingly no land in sight. At least, not the same land where we usually dock.

Change happens. When it is least expected. When it is least convenient.

Change can test the resiliency of a community. The COVID-19 pandemic cost lives, devastated families. Yet, the tests we developed saved lives. Virtual

Zoom meetings became part of our workday realities. Remote teaching showed the possibilities of full online education.

Change becomes a necessity. When the status quo is unacceptable. When conducting business as usual is unsustainable.

Having lived through all the disruptions and expecting the ones we are likely to face in the near term—this demonstrates the need for adaptability. With that recognition, the Academic Senate stood up to the challenge and mounted a Senate faculty Task Force on UC Adaptation to Disruptions, also known as UCAD. The UCAD interim reported issued in July and presented to President Milliken, as well as Senate and other administrative leaders, offers a draft blueprint, a potential roadmap, a focused conversation starter for reimagining the future of UC. A promising platform for the Senate and the administration to engage and act together.

Change will happen. When the community finally reaches a precipice. When there is no other alternative but to embrace the change.

Collectively, collaboratively, purposefully, we at UC will drive the change. Because that's what we are known for. We have certainly done that before. We can do it again.

Change is good. When it invigorates us to meet our responsibilities to the great State of California. When it pushes us to deliver on our mission.

I trust our people and our processes at UC. We enjoy the collective wisdom of our faculty, the tenacity of our students, and the dedication of our staff. While the dark clouds obscure the path forward, I choose to believe that we have the means to keep us true to the path. A path toward a UC that prioritizes quality, champions access and affordability.

As changes ensue, the Academic Senate reaffirms its commitment to shared governance and partnership with President Milliken and the Board of Regents to sustain UC's tripartite mission in this moment of turmoil. UC's strength and impact are often said to rest on the Power of 10—10 world-class campuses, working together in pursuit of excellence and in defending academic freedom and our core values. Equally important and essential is what the Senate calls the Power of Three: the Senate, the Administration, and the Regents, working

together through shared governance to uphold UC's academic mission, respond to new challenges, and advance the promise of higher education for future generations.

As Japanese author Haruki Murakami said in his book, *Kafka on the Shore*, "When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about."