

Academic Senate Chair Kum-Kum Bhavnani
Remarks to the University of California Board of Regents
September 18, 2019

Thank you, Chair Perez and Members of the Board.

I am honoured and privileged that my first task at this September Regents' meeting is to introduce the wonderful new Vice Chair of the UC Academic Senate. Mary Gauvain is Distinguished Professor of Psychology at UC Riverside, where she has been since 1992, following completion of her doctorate from the University of Utah. Mary's undergraduate degree is from UC Irvine, and her master's from Stanford. Professor Gauvain's scholarly interests focus on children's cognitive and concept development, for example, about water and food contamination. She is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Mary is no stranger to Senate service. For example, from 1999 to 2000 she was a member of the University Committee on Research Policy and from 2008 to 2009 she was a member of the University Committee on Planning and Budget. In 2010 she was awarded the Distinguished Campus Service Award by the UC Riverside Academic Senate. From 2010 to 2012 Mary was elected as the Senate Divisional Chair at UC Riverside. In the course of her commitment to the Senate Mary has been on different committees related to UC's Agriculture and Natural Resources, has served on the UCOP Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Council, and in 2018 was the Senate representative to the UC President's ANR Advisory Committee. I look forward to working with Mary in the coming year, and invite you to join me in welcoming Professor Gauvain.

Many in this room know that one root of "education", the word, derives from the Latin *educere* -- to lead away from. I have held that idea close to my heart ever since I studied Latin during my school days, because knowing its etymology allowed me to understand that education is a means by which we, human beings, can move away from the familiar and the personal by interrogating our own thinking and experiences, especially the ones we hold most dear.

In this sense, education is not a set of skills or a training that is acquired as a commodity, to be banked or sold according to the whims of the societies in which we live. Rather, it is an approach to life that is based on human beings being critically active in creating our worlds.

Yet a university education such as at the University of California, is more than being active in creating our worlds. To pursue education at the UC demands a discipline and rigour so that ideas can be shaped to pinpoint what is to be communicated. Undergraduates develop their opinions

and their imaginations as they take our classes, our labs, and conduct research with us. Graduate students and post-docs enter the UC because they have started to realise their passion for curiosity at a more profound level – and they continue to refine their potential as they become more attracted to that which is unfamiliar and/or unknown.

A UC education could lead someone to install an art piece in a public park. It could mean developing ways to think differently about the future, whether it is research that allows astrophysicists to gaze through telescopes to understand better where humanity and the planet have come from and where we might go, or it could involve working with computer programs to create new games to be enjoyed by many. Education allows people to first imagine, and then engineer, for example, autonomous cars. We can, by drawing on education, analyse the histories of people on the planet so that we may not repeat the same mistakes as we walk through our own lives. We can rely on education to make films and take photographs– as Dorothea Lange did of Japanese-origin people imprisoned in internment camps, to suggest that there are many worlds beyond the ones we choose to inhabit at any one point in time. And it is a UC education that allows us to create links between internment, the holocaust and what is being done presently to communities of people and our children who are merely economic refugees trying to survive in what is all too often a cruel and heartless world.

As professors of UC students – graduate and undergraduate – our deep desires are to make sure that students have the best possible educational experience at the UC. We work 60 to 80 hour weeks so that we may offer ideas, information and mentorship, all in a glorious tangle of research and argumentation. Some comment that this can be Sisyphean in nature – Sisyphus whom Zeus condemned to roll a boulder endlessly up a steep hill. But as Albert Camus reminds us, the pleasure of rolling the boulder is what makes us...

At the risk of repeating what many already know, our work as professors incorporates another element beyond that of teaching and research -- that of service -- inside and outside the university. To participate in service to the university, many faculty are (usually) elected to committees and positions. The UC has a unique and strong system of shared governance. Shared governance within the UC implies a non-adversarial relationship whereby key decisions are made by faculty regarding admissions policies and the awarding of degrees, as well as having a close collaboration of administration and faculty on related matters central to all universities. This has allowed the UC to develop curricular innovations that are robust because they rely on our knowledge and experience with students, so that we develop admissions and transfer policies to give all who enter the UC the best possible chance of graduating in a timely way and with experiences that will last for a lifetime. The UC offers degrees in familiar areas such as mathematics, English literature, physics, history biology, sociology and economics. But we

simultaneously have a very strong reputation for innovation such as in creating some of the very first departments of ethnic studies, of departments that enshrine lesbian, gay and queer studies in general as the backbone of their syllabi, and departments that combine engineering backgrounds with artistic commitments to create graduate degrees in media, arts and technology.

Yet shared governance also offers much more. In advising the President and the Board on matters of finance and budget, the UC draws on some extremely accomplished individuals – the faculty - - whose degrees and research background rival, if not supersede, those of the consultants who are brought in to advise our academic affairs programmes on diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as to advise our health centers, our pensions, and our capital development programmes. Other could think of many such service contributions by UC faculty -- such as how to develop energy policies that permit campuses to move swiftly and safely to carbon neutral positions. And we work closely and openly with all who wish to collaborate with us in making our university communities as diverse, equitable and inclusive because we all know that the excellence of the UC of which we are all justly proud, is derived from our commitment to access and diversity.

This commitment to service has meant that we partner very closely with librarians and libraries to commit to an Open Access policy for our publications, most of which are derived from research that is conducted using public monies. We are presently exploring if standardized testing is helpfully predictive for admitting students to be successful in the context of the UC by graduating within four or five years with a powerful research and critical thinking education that may then be utilised by the state, or form the background for business, legal and scientific work.

Our knowledge of of inequality has meant that we hesitate when we receive directives from Washington not to co-operate intellectually or as teachers and mentors with people who wish to collaborate with us on our research – directives that single out a single nation state as being entirely comprised of academics who threaten the national security of the US. Senate, through Academic Council, has noted that such directives racialize communities of researchers based on not only on their national origins, but also based on who they are and their motives on assumptions based on phenotype. Such racialization, that some call racism, is antithetical to what a university is about: sharing new knowledges so that our communities and societies may move in directions to decrease inequality and unleash the creative energies of all.

The UC, and all universities around the world, are living in times that endanger much of what we hold dear about humanity and our creative potential: our desire to feed the world, to make sure that, for example, maternal mortality is zero around the globe, that literacy is at 100%, that

workers are protected from exploitation and greed, and that our opening up of new vistas of knowledge and opportunity are under threat.

Yet, this is precisely the time at which we must keep our creative and research talents at the forefront of all that we do: borrowing, and amending, from the late Toni Morrison:

“This is precisely the time when artists [and scientists] go to work. There is no time for despair, no time for self pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, [we research], we do language. That is how civilizations heal.” Toni Morrison

Thank you Chair Perez. That concludes my remarks.