

Choosing the Next UC President
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It's November 2020, a year from now. Everyone has noticed one big change. The Democrats have taken back the White House. It turns out that the Warren—Sanders ticket did better than the polls had predicted . . . 😊

Less noted is the arrival of a new UC president, who starts her mandate by doing the rounds of politicians in Sacramento and business moguls in San Francisco and San Jose. Wherever she goes, she gets questions that she begins to organize into a composite position like this:

We are glad you're here, and we need just a few specific things from you as UC president. We need:

1,000,000 additional degrees by 2030 from California higher ed. Thank you for agreeing for UC to do another 200,000.

We need low student costs in our expensive state. So we can't give you more than a 2-3% tuition increase, every once in a while. We won't take the political heat for you for tuition increases.

We need the university to pay its own way rather than asking for big state funding increases. We'll look the other way as you bring in some new non-resident students. In general, you need to keep working on your multiple revenue streams, where you seek alternatives to state funding. So you need to increase philanthropy and research grants. Take your technology and license it to companies who will bring it to market. Use more information technology to cut costs. You don't need as much money from the state now that you have these other sources.

We hear that some students are worried about the quality of their education. Maybe this is a problem—but it's your problem. If classes are overcrowded, why don't your faculty teach more? Cal State professors teach 8-10 semester courses a year and those students seem to learn just fine. If you don't want to raise teaching loads, use educational technology. Put a lot of student support on line, do e-advising. Support your state programs with for-profit masters – you're already doing that, right – you call them Self-Supporting Degree Programs? So combine these three things – SSDPs, online courses, and higher teaching loads—you can do more teaching without more state money. Please get to work on this.

Also, you at UC say you need more buildings to cover student growth? And for research? Well we haven't given state money for construction for a decade, but whenever we go to a UC campus we see all sorts of building. It looks like *you* can fund that too. And if you need a research building, you can pay for that with the money you make from your grants.

Our new president returns to Oakland each week with an earful about doing more with less, as we have been doing for the last 10 years, and for the 10 years before that. Our question here is,

what kinds of knowledge and qualities does our next president need to confront this fossilized conventional wisdom that I've just recited for us?

She needs to be able to rebut the premises of each of those bits of conventional wisdom. For each of them is wrong. Each is part of a project we've seen implemented during the Schwarzenegger and Brown governorships, a project that is to revert California higher education to the mean. Make it good enough, but no better than that. And don't make it something really great for our uniquely diverse and also brilliant California student population. The job of the next president is to fight this ebbing tide in California politics and to make UC really great.

The next president needs to rebut and reconstruct. A few examples:

- You want 200,000 more UC degrees by 2030? Well ok, the university defines itself as offering more knowledge rather than less. But the question is *quality* as well as quantity. Small classes, individual feedback. That will cost more than what you are willing to pay now. You've given us \$5000 and \$7000 per student in recent years. We're hoping for \$11,200 next year. But it's going to take \$15,000, maybe \$20,000 per student. As president I'll get you the figures and work with you on a plan to get state funding up to meet our common quality goals. And I'll explain to you exactly what we'll be doing with that money.
- The president will say, you want neither tuition nor state funding increases? We agree with you on no tuition hikes. We have worked now for a decade to make the magic happen without asking much of anything from the state, and under a tuition freeze. I'm a president who has studied the current funding model, and I know its history, and its result. We have done already as much as we can do with multiple revenue streams. We have tried them all. For 20 or 30 years. [SLIDE] After years of growing philanthropy and increasing grants and working as hard as we can on technology commercialization and all the rest, we've maxed it out. Our campuses are not prospering. Several are in deficit. I have to report to you that the model has failed. Public universities serve the public, and together we'll go to the public and explain why the public has to pay. First we explain *what* it will cost for *debt-free* bachelors degrees at the high level of quality on which we agree. Second we'll pass on the good news of how little additional money each tax payer will pay. (\$66 per median tax payer for free CA higher ed.)
- The next president will say, we all agree on efficiency. But we are research university. When professors aren't in the classroom they spend the workweek in the library and lab. They are already working 60+ hours a week on average. Raise the teaching load? You're asking me to gradually destroy UC as a research university. You're asking me to deprive students of research-learning, though that is the future of higher education. You're asking me to deprive the state and the country of the college teachers that higher shares of bachelors degrees require. I can't do those things. Please remember that we do the most advanced research anywhere. Most of it is massively expensive. It doesn't make money, it loses money—UC spends hundreds of millions of internal funds each year to support our superb work. Making money on commercialization? That's mostly downstream from us? Licensing revenue? Well it comes to about two and a half

percent of contract and grant income—not something we should keep talking about as a solution. In addition, we need to do cultural and social research that has no monetary returns. That research has *huge* nonmonetary and social effects that I am happy to talk about, but these can only be funded by the public at large. We have tried everything, the next president continues, and will continue to, but the model we've all been using together, though cheaper for the state, simply doesn't work.

This next President will be able to address all these questions because he or she or they will come from inside a university. She will have formed her career inside it as a teacher and researcher. She will know what leaning involves, in detail, the personal interaction, the blockages and the effort. She'll know the same for research. Research is very hard. It is very risky. It's confusing. It takes a long time to get somewhere. She will understand these things. She will be an intellectual. She will have thought about the place of thinking in today's society. She will have had direct contact with today's students. She will know not only in the abstract that our students are *not* majority middle class and not majority white but will also know through contact what that means: the debt burden, the financial anxiety, the temptation always to replace study with more hours of a paid job, and the remarkable background knowledge and the highest levels of engagement of any students of recent generations. She will have had existential immersion in the pain and suffering and comprises and the settler-colonial badness and also the transformative power and social justice effects of universities. The next president will be able to reverse the slow downgrading of the University of California—start the upgrading-- because she will understand the combined social and intellectual missions of the university from the inside. The Regents need our strongest encouragement to find this person.