

June 15, 2009

Dear

I write on behalf of an array of departmental chairs from all parts of the campus – the physical and biological sciences, the social sciences, engineering, the humanities, and the arts, plus the chair of the department of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, to express our collective sense of dismay, frustration, and anger at what is being done to the University of California. For years our budget has lagged behind our needs, and the university has suffered from a slow degradation in its quality, and in the quality of education it offers to the citizens of California. The cuts to our operating budget have essentially been spread equally across campuses and units, without much pretense at selectivity, depriving the excellent along with the less so, damaging morale and the very fabric of an institution that makes extraordinary contributions to our state and nation. The plans we have heard outlined for 2009-10, 2010-11, and the next five years, go far beyond what we have experienced so far. We believe that if these plans are implemented, the University of California as we know it will be dead – reduced to a mediocre shell of what it once was. If we are lucky, we will end up as just one of many mediocre state university systems.

The proposed actions presented to us at the June General Campus chairs' meeting essentially amounted to throwing in the towel. Rather than discussing entrepreneurial solutions that might mitigate the budget damage, coupled with intelligent and selective cuts designed to protect the core mission of the university, these proposals continued the policy of incremental pain under the guise of "everything is on the table", ratcheted up to the point where excellence will vanish at the university. These proposals guarantee that as soon as the economy improves private universities will take our very best faculty, save those close to retirement, and those contemplating retirement will do so. That will, of course, have permanent and catastrophic effects on our academic reputation, from which we shall never recover. To recover from this blow would require, in the first instance, attracting the best people to what will (rightly) be seen as an inferior institution, which will require paying over the odds (financially and otherwise) – and we know that will be impossible. In any event, the plans to shrink permanent faculty by almost 25 per cent to balance the books means that these people will simply not be replaced.

Such an outcome will produce a steadily tightening vicious circle, because we shall simultaneously be experiencing a reverse multiplier effect: our best and brightest will take their major grants with them, so indirect cost recovery will diminish sharply, which will further exacerbate both the reputational and budgetary problems, which will further the exodus of the next tier of faculty. That problem will intensify as services on campus are cut, damaging the necessary support for research, affecting our teaching mission, worsening the day-to-day environment, and impelling those of us who have choices to bail out. It does no good to point to others' current misery, and suggest that as a result all will be well. The depressed state of the economy and the stock market is not permanent, but our losses will be. As soon as we see an economic rebound, the exodus will begin. And the excellence that has always characterized the University of California will slowly (or not-so slowly) erode into mediocrity.

The first option that was laid before us was a possible 5 per cent pay cut, which, so we were told, would net the campus \$20million, and Academic Affairs half that, or \$10million, out of

\$90million. (Today, rumors suggest that cut may be as much as 10 per cent.) It is well known that UC faculty are already 20-30 per cent behind our peers in compensation even before such a cut, and will take a 2 per cent pay cut soon when contributions to our unstable pension system resume (another reason to leave). More importantly, as was pointed out at our meeting, to begin at pay cuts as the first solution is to admit defeat and invite the vicious circle. Add in the proposal that the faculty/student ratio decline by a third and the prospect of increasing numbers of graduate students will disappear and our predictions of faculty departures probably err on the low side.

We know the response to all this will be “we live in hard times, and politically difficult times, so what do you propose instead?” We propose that we engage in some radical rethinking. What follows are a few such ideas, some of which may require refinement or could be replaced by better ones.

1. Immediately enroll 500 more out of state students per year for the next four or more years. The increased tuition money would stay on this campus, and four years out would amount to \$44 million per annum, almost half our deficit. This step should not be done stealthily. It is very important, to the contrary, that we proceed transparently. We must explain to the California taxpayers why we are forced to take this step, and educate them about the magnitude of the cuts we have taken in state support over the last decade; the potentially fatal impact of these new rounds of cuts on the very thing that makes a UC education special for their children, the opportunity to be taught by world-class research faculty; and the contributions such a step can make to keeping the university in the forefront of knowledge creation and in preparing the highly educated workforce that is the state's ultimate salvation. We note that in fall 2008 only 5.9% of our undergraduates were non-resident, compared to 9.7% at Berkeley and 9.5% at UCLA.

We also note that in fall 2008 at the well-regarded University of Michigan, 35% of undergraduates were non-resident. Admitting more out-of-state students will cross-subsidize California residents by helping to maintain professor-to-student ratios and to reduce or eliminate the planned cuts to teaching assistant and temporary (lecturer) funds. Admitting more students from other states would also enhance UCSD's national reputation and it will benefit California in the long run since a significant number of American students who go to university out of state end up settling in the state where they attended university. It is in California's interest to attract some of the best and the brightest high school graduates from around the country, to provide them with a world-class education and then to reap the tax revenues that result when these university graduates enter California's workforce. We recommend that over the summer you convene a committee to develop a plan to enroll significantly more out-of-state undergraduates next year.

2. Generate defensible estimates of our strictly economic contribution to the state's economy, via an educated workforce, spin-off companies, federal funds attracted, etc, etc, and repeat that number relentlessly to force it into the consciousness of the public and the politicians. That is the golden egg that is in jeopardy. We find it surprising that this has not been done already. Every official in the UC system, every media report, every media release should have included this same number over the last year. To drive home the point the numbers begin to make, the campus could also compile a list of 5-10 pieces of faculty research in the past decade that have transformed our knowledge and improved human welfare, and supplement that with a similar

list of spin-off corporations and technologies (Qualcomm obviously prominent among them) that have transformed the economy of the region and the state. Again, these lists must be hammered home over and over again, like an annoying advertisement that enters everyone's consciousness.

3. Establish different budget priorities for the profiles of different UC campuses. Every state system of public education save California manages to sustain (at best) one flagship campus. Many, including such states as New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, do not manage even that. We pretend we have ten such campuses. In better times, there were in reality four flagships (Berkeley, UCLA, UCSD, and – in its highly specialized way, UCSF). Rather than destroying the distinctiveness and excellence at Berkeley, UCLA, and UCSD by hiring temporary lecturers to do most of the teaching (and contribute nothing to original research, nothing to our reputation, nothing to the engine of economic growth a first rate research university represents), we propose that you urge the President and Regents to acknowledge that UCSC, UCR, and UC Merced are in substantial measure teaching institutions (with some exceptions – programs that have genuinely achieved national and international excellence and thus deserve separate treatment), whose funding levels and budgets should be reorganized to match that reality.

We suggest, more generally, that in discussions systemwide, you drop the pretence that all campuses are equal, and argue for a selective reallocation of funds to preserve excellence, not the current disastrous blunderbuss policy of even, across the board cuts. Or, if that is too hard, we suggest that what ought to be done is to shut one or more of these campuses down, in whole or in part. We have suffered more than a 30 per cent cut in our funding from the state, and we can thus no longer afford to be a ten campus system – only a nine, or an eight (and a half) campus system. Corporations faced with similar problems eliminate or sell off their least profitable, least promising divisions. Even General Motors, which for decades resisted this logic, to its near-fatal cost, is lopping off Hummer, Buick, GMC, Opel, Saab and who knows what else.

On a systemwide level, more substantial sums could be raised, though not immediately, by expanding an existing resource: the UC Education Abroad Program has been highly successful academically, and study abroad is increasingly attractive to this generation of students. Yet this asset, built up over decades, now seems increasingly neglected and run down. It could, with a modicum of entrepreneurship, be translated into a source of revenue. Syracuse University, for instance, which opens its programs to outside students, charges very profitable fees to those it enrolls. Why can't UC do the same? We suspect that, if the ingenuity and knowledge of the faculty were tapped, other sources of raising revenue or cutting costs could be uncovered. Why not ask for ideas, and actively investigate those that seem promising? We are, after all, in this together, and collectively the intellectual resources of this university are almost unmatched.

Some final remarks: when the previous budget cuts were announced, we were told that priority was being given to protecting the core academic mission of the university. That presumably is the faculty, teaching, and the necessary library resources that are the domain of Academic Affairs (plus Scripps). Yet it transpires that Academic Affairs, which accounts for 49 per cent of the campus budget, absorbed 49.5 per cent of the previous rounds of cuts. This is clearly not

protecting the core academic mission of the university! Specifically, we recommend that the percentage of cuts to academic affairs (including the department of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography) be decreased significantly to protect the core academic mission of the university. If this does not happen, talk of protecting the core is essentially meaningless. We would also like a better understanding of why this decision was made in the first place.

We suggest that all professional schools have to stand on their own, raising fees as they need to and can, with no subsidy from Academic Affairs. We know that, despite assurances to the contrary, both Skaggs pharmacy and the Rady business schools had to be funded in part by subventions from Academic Affairs. However desirable and worthy those enterprises are, they cannot be regarded as the central mission of the University of California, and they ought, if necessary, to charge market rate tuition to fund their operations.

In sum, we urge you to break from the pattern of across the board, incremental cuts. Politicians typically choose this option to avoid complaint. It is far easier to announce a certain percentage cut across units rather than to make the hard decisions of eliminating something completely. It is simply not the case that all campus entities are of equal value to our goals. But such an across the board strategy strikes a mortal blow to a university. The core – not 65% of everything -- must be saved at all costs; without it, the University of California as we know it, will die.

We respect the fact that dozens if not hundreds of University employees have been working hard to create solutions to this crisis. We also know that many discussions may have centered on the ideas that we have expressed here. But the actions we have seen implemented and proposed to date are extremely troubling to the faculty. We are told that “everything is on the table” but that is only a half truth: what is on the table seems to have already been prioritized, and simply awaits to be implemented in an order that the faculty are kept in the dark about, and to which we have no input.

The faculty knows that the fiscal crisis is real. The faculty knows that things cannot move forward as before. And the faculty knows that they will be required to make some difficult choices in their own institutions. But the faculty do not know the overall strategy being implemented by the University, and are deeply troubled by positions and actions that do not seem to protect the core mission of the university, despite assurances of the contrary. What they see is that the future of this great institution is in peril, and that this institution is likely to die a slow death from a thousand cuts, the inevitable result of continuing down the pathways we have heard outlined to date.

Instead, we must genuinely make it a priority to maintain UCSD (and UC) as world class institutions; explore ways to generate new resources, which obviously will not be forthcoming from the state and taxpayers; and insist that cuts must be targeted rather the result of a meat-axe approach, focused on sustaining the things that make this an institution to which many of us have devoted our careers. It is time to fight for our future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scull
Distinguished Professor and Chair, Sociology

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