

## *Concentrating on Excellence*

**Good afternoon.** I'm pleased to have this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you.

Let me begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the warm welcome I've received from the UCLA community. I can't tell you how much it has meant to me.

As you might expect, these past several months have been a time of learning for me. I've immersed myself in this university. During the summer, I met with the provosts, deans, and other academic leaders, and I made an extended visit to each division of the College of Letters and Science, to each professional school, and to each of the major administrative units. In addition, I had the benefit of what might best be called an "orientation day" with the leaders of the Academic Senate, as well as meetings with the leaders of the Staff Assembly and of several student organizations.

Beyond the campus, I've enjoyed substantial contact with a number of alumni, friends, and supporters of the University – not only here in Los Angeles, but also elsewhere in California, in New York, and in Washington, D.C. And I've begun to develop relationships with government officials at the local, state, and federal levels who have – or should have – an interest in UCLA.

What have I learned from this "crash course" on UCLA? Most importantly, the experience of these past four months has confirmed my impression that UCLA is an excellent university, and that we are well positioned to become one of the world's great universities.

Three factors that contribute to this potential for greatness are the excellence of our programs, the quality of our resources, and the strength of our public support. Let me comment on each of them.

First, the excellence of UCLA's academic programs is recognized worldwide. This is remarkable in light of the relative youth of this university. Whether you measure its age from the establishment of the Southern Branch of the University of California in 1919, or from the opening of the Westwood campus in 1929, or from the explosive growth in enrollment and programs in the aftermath of World War II, this is a very young university, even by American standards. Yet, in this short time, UCLA has risen to the very highest ranks of public universities, and has surpassed all but a very small proportion of the private universities in the United States and elsewhere around the world. In light of the high levels of excellence that characterize our current academic programs, the goal of reaching the pinnacle of academia is quite realistic.

The second factor contributing to UCLA's remarkable potential is the quality of the resources available to us. Primary among these, of course, are the human resources. I hardly need dwell on the extraordinary credentials of our faculty and students. They go together: outstanding faculty attract outstanding students, and vice versa. (I know of no university that has an excellent faculty and mediocre students, nor of one that has excellent students and mediocre faculty. Excellence attracts excellence; mediocrity attracts mediocrity.)

Moreover, at UCLA both faculty and students continue to get even better. This year's entering class of students – freshmen, transfer, graduate, and professional – arrives with more impressive credentials than any of its predecessors. And the faculty continues to gain more recognition, raise more funds for research, and win more awards. A shining example of this recognition of our faculty is the awarding of this year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry to UCLA Professor Emeritus Paul Boyer. The entire UCLA family takes pride in his

REMARKS TO  
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extraordinary accomplishments. I'm pleased to note also that the University's staff, on whom faculty and students rely so greatly, also is extremely capable as well as dedicated. UCLA is blessed with these remarkable human resources.

UCLA is blessed also with a magnificent campus. Its beauty is unmatched not only in the University of California system, but anywhere. This despite the fact that ours is the most crowded campus in the UC system: we combine the system's highest enrollment with its smallest campus. Given the number of construction projects recently completed, currently underway, and planned for the near future, it may seem to many of you that the campus map is perpetually in draft form. Setting the balance between maintaining the beauty of the campus and preparing for leadership in research and teaching in the 21st century will remain one of our most trying tasks. But let us never forget how fortunate we are to have such a lovely and functional physical plant with which to work.

The financial resources potentially available to UCLA also undergird optimism about our future. I say this in full knowledge of the difficult times faced by you, my colleagues, over much of the past decade. Most of you witnessed the substantial decline in state funding, and endured the resultant reductions in resources available for teaching, research, and service functions. You lost valued colleagues to early retirement programs, and you were forced to assign priorities to what appeared to be uniformly essential programs. Those "bad old days" may not yet be completely behind us; but (I hesitate to use this phrase) there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The California economy is recovering, and we can expect some degree of stability (and perhaps modest growth) in state funding. The potential for fruitful collaboration with business and industry and for private fundraising is even more promising. Campaign UCLA was launched last spring with a goal of \$1.2 billion – more than any other public university ever has attempted to raise. Yet, in recent weeks we passed the \$500 million mark, achieving more than forty percent of our final target. This reflects a gratifying endorsement of our enterprise, and gives us confidence that we can reach (and I hope surpass) our ambitious goal. And it reminds us of how grateful we are to those alumni and friends of the University who give so generously of their time, their energy, and their material resources.

The third factor undergirding UCLA's potential for further improvement is the strength of public support for this institution. While elsewhere in the United States the public questions the value of a university education, questions the relevance of university research, and questions the commitment of university faculty and administrators to serving the public good, I find little such skepticism among UCLA's public constituencies. The people of Los Angeles and California recognize the value of a UCLA degree; they appreciate the contributions to society made through research on this campus; and they respect and admire the people who make their careers here. They care about this University; they feel invested in it; they believe that their futures and the future of this institution are inextricably intertwined; and they are right. They want us to succeed, and they are willing to help. What more could we ask for?

For all of these reasons – the excellence of our programs, the quality of our

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resources, and the strength of our public support – and more, UCLA is well positioned to achieve greatness.

How can UCLA move up to the highest rung on the ladder of university success? Not by changing the essence of this institution: UCLA must remain UCLA. This University already has qualities that set it apart from other research universities. In all likelihood, they are among the very reasons why you have chosen to pursue your careers here rather than elsewhere.

One of the qualities that distinguishes UCLA – indeed, one of its most valued traditions – is shared governance. It defines the roles played by faculty, students, and administration in shaping the University's academic enterprise. Shared governance has been nurtured and protected here, and it has served UCLA extremely well.

This tradition of shared governance is one which I embrace with enthusiasm. The university is a collegial enterprise. I cannot imagine myself making decisions having significant academic implications without the benefit of meaningful consultation with you, the faculty. My primary responsibility is to lead; and, in that regard, my principal power must be the power of persuasion.

In shared governance, the word “shared” is our guidepost. It must reflect shared values and shared aspirations, not merely shared responsibility and shared authority. Working together, we must ensure that the decisions made are best for UCLA and the people it serves.

Another traditional point of pride for UCLA is its racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Few if any universities can compare with UCLA in this domain. Diversity of the student body, in my view, is particularly crucial to the success of this institution. I offer three reasons why I am convinced that this is so.

First, education is markedly enhanced by a diverse student body, largely because students learn so much from each other. Our task as educators is to facilitate that process of learning. I draw on my own experience in recognizing how much is gained in a course on international relations by having a student body comprising many nationalities, and in recognizing how much is gained in a course on policy analysis by having a student body comprising many economic and social segments of society. Diversity of backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences is among the most valuable of educational assets.

Second, as a public university, UCLA has a special responsibility to prepare leaders for all segments of society. That responsibility can be met only if our student body is drawn from all segments of society.

Third, as an American institution of higher education, UCLA has a special role to play in our nation's future. For generations, the American dream has been based on real opportunities for upward social and economic mobility. And that dream has been realized primarily through access to education. Many of us have been fortunate enough to see that dream come true for ourselves and for our children. We owe it to future generations to keep that dream alive.

For these three reasons, among others, we at UCLA must maintain the long-standing goal of ensuring a diverse student body, and we must reaffirm our commitment to achieving that goal.

Now that Proposition 209 is the law of the land here in California, we must rededicate ourselves to the concept of Outreach. Our short-term strategy is to stimulate applications to UCLA from underrepresented minority students who

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are UC-eligible, and to encourage those who are admitted to join us on this campus.

The long-term strategy remains relatively unchanged, and it holds the most promise for the future. The challenge is to provide equal opportunity for all of California's youngsters. Sweeping improvements in K-14 education are needed. This will not be easy, but we must do our part to bring about the necessary changes.

I've spoken thus far of two traditional UCLA values that are key to making the transition to greatness; namely, shared governance and diversity. A third element essential to the transition requires some departure from tradition. It relates to allocation of resources.

Traditionally, public universities have emphasized coverage; that is, they allocated their resources in a manner that enabled them to conduct research and teaching in as many fields and subfields as possible. The rationale underlying this approach was entirely sensible: it stemmed from the felt obligation to ensure that qualified students, especially graduate students, attending their state's public university could specialize in whatever subjects they might reasonably expect to find covered at a university.

Private universities felt – and feel – no such obligation. If a student wishes to specialize in a field or subfield not offered by a particular private university, the student would be expected simply to attend a different university – one that did have faculty expertise in the student's chosen specialized area. The best of the private universities have placed greater emphasis on quality – often at the expense of coverage.

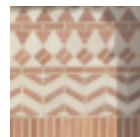
UCLA is among a handful of universities that offer both quality and coverage. But a truly great university can't do everything. It must focus its resources on what it can do best.

Fortunately for us, UCLA can elect to sacrifice some coverage in favor of an even higher degree of quality. We can elect to “concentrate on excellence.” And we can do this without undermining the opportunities for Californians and others to specialize in whatever fields they'd like. That's because UCLA is not the only public research university campus in this state; any subspecialty that might not be available at UCLA almost surely would be available at another campus of the University of California. How fortunate the citizens of this state are to have the outstanding nine-campus system of the University of California!

Let me offer some preliminary thoughts about a strategy of concentrating on excellence.

First, it is important to recognize that this is a strategy for focusing resources, not for reducing them. The idea is to loosen the requirement on coverage so we can shift resources over time to those fields and subfields in which UCLA has or can have an academic comparative advantage. In those areas where we concentrate our resources, we should expect to be a leader among universities everywhere.

Second, a strategy of concentrating on excellence must be implemented primarily within academic units, not across them. One of UCLA's clear comparative advantages is the comprehensiveness of its academic programs, ranging from the many disciplinary and interdisciplinary units and subunits in the College of Letters and Science to the eleven professional schools and their subunits. We would not want to undermine that comprehensiveness of academic perspectives. Within those units, however, there may be more room to maneuver. We may find, for example, that quality can be enhanced if we take advantage of an opportunity to appoint two or more outstanding faculty candidates whose areas of specialization overlap considerably, even if that means that we





may have an uncovered “gap” in some other area of specialization. Surely, a graduate student seeking to specialize in a field not covered at UCLA will find it well covered on one or more of our sister campuses. Similarly, for those individuals seeking to specialize in an area in which we have concentrated our resources, UCLA would be the university at which to study.

Third, a strategy of concentrating on excellence can succeed only if it is welcomed by the faculty and implemented by the faculty. This process cannot be effected from the Chancellor’s Office. Decisions about the directions of academic programs for the most part are made within departments and schools. Within these units, the question of how best to focus teaching and research resources to enhance quality is best addressed by knowledgeable faculty and academic administrators. As Chancellor, I can help, but only in ways that are acceptable to you.

Fourth, a strategy of concentrating on excellence is inherently evolutionary. Over time, it would influence decisions on faculty appointments, on investments in facilities, and on admissions of students, especially graduate students. Progress would take years rather than weeks or months.

Implementation of a strategy of concentrating on excellence would require close cooperation among faculty, administrators, and other members of the UCLA family, and, from time to time it would tax our patience. But we could do it!

I’m excited about the future of UCLA. This is a young institution with a reputation for excellence, with a proud tradition of being on the rise, and with enormous potential. All of this is a credit to the founders of UCLA, who had a vision and overcame great obstacles to realize it. It is a credit to inspiring leaders like Franklin Murphy and Charles Young, whose visions were even grander, and who somehow managed to realize those as well. And it is a credit to you, the faculty, who have chosen UCLA as your academic home, and who have made a commitment to fulfilling our mission of teaching, research, and public service.

The triumphs of this university are your triumphs. By concentrating on excellence, together we can ensure that UCLA will be among that small group of universities recognized worldwide as the very best. I look forward to working with you to meet the challenges that surely will face us, and to enjoying with you the heady excitement of success.

Thank you. ▲

