

March 3, 2003

THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Last month I convened a meeting of the Council of Chancellors and Senior Vice Presidents to explore how the University, with constrained resources, can increase its enrollment as much as it now appears will be necessary, while maintaining quality. I am pleased to report on our discussion.

The University's explosive growth in enrollment is a serious problem, not only because of the state's financial condition, but also because current enrollment exceeds the University's 1999 enrollment plan. When that plan was formulated, it was based on four assumptions--the growth in California high school graduates then projected by the Department of Finance (DOF); a constant 7.3 percent of public high school graduates enrolling in UC as freshmen; the goal based on an agreement with the community colleges of enrolling 10,300 transfer students per year; and an increase in graduate enrollment to 18 percent of the total. All of these assumptions have proved to be low. DOF now projects that high school graduates will be 5 to 10 percent higher, freshman participation has risen to 7.7 percent, we expect to exceed the Partnership Agreement projections for community college transfers, and graduate enrollment is slightly above the plan. In light of this new information it is necessary to reassess how campuses are dealing with the rapid growth in enrollment and determine the maximum capacity of the system.

It is also important to look past 2010, the year our previous plan targeted. DOF is now willing, at least tentatively, to project high school graduates to 2017. Their data indicate the rapid growth we are currently experiencing will plateau in 2012, and be essentially flat to 2017, although there are some indications it may begin to rise again at that point. This means that after a decade of rapid growth, we may have at least five years to recover before having to face the challenges of growth yet again.

The chancellors spent several hours describing the current circumstances on their campuses, how current levels of growth are affecting them, and what they foresee as the limits on growth. While it seems possible in the next decade to accommodate the growth UC is experiencing, there are some actions that need to be taken now to ensure that we maintain the quality of our programs.

The most crucial of these steps is State funding for the summer quarter for the four campuses that must still offer summer programs in a

self-supporting mode. Without State support, these campuses cannot expand summer instruction to make it equivalent in scope and quality to the other academic terms. In addition, they cannot offer student financial aid in the summer, making it impossible to meet the existing enrollment plans.

Similarly, those campuses currently working on re-analyzing their Long Range Development Plan need to be successful in developing modified enrollment plans that are acceptable to their communities. Adequate facilities will be essential to accommodate growing programs, making it crucial that the voters pass the next facilities bond act. And throughout this period of growth, all campuses must ensure that students move through their degree programs expeditiously--through good advising, access to summer instruction, and adequate financial aid.

In addition to our immediate plans, we must also look to the future and consider what can be done, particularly in the post-2017 era, to protect both access and quality. This will require significant creativity--new off-campus centers, new approaches to community college transfers, incorporating summer instruction and new technologies into curricular design, and expansion of the Education Abroad Program. Finally, yet another option is opening another UC campus. If an eleventh campus is needed, we should begin detailed planning at least 10 to 12 years before the opening date.

I will continue to keep you apprised of our planning efforts, and I anticipate further discussion with you when we bring the next report on the tracking of quality measures before the Board later this year.

Fiat Lux,

Richard C. Atkinson
President

cc: Chancellors