

# University of California Office of the President

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## Remarks on Appointment as President of the University of California

Richard Atkinson



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# Remarks on Appointment as President of the University of California

*August 1995*

It is an honor to be selected the seventeenth president of the University of California. I come to the position with full knowledge of the enormous challenges facing the University. More importantly, I am inspired by the remarkable contributions that the University has made to the well-being of California. The people of California have created the finest public university in the world, and I am committed to maintaining its preeminence.

As we approach the twenty-first century, the University is more critical than ever to the economic vitality and social integrity of our society.

In economic terms, a society's wealth was once thought to be dependent upon its natural resources. Today, a society's wealth is the knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving abilities of its citizens. It is the University's responsibility—shared with the state's

other public and private institutions—to enable Californians to achieve their full potential. We must continue to provide a challenging and rewarding education to our students so that they can compete in the global economy in which we now live.

In social terms, universities provide opportunities for students from widely varying backgrounds to come together and develop respect and understanding for each other. It is here that individual threads are woven together into a strong and resilient social fabric. We must continue to provide the highest-quality education to the full spectrum of qualified students. We must keep this commitment alive for our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

The University's ability to contribute to the economic and social well-being of California is dependent upon its capacity to create new knowledge through research. Not only do research and scholarship contribute to the excellence of our teaching programs, but they also yield large dividends in the form of new industries, new jobs, and an improved quality of life. We must do everything we can to maintain the vitality of the University's research programs.

In order to accomplish our mission, we will need to set clear priorities:

- First, the University must continue to attract and retain the best-qualified faculty and staff by remaining competitive with other leading universities.

- Second, to ensure that all students are afforded a quality education, the University must work with the California State University system and the California Community Colleges to maintain the promise of the Master Plan for Higher Education.

- Third, the University must provide greater assistance to elementary and secondary schools to give young people the best possible start in life.

- Fourth, the University must forge new research partnerships with industry and government to ensure California's continued economic progress.

- Finally, we must develop new management systems for the University that promote efficiency and guarantee accountability to the people of California.

Over the past several years, the Regents and President Peltason have held the University together through one of the most difficult periods in the history of California. More challenges are ahead. As we meet these challenges, I am convinced that the University will continue to provide rich dividends to the people of California, who have so generously supported the institution throughout its history. This institution has a special place in my heart, and I will do my utmost to ensure its future.