

REMARKS TO THE UC FACULTY OUTREACH CONFERENCE

President Robert C. Dynes

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I want to begin by thanking Larry Pitts and Winston Doby for convening this gathering on this very important topic. And I'd like to speak to you today AS a faculty member – as a colleague – about our involvement in the University's efforts to reach out to students in our public school system.

The faculty are the intellectual core of the University of California and are its most vital resource when it comes to addressing complex societal problems – be they in health, technology, economic development, or many other areas.

There is probably no problem in our society more deserving of attention than the educational achievement of young people. Given the land-grant, public-service mission of the University of California, it is the perfect issue for we UC faculty members to be involved in addressing today.

Now, that's all nice to say. But what really, specifically, DO we faculty bring to the table when we become involved in outreach? Why can't the task be left to others? I think we bring several important things to the effort:

- subject matter expertise;
- real, practical, day-to-day familiarity with the skills students need for educational success;
- academic credentials that are useful in getting the attention of students, teachers, and principals alike
- and a love for teaching and for students.

We are here today to highlight the faculty role in outreach and to find ways to expand it – for expand it we must.

We need to find ways to reduce the barriers to faculty participation in outreach and make sure that outreach is viewed as a central part of what the University does.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke in Sacramento on the subject of educational opportunity and access to college. There, I pointed out that historically, the University of California's responsibility has been to educate California's very best students and to draw them from all walks of life. High quality and broad access are our mandate.

Moreover, I believe that high quality and broad access are of a piece – they are not in conflict. We can only call ourselves a “high-quality” institution if the people we serve are broadly representative of the state that supports us to begin with.

So, an important task for us today is to find ways of meeting our historical commitments to the people of California – to find ways of preserving that high quality and broad access. And outreach to the public schools is a critical ingredient.

As a university, we can't just be involved in saying "yes" or "no" to the students who come to our door seeking admission. We need to be involved, on the front end, in helping close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged young people in our public schools.

I believe we, the University of California, are at our best when we're excelling at all three missions of teaching, research, and public service at the same time, and approaching them in an integrated way. That's the kind of thing we need to be doing in outreach as a whole, and faculty involvement is key to making it happen.

Today, we're facing a very difficult moment in the evolution of outreach, with state funding being cut 50%. But I also think this is a moment of great opportunity. It's a moment for us to forge new partnerships with the other educational segments to continue the work of outreach in creative new ways.

And I think it's a great opportunity for the UC faculty to exert new leadership in this area.

There clearly are barriers to engaging faculty more deeply in the work of outreach. There are:

- resource barriers,
- bureaucratic barriers,
- barriers of isolation and disconnectedness,
- and, frankly, there are time-demand barriers. Faculty are busy people who devote a great deal of time to teaching, to research, and to service to the University.

This conference is a great place to talk about, sort through, and come up with ideas for overcoming those barriers.

I've found, in my own field of physics, that the best work gets done when many people come together in truly interdisciplinary collaboration. That's what we need to do here – bring many perspectives together to help solve the problem of the achievement gap in our public schools.

It's the perfect problem for an interdisciplinary approach, and I know that we have some great thinkers from many disciplines here to focus on it. I look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations today, and to more conversations in the future.