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An Open Letter From President Mark G. Yudof

This is a proud day for the University of California. This morning, UC campuses performed a full sweep, placing first, second and third in *Washington Monthly's* annual college rankings. Six of our campuses were ranked among the top 25 universities in the nation. My congratulations to students, staff and faculty at UC Berkeley (ranked first), UC San Diego (2nd), UCLA (3rd), UC Davis (10th), UC Riverside (16th) and UC Santa Barbara (21st).

It is, of course, easy to be cynical about college rankings—too often they have been prone to manipulation or swayed by factors that do not reflect directly on the quality of education. These rankings are different. They reflect UC's values. The magazine's editors note as much in declaring their criteria for what makes a top-quality university. "In the information age we all depend on colleges and universities to produce groundbreaking research and new inventions, to serve as engines of social mobility for first-generation college students, and to mold the minds of future leaders."

By these standards, the University of California stands out. Our campuses, the *Washington Monthly* editors note, "enroll unusually large numbers of low-income students while maintaining high graduation rates, generating billions of dollars in research funding, and sending a healthy number of students into service programs like the Peace Corps." We are gratified that our public service priorities are so clearly valued. They offer, in the editors' words, "a measure of not just what colleges can do for you, but what colleges are doing for the country."

The article is noteworthy for another reason. It recognizes that UC's future excellence is at risk due to the steep budget cuts resulting from California's budget crisis. In the short term, we are coping with \$813 million in cuts during the current fiscal year by instituting student fee increases, staff and faculty salary reductions, and cuts to vital programs. In the long run though, Californians will have to reset their priorities and ask their lawmakers to begin investing again in the university system that is—rightfully, and not just in our opinion—the pride not only of our state, but of the nation. Not because of rankings, but because it is the right thing to do.

With best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Mark G. Yudof
President