



Web Chat with President Dynes

In his first weeks in office, UC President Robert C. Dynes held an hour-long web chat with faculty and staff from around the UC system. The following is a transcript of questions and answers from this October 14th chat. The chat series also includes two conversations with UC alumni and students.

For more information about President Dynes and future events, please visit the president's web page at <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/president/welcome.html>.

- Moderator Welcome! UC President Robert C. Dynes will be answering questions from faculty and staff today. He will be joining us at 10 a.m., and he will answer as many questions as possible during the scheduled hour. You can post questions now if you like, and President Dynes will respond when he joins us at 10 a.m.
- President Dynes has just joined us – thank you for spending an hour with us today.
- BOB DYNES I'm happy to be here. Communication with faculty and staff is very important to me, so thank you all for logging on.
- <Q> What do you see as the most challenging issues faced by staff in the upcoming year? And what will the University do to support the staff in facing these challenges?
- BOB DYNES The most challenging thing I see is offering staff the opportunity to educate themselves and advance themselves in a difficult budget time – to allow staff to see a rewarding career. The challenge is to develop a more stable budget process that can ride through the highs and lows that we've been experiencing over the past several years.
- <Q> I've heard rumors that staff salaries will be cut 15-20% due to the budget situation. Can you comment please.
- BOB DYNES I don't accept the premise that 15- to 20-percent salary cuts are going to happen. We must do the best we can to maintain competitive salaries and benefits. It's true I don't have direct control of the U.S. and of California, we should do our best to sustain more stable funding sources than we have experienced in the past.
- <Q> We've recently been alerted that our health premiums are going up. Is this something that will continue? One of the reasons I came to UC was because the health benefits were so good. Now, they are not nearly as good as my old job.
- BOB DYNES The answer is yes, unfortunately. If you look at the rest of the country, health premiums are headed for a train wreck. I talked to my colleagues at Lucent Technologies, and their premiums are going up enormously – in industry they're

going up tremendously compared with UC. We're going to do our best to ease that load, and especially for those whose salaries are modest.

<Q> Good morning. I worry all the time about budget cuts to my department. Is there any chance of VERIPs for next year? The VERIP is the only thing I can think of that may save our department from going under....Thanks.

BOB DYNES I certainly recognize the appeal of a VERIP and recognize the value of the previous VERIP. The question is whether the pension fund can afford it. The volatility of the market in the last couple of years has made that a real question, so we need to tread very carefully in this area.

<Q> Have you spoken to the new governor? He's expressed much support for K-12 education. What about UC and other higher education?

BOB DYNES I've not yet spoken to the governor. I've written him, offering the resources of the University, and I've contacted several members of the transition team. I hope the governor recognizes the enormously valuable investment that the University of California represents for the state of California, and I will express that to him at the first opportunity.

<Q> Many of us lived through a 5% pay cut in 1993 – do you foresee a pay cut of any kind, even if not 15-20%?

BOB DYNES I hope not. I recall that, when that cut was implemented, the Capital Accumulation Program (CAP) was instituted, which helped ease the pain. I hope we're not led to that this time.

<Q> Welcome. Could you please share with us your perspective of UC Cooperative Extension and it's role in the larger University system, the state, and local communities, as well as your vision for our organization for the future?

BOB DYNES The University of California was created as a land-grant institution to serve the agricultural needs of the state of California. I don't see that that responsibility has diminished at all. We've taken on many additional responsibilities, of course, but California is the breadbasket of North America, and we should maintain that position – and UC needs to play a leading role in that.

The cuts in this area have been horrendous, and I very much regret the impact that has on individuals and programs – particularly after the cuts in these areas in the early 90s.

<Q> Many staff units are chronically understaffed and have been for some time. Low staffing translates to low morale. What advice do you have for employees with impossibly high workloads?

BOB DYNES I sympathize – I know that many people in the University are doing more with less. One thing that has contributed to workload today is the decentralization of the work that has occurred over time; in some cases, it's my view that we're doing things 10 times (or 11 times). Perhaps it is time to look again at whether we can find areas where we can operate more efficiently by sharing resources and best practices.

Let me add that I think many people are proud to work at the University of California: they're proud to be part of an institution that has such a remarkable

reputation and impact on the lives of so many people. So while times are tough, I hope we can all continue to be proud of a job well done. And we will look very seriously at the workload issues you raised.

<Q> Thank you for creating this forum - it illustrates your continued commitment to having discussions with staff directly. Will you be having more of these in the future, and will you be creating other opportunities for the campus staff to communicate directly with OP [Office of the President]?

BOB DYNES Thanks very much. And thank YOU for engaging in this forum. YES – I do plan to have many avenues of communication with the University community. Many of the things you saw at UCSD, including Dynes Desk, will be incorporated at UCOP.

<Q> Is it possible for the UC system to alter its funding model so that it is substantially less dependent on state funds for its operating budget? How does UC compare in this regard to other large public universities?

BOB DYNES At the moment, about 23 percent of our budget comes from the state. The remainder comes from federal sources, hospital revenues, and other enterprises. That 23 percent, of course, is extremely important because it supports a large number of faculty and staff – and the core instructional program. We continue to look for other sources, but I also would like to find ways to develop a more stable funding algorithm in partnership with the state. The state needs to recognize the tremendous value of the UC system and fund it in a stable way.

<Q> In thinking about UC and UCOP in particular becoming more "green," I recall that during the threatened brown outs, we all got by just fine with fewer lights on. Also, I understand it's possible now to buy 100% recycled paper at the same price as the paper we're using. A policy statement from you just to OP [Office of the President] about using less power and buying recycled paper would make a huge difference in our impact on the environment and would go a long way in helping us meet the sustainability goals adopted by the Regents. Thanks!

BOB DYNES The Regents have adopted a clean energy and green buildings standard, and there's a lot of excitement around the system around these issues. I hope we can become leaders in the country with these standards, and I'm personally excited by it.

<Q> Why are we adding Merced when we can't support what we have?

BOB DYNES We're adding Merced because we're an institution that has to look 10 to 20 years into the future. The Valley is very much underserved by the University of California, and the campus will be an educational and economic engine for the future of the Valley and the state as a whole.

<Q> I just logged on, but has anyone asked about the increase in health benefit costs for faculty. In the range of 275-360% for higher salaried employees? Is this fair?

BOB DYNES Thanks for the question. Given the huge increases we're seeing from the health plans, we have provided the largest subsidy to lower-paid employees. That is the fairest we can be under the enormous stress of rising health care costs. We have tried to keep our costs below those of other large institutions throughout the country.

<Q> You have two key Chancellorial openings to fill. What's the status of these

searches?

BOB DYNES The search committee has been formed for the San Diego chancellor, and its first meeting will be this Friday. I'm in the process of putting together a search committee for Berkeley chancellor.

<Q> What is the meaning of life, the universe, and everything?

BOB DYNES As a physicist, my answer is, "Let there be light"!

<Q> Do you feel the University is doing a good job of communicating our mission to the public and defending its validity and importance to the state -- i.e., the public good of higher education?

BOB DYNES We can do far better, and I intend to. Part of the motivation for my first six months "traveling inauguration" is to carry that message to many corners of California. I hope you will help me do this.

<Q> Good morning, Bob, I just wanted to check in quickly as I'm quite busy and wanted to know your relationship with the SD chapter of the UC LGBTIA? Did you do a lot of work together? How was that work?

BOB DYNES Yes, we did do a lot of work together. They are an integral part of the UCSD community – if you want a report card on how it went, I hope you'll ask them!

<Q> Do you think UC will be forced to raise its budgeted student-faculty ratio by 5% from 18.7 to 19.6?

BOB DYNES There is continual stress on the student-faculty ratio, and we will do everything we can to maintain the 18.7 while maintaining individual campus flexibility.

<Q> Any thoughts on the future of LLNL [Livermore National Laboratory] and its UC contract?

BOB DYNES Livermore does a great service for the nation, and the missions of Livermore and Los Alamos complement each other in many ways. It's my view that those two laboratories should be managed by the same contractor. In that way, the nation is best served. We are proceeding on the Los Alamos laboratory competition assuming that we will compete – we are not yet committed to compete until the details of the competition and the contract are released by the Department of Energy.

The employees at all of the laboratories should be enormously proud of the accomplishments of these laboratories in serving the nation. The science is superb, the technology incomparable, and the nation's security stronger because of these laboratories.

<Q> Good morning, President Dynes. I recently learned that library books that have been paid for by state funds and can no longer fit into the collection, are required by either policy or law to be disposed of and can not be given to a non-profit to distribute to poorer communities within America or the rest of the world. Can you comment on this? Or have someone look into this? It seems a waste.

BOB DYNES Thank you for raising the issue. I don't know about it, but I will ask folks to look into it.

<Q> Will you be visiting all 10 campuses?

BOB_DYNES Absolutely. I've actually been to all 10 campuses, of course, but not as president – I'm looking forward to the opportunity to visit as president and meet as many people in person as possible.

<Q> A legislator called UC the worst public employer in California. What will you do to change that image of UC?

BOB DYNES Thank you for the question. I don't believe that statement is true, but I do believe we can do a better job helping people understand all that UC does and tries to do for its employees. Let me add to this that communication in my mind is a two-way street, and I must hear from you, just as you need to hear from me.

<Q> What are some of the ideas you have for the university for next 5-10 years? How will the staff/faculty be a part of that?

BOB DYNES The University of California – every campus – can be a world leader. I envision that each campus will have areas that are the best in the world, and that people will come there from all over to learn. We are a true system of 10 campuses, as opposed to a hierarchy, and I would like to see each and every campus shine. The faculty and staff are the ones who are going to make this happen. Let me say that I believe every campus ALREADY is a world leader in many areas. The task now is to build on those areas of excellence. We have a great foundation to build on.

<Q> I just read a question about used library books. I think used computing equipment should be donated also. Can UC look into this?

BOB DYNES These are great ideas for using our resources efficiently and serving the community creatively. We will look into them further. Thanks.

<Q> Why do senior officials get increases to stay "competitive" in the market but the rest of us can't even get salaries to live on?

BOB DYNES I understand your frustration. We have made a number of efforts – the CAPs of the last couple of years and the assistance in the health care area the last two years come to mind – to assist lower-paid employees. Adequate funding for salaries remains a top priority for us, and the recovery of the California economy will help a great deal in this regard. As a group, senior executives have gotten the same increases as others in the University – it's in a few isolated instances, involving recruitment and retention issues, where we've had to give higher individual raises to preserve our managerial excellence, which we need now more than ever.

Moderator President Dynes, thank for taking an hour from your schedule today for this chat.

BOB DYNES Thank you to everyone who participated. I have learned from your questions, and I assure you that we will have many more opportunities to talk. I'm sorry I wasn't able to get to everyone's question. Let me just say, again, that we should be proud of the role the University of California plays in California and the nation – and the role YOU play in making us the best university in the world. The issues you've raised will be very much on my mind in the coming months. Thanks, and stay tuned! Bob.