

UC Office of the President

Working with University Constituencies, Within and Without

Title

Opening Address, All-University Faculty Conference on Graduate Student and Faculty Affirmative Action, San Diego, California

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/14p3964s>

Author

Gardner, David P.

Publication Date

1990-02-01

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

OPENING ADDRESS

All-University Faculty Conference on Graduate Student and Faculty Affirmative Action

President David P. Gardner
University of California

Pala Mesa Resort
February 8, 1990

Fellow members of the University of California community:

I am delighted to welcome you to this first All-University Faculty Conference in 14 years--a fact that, all by itself, makes this a special occasion. It also, in my view, lends uncommon significance to the theme of this set of meetings. We were not faced with the question of "What should we discuss this year?" but with choosing, for the first time in almost a decade and a half, an issue of critical importance to the University and its future--where we are and where we need to be in graduate and faculty affirmative action.

In these opening remarks, I wish to offer questions, not answers. The purpose of this conference, as I see it, is for representatives of the nine campuses and my office to discuss, debate and formulate responses to this issue. Suggested responses from me, or answers if you prefer, would not just be premature; they would be demonstrably unhelpful in terms of what we are here to do.

Instead, I will spend my brief time this afternoon sketching briefly for you the context within which I see the issue we are considering, and I will end with

some questions that I hope will be worth keeping in mind as our discussions proceed over the next few days.

In 1868 California was a rough, sparsely populated, and isolated society, still riding mostly on the wealth and energy of the Gold Rush but singularly lacking in the history, tradition, and experience that were customarily precedent to the creation of a university. Yet as early as the constitutional convention of 1849 it was taken for granted that California would have a university, and that it would be an outstanding one. It must have taken considerable boldness of vision to plan for the building of a great university from such unpromising circumstances as California's raw frontier society then offered.

But as the early architects of the University recognized, California was at the beginning of a dynamic curve of development that called for the fullest possible cultivation of its human as well as its natural resources. And as California's land grant university, UC undertook not just to teach the traditional subjects but also to broaden the curriculum in response to the society it served--first in the "agricultural and mechanical arts" and later in every conceivable field of learning. And as part of this tradition of service, the University has sought two strategic goals since the very beginning: to provide an education of exceptional quality to the students entrusted to its care, and to welcome into the student body persons of talent and promise irrespective of their gender, social, economic,

religious, or ethnic characteristics. On balance, and viewing it over time, we have done it as well as any university in the world.

Today California is no longer sparsely populated, but the nation's largest state and one of the world's great centers of in-migration; no longer isolated, but tied to countries around the globe by the insistent threads of culture, commerce, and communication; no longer a society on the margin, but the rough equivalent of one of the world's great nations in terms of its size, its economy, and its influence. California has changed--and so has the University--but our twin goals of access and excellence have not. We still welcome students who have prepared themselves to meet our standards, whatever their circumstances or background. And once they are admitted, we expect a great deal of them, just as we expect a great deal from faculty members in terms of professional accomplishment and promise. These two commitments--to exacting standards and to the creation of a community open to talent--remain the lodestar that has guided the University of California for 122 years.

This conference, then, is entirely within the spirit of the University of California tradition of serving the state and its people, of demanding the best of ourselves, of adding to our understanding and knowledge of the world, and of assuring that people of talent and promise are afforded their opportunity irrespective of

personal characteristics that in other places and in other times would, in some instances, have prejudiced their opportunities and thwarted their goals.

As you know, and as some of the background material you received explains, California today is undergoing a swift and dramatic transformation:

- By 2005, California's population is projected to grow by 22 percent, from 28.3 million to 34.5 million.
- The K-12 population--the population from we select our students-- will grow at the even faster rate of 50 percent between now and 2005.
- Along with growth, California's population is becoming rapidly more culturally and ethnically diverse. That trend will continue, from all we can tell, fueled by immigration, especially from Asian countries and the nations south of our border. As you know, by the turn of the century or thereabouts, California's population will have no ethnic or racial majority.

For the University, these developments translate into formidable challenges. Using 2005 as the ending point again, our student body is expected to grow

from 160,000 to approximately 220,000. Ladder rank faculty will grow from about 8,000 to 11,800, and between now and the year 2005 we will have to recruit 10,400 ladder rank faculty to accommodate growth, retirements, resignations, disabilities, and deaths.

It would be easier, of course, not to grow. The University is, after all, among the most distinguished academic institutions in the world; adding to our size will not necessarily add to our stature. But in keeping with our historic role, and in accord with the California Master Plan for Higher Education, UC must grow if we are to keep the doors open to the coming generations. How do we go about meeting our historic goals in the context of today's California?

First, we need to recognize that one of the challenges we confront is the sheer pace of the changes now working their way through our society. California has been growing by some 700,000 citizens--the rough equivalent of the population of the state of Delaware--every year. Many are immigrants who face language or cultural or economic barriers. If the state were growing by 70,000 annually instead of 700,000 we could deal with the challenges that growth generates in more routine and familiar ways. But the scale of California's population growth, combined with its expanding racial and cultural diversity, means that it cannot be coped with by a business-as-usual approach.

Second, we need to build on the successes we have achieved so far. For example:

- The percentage of Black, Hispanic, and Native American freshmen at UC has doubled since 1980, increasing about one percent every year to the current figure of about 19 percent. And if one were to include Asian-Americans, one of every three UC students today is a minority.
- UC's five-year graduation rates for Blacks and Hispanics are better than those of comparable public institutions--50 percent for Blacks, 57 percent for Chicanos, 61 percent for Latinos, and 54 percent for American Indians. These figures compare with the five-year graduation/continuation rate for all UC students of 65 percent.
- Minority graduate students increased by 17.6 percent from 1983 to 1988, compared with an 8.3 percent growth rate for total graduate student enrollment during those years.
- UC's minority faculty increased by 45 percent between 1977 and 1988. Most recent progress has been especially encouraging. Minorities and women represent almost one-half of the faculty

recruited during 1988-89. And these increases in minority faculty ran counter to national trends, at a time when the nation's pool of minority candidates for initial faculty appointments remained very small.

These accomplishments are testimony to the commitment, hard work, and talent of many within and outside the University, and their greatest importance lies in demonstrating that success is possible, that individual and institutional dedication can make a difference. With this in mind, let me offer some questions to ponder as we think about what comes next.

- What can we do--that we are not already doing--to address the differential rates at which students of various ethnic and racial backgrounds qualify for the University? Although the overall UC eligibility rate is approximately 12.5 percent, Blacks qualify for the University at a rate of 4.5 percent and Hispanics at 5 percent.
- How can we increase the percentage of minorities in our graduate and professional schools from the current figure of 21 percent? And what can be done to encourage a broader distribution of minority--and women--scholars among the various disciplines? In particular, since many minority students who pursue study beyond the

baccalaureate tend to enter the professions, are there things we can do to make academic fields more attractive?

- How can the faculty help? What are the contributions that faculty are especially qualified to make, and how can all of us do a better job in general of drawing on the wealth of talent and ideas that exists among faculty at the University of California in pursuit of these objectives?

Institutions of our kind have been around for a long time because they serve essential goals. They conserve, protect, and transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated knowledge and comprehension we have of the world, its civilizations, and the ideas that have driven its peoples and cultures. They add to our understanding of the physical world and the vast domain of nature. They share with society the knowledge they conserve and generate. I am speaking, of course, about teaching, research, and public service, and all that those critical functions have come to mean in today's world.

At the same time, universities change and adapt as the larger society itself changes, as, for example, in the nineteenth century when American universities embraced the land grant idea in conjunction with the liberal arts tradition, graduate studies, research, and empiricism to form the modern American

university. Universities, among civilization's most conservative of institutions, have endured for centuries because they have adapted, when necessary, to changing times--even if not always easily or quickly!

I believe that the times demand of us today a willingness to look at old issues with new eyes, to explore our traditions for the light they might cast on our future, and to plumb our options with an openness of mind and spirit characteristic of great universities everywhere. We are, in short, confronted today with the two challenges we have always faced as a public university in a growing, diverse, and dynamic state--to serve California with the excellence that only a world-class university can provide; and to assure that our doors are open to the talent that California has drawn so abundantly, and perhaps never in greater measure than today.

I am confident that, with your help, the University can meet these challenges. And I wish to conclude by expressing my deep gratitude and appreciation to each of you for your willingness to take the time from demanding schedules to address these fundamental issues. I look forward to discussing them with you and to the recommendations that will flow from these meetings over the next few days.