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Author

Gardner, David P.

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The University Presidency: A Personal View

American Physical Society

David P. Gardner, President
University of California

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It is a pleasure to be here, and a special pleasure to begin my remarks by congratulating Professor Malmberg and Professor Wong on the honors they have received tonight. The University of California shares in the reflected glow of their accomplishments, and I am very pleased for them and for their University.

As you know, my topic tonight is "The University Presidency: A Personal View." What does the president of a large research university do? It is a question I am often asked, frequently by the faculty, and at times one senses the question is not always posed in a spirit of simple inquiry.

I concluded that the best way to share this topic with you is to adopt a scientific approach--that is, to divide the subject into smaller and more manageable units. Thus, I will talk about the experience of serving as a university president from three perspectives: 1) the responsibilities of the President; 2) what an average day involves; and 3) some of the more salient issues that presently engage the University's interest and attention and my own time as well. I will conclude by mentioning a few of the things I like and dislike about my present role.

I wish to begin by describing briefly the University of California.

-We have nine campuses, eight general campuses and one campus devoted exclusively to the health sciences. The general campuses are at Davis, Berkeley, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Riverside, Irvine and San Diego. The health sciences campus is at San Francisco.

-We own and operate five teaching hospitals, three law schools, nine agricultural field stations, some twenty-six uncommon and valuable research sites in the Natural Reserve System, and a world-renowned oceanographic institution here in San Diego.

-125 organized research units are distributed throughout the University, of which some 23 are multi-campus--that is, they involve faculty and research at more than one campus. Our research endeavors involve the University virtually everywhere in the world.

-We have exchange agreements with the world's leading universities, and through our Education Abroad Program, we send nearly a thousand students each year to study at 45 foreign universities in 25 countries.

-Our main and specialized libraries, of which there are 100, house 21 million volumes.

-More than 100,000 persons work for the University, including some 31,000 academic personnel, at our various branches, hospitals, and campuses.

-In the fall of 1984 we enrolled some 144,000 students-- 106,000 undergraduates, 26,000 graduate students, and an additional 12,000 health sciences students.

-To finance these activities, some \$3.7 billion were expended in 1984-85, of which roughly 40% came from State.

-In addition, three major national laboratories are managed by the University for the Federal Department of Energy. In 1984 these laboratories had total budgets of \$1.7 billion and employed 20,000 people.

As you are probably beginning to realize, the University is a very large organization. We feed thousands of people every day. Our meals are inexpensive--I'll stop there. We repair and maintain literally thousands of buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and offices. We purchase everything from enzymes to pencils. We contract for services of the most sophisticated kind--architects and actuaries, appraisers and accountants, bond counsel and investment advisers. We are one of the State's

largest employers. The direct economic impact of the University is very large indeed. The indirect economic impact is enormous. Our budget alone, for example, would rank 21st among the states if compared with state budgets in the U.S.

If we were a private corporation, the President's Office would probably be a holding company, with wholly-owned subsidiaries responsible for the various kinds of activities I have described. That is, we would in all likelihood have a subsidiary company operating our hospitals, another to assume responsibility for our organized research units, another for our teaching programs, another for our public services, and so forth. We would have our own insurance company, architectural firm, publishing house, and investment firm.

We cannot organize the University in this way, however, for two reasons. First, our nine campuses, by and large, carry out their responsibilities for teaching, research and public service simultaneously and more or less in one place. Second, the University's institutional form and character predate the American corporate model by about 800 years.

The American university, that is, has its roots in eight centuries of history, beginning with the universities of medieval Europe--Paris and Bologna and Salerno. Despite what our students sometimes think, however, the university is not entirely medieval. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the

American university, as we know it today, was created by the merging of three forces: the undergraduate model with its emphasis on the liberal arts, based largely on the British experience; the graduate school model, based on the German experience with its emphasis on empiricism, research and science; and the peculiarly American concept of applied arts and sciences and public service. The American university is, therefore, a uniquely American institution in its commitment to the threefold mission of teaching, research, and public service. This model has served the nation brilliantly.

But this model makes the University of California dissimilar to the corporate model which is more familiar to American business. The product we turn out is valuable--in fact essential--but not easily quantified nor always readily applicable. We also believe that decision-making in the University should be shared as fully as possible and with a minimum of hierarchy and bureaucracy; all this to enhance the probability that competent people, left alone to do their job, will yield up the most effective, creative, and promising work.

Well, what does the President do in an atypical organization like this? I clearly do not manage the work of professors of physics or music or law or pharmacy or engineering or history. But I am responsible for overseeing and sometimes managing the environment within which professors teach, students learn, researchers inquire, and staff and administrators carry out their various

functions. More specifically, I have the following obvious responsibilities, which I list in no particular order of significance:

-I am the chief administrative officer of the University and I am held accountable by The Regents for that role. It is not sufficient for me to inform the Board that a problem exists in the University and that it is someone else's fault. The Regents don't care whose fault it is. They do care that it receives appropriate attention, and they expect, reasonably enough, that the President will take responsibility for seeing to it.

-As chief administrative officer, I am responsible for recommending the appointments of key administrative people to The Regents--that is, the Chancellors, Vice Presidents, Directors of the national laboratories--and for monitoring and evaluating their performance. This is a very important part of my responsibilities. If the right people are chosen for these positions, much of my work is done. If not, I find myself doing someone else's job as well as my own.

-I have responsibility for developing University policy and recommending it to the Board of Regents for consideration and adoption; and when approved, for monitoring its implementation. I try to keep such policies to a minimum because

I believe, exceptions notwithstanding, that the best managed institutions are generally those that are managed least.

-The President also serves as the principal link between the Board of Regents and the UC community. The Board consists of thirty people, seven of whom serve by virtue of their office--the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the President and Vice President of the UC Alumni Association, for example--twenty-two Regents who are appointed by the Governor for twelve-year terms, and one student Regent elected by the Board. There are, in addition, two non-voting faculty representatives to the Board. The President is responsible for preparing the Board's agenda and for offering recommendations on all business coming to the Board.

-Next, the President has significant responsibility for preserving the University's constitutional autonomy--guaranteed to the University under Article IX, Section 9 of the State Constitution--and the intellectual and academic freedom of those who comprise the University community. That is not always easy, because of both internal and external pressures. In fact, depending on particular circumstances, I have sometimes found that there are as many internal as external pressures unfriendly to the free exchange of ideas.

-The President has the principal responsibility for acquiring the resources the University needs to carry out its missions of teaching, research, and public service. Our budget from the state comes to the University of California as a single item. It is not appropriated campus by campus. My job is to make the strategic budget decisions, to recommend a budget to The Regents, to encourage the State's affirmative response to the Regents' budget, and then to allocate the funds among the campuses and programs once they are appropriated. In addition to State funds, we receive significant support from the Federal government; in 1984 the University of California received more than 11% of all Federal funds for research awarded to colleges and universities nationally. Thus, seeing that the University's interests in Washington are looked after is an important part of my responsibilities as well. So, too, is seeing that the University receives enough private support to maintain its margin of excellence. Some \$225 million was received by the University this past year from private sources.

-The President is responsible for interpreting the University to the people of California, and for sharing with the University community what the public thinks of our work. Universities in America are created by the people, a fact that universities forget or neglect at their peril.

-Finally, the President must know enough about what is going on in the world to be able to sense and to comprehend the forces at work that bode change, and especially change for universities. Only with this knowledge can one help direct the institution one way as against allowing it simply to drift.

So much for my responsibilities, in a nutshell. What is my day like?

I work at home for a couple of hours after exercise and a light breakfast. I make phone calls to the East coast and Europe, and catch up on my correspondence and reading during such uninterrupted time. I arrive at the office about 9:45 a.m.--which eliminates commuting problems. My appointments begin at 10:00 a.m., and run until about 5:00 p.m., with phone calls sandwiched in between. Then I meet with my secretary from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. I work another two hours at night and perhaps five to six hours over the weekend. I am away from the office roughly one-third of the time travelling, principally within California, to Washington, D.C., or abroad.

I could work at this job twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, of course. I won't and don't do that, for two reasons. The first is that the institution gets less than the best if its president works nonstop. The other is that I believe in

balancing my personal and professional lives. I am not one to sacrifice a personal life to a professional one.

Thus, my personal and managerial philosophies lead me to delegate heavily. I have confidence in the people who work with me and recognize that any president needs people who will complement his strengths, not just reinforce them. I need people who have a different view of various issues than I do and who will speak out--but who will also recognize when I am the one who must decide and who are willing to support and defend my decision when it is once made.

Now, a brief mention of some of our major problems.

There is the practical and immediate problem of accommodating an enormous and wholly unexpected enrollment demand. When I came to the University as President in 1983, I was told that our undergraduate enrollment was expected to drop. So far it has done nothing but increase--so much so, in fact, that we have had to turn thousands of students away from the campus of their first choice because there was simply no room for them. We are finding ourselves with an entirely new set of questions. Will we be able to accommodate this enrollment growth, say, for the next fifteen years within our nine campuses? Where do we have growth potential? And can those campuses with growth potential increase their size at a rate sufficient to accommodate enrollment expectations? What resources will they need to do so? How can we

position ourselves in order to compete effectively in the academic marketplace knowing that roughly one-half of the present faculty will be retiring between now and the close of this century? How do we make decisions for each campus after the answers to these issues have been decided for the University generally?

Such issues involve planning, of course, and as I am sure you will appreciate, planning for a vast enterprise is enormously difficult. Besides the sheer size of the organization, there is the problem of projecting accurately all the factors that need to be taken into account in a world that is changing all the time. I am not one who believes that we can, with confidence, project very much beyond five years. But we should at least try to set down some limits and we should encourage people with a role in planning to think through their assumptions on a regular basis.

In addition to the burgeoning size of our enrollments, we are also concerned as an institution with the ethnic composition of our student body. California is undergoing profound demographic change. It is estimated that by the turn of the century, a majority of our population will consist of members of minority groups. This means that higher education in this state--including the University--simply must find ways to bring more members of underrepresented groups into our colleges and universities. Among the new program initiatives the University is asking the State to support, my highest new programmatic

priority for 1986-87 is a comprehensive proposal we have developed designed to increase the representation of ethnic minorities among the University's students and on its faculty. The strategy we have laid out involves increasing the pool of individuals motivated toward and qualified for University studies, and encouraging those prepared and so inclined to seek a faculty career. The University has a strategic need to be successful in all of its affirmative action efforts--for the sake of our students for the sake of California.

Another complex and important issue is that of the education we offer our undergraduate students. Traditionally, we have tried to provide our students with a broad liberal education as well as helping them prepare for a career. Undergraduate education, of course, has been in trouble for some time now. Some believe that it has suffered from the growth and development of graduate education, with its emphasis on specialization and research, a trend that has accelerated since the close of World War II. Others have pointed to the economic difficulties of the 1970s and early 1980s that gave a fresh impetus to vocationalism. Still others blame the colleges and universities themselves for tailoring their education to the marketplace in order to attract students.

Whatever the reasons for the current condition of undergraduate education, there are encouraging signs of a renewed national interest in the issue. During the past year alone, three

national reports on undergraduate education have appeared, and a fourth is soon to be released. I believe this is an issue of major import for universities and colleges throughout the country, and at UC we have just appointed a task force to examine how we conduct undergraduate education and to discover what changes might beneficially be considered.

I have also been encouraging the University to think more about the international dimensions of the subjects we teach. I believe this is also a compelling issue, especially here in California, which is strategically located along the Pacific Rim--that vast stretch of nation-states rimming the eastern and western boundaries of the Pacific Ocean. This area is destined to be a growing and powerful force in world affairs, one of the greatest centers of commerce, trade, and cultural exchange the world has ever known. Yet it has been my experience that Californians tend to be more parochial in their outlook than one would expect.

I am convinced the University of California can and must play a significant role in preparing this state for the changes that are coming our way as the nations of the Pacific Rim emerge as major players on the international scene. Part of UC's response is the proposal from UCSD to establish a Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies here in San Diego, an exciting and timely initiative, in my opinion.

Another broad issue for the University and the President is the University's role in managing the two nuclear weapons research laboratories at Los Alamos and Livermore. There are those within the University who believe that such a management role is inherently inappropriate for a university. On the other side are those--myself included--who believe that in managing Los Alamos and Livermore the University renders the nation a public service. Every five years The Regents must make a decision about whether to renew our contracts, and when that happens the question of our management role is re-opened, with attendant controversy, discussion, and debate. The President's responsibility in this area, it seems to me, is to see that The Regents have all the information they need to make an informed decision. That includes having the opportunity to hear the spectrum of opinion within the University on this question. The Regents just recently voted to renew the contracts, and for more than year before that we worked to see that the Board was, in fact, fully informed about the issue. The whole topic of Strategic Defense Initiative research is caught up in this issue, but it will surely not be limited to the labs alone. Our campuses will be contending with this matter as well during this academic year and probably beyond.

During the months UC was debating what its position would be on investments in South Africa--a recent and divisive issue--I was reminded of how quickly controversial universitywide issues tend to focus attention on the President. He becomes something of a

lightning-rod for various tensions within the University. Put in managerial terms, the issues that reach the President tend to be those on which others within the University cannot agree. Thus, a large part of my job consists in finding ways to resolve these often intractable matters in ways that confirm the University's academic values, honor its autonomy, serve its long-term interest, preserve its academic freedoms, minimize ill-will and hurt feelings, and are explainable and credible to interested parties and concerned observers.

Another, and equally important, part of the President's job is to raise issues that others do not but that need to be raised anyway. Most people tend to be wrapped up in their particular campus or discipline or specialty, and that's just as it should be. The President, however, is in a position to take both a broader and a longer view, and when things work well that is what he does--or tries to do, anyway.

Let me conclude this personal view of the presidency by sharing with you what I like and don't like about being President of a large university.

I dislike the fact that issues are constantly demanding my attention that are, in the long term, peripheral to the fundamental mission of the University and its *raison d'etre*. I imagine every chief executive struggles with this problem. It is all too easy to become entangled in day-to-day problems that

appear to be urgent at the time and yet are not central to the institution's long-term well-being.

I also miss the tempo and environment of campus life. I spent most of my career before becoming President of UC on a campus, and I now find myself one step removed. I regret that.

I also find that the position can be quite isolating. People tend to treat me differently, even though I don't regard myself as having changed any.

I really prefer a more private to a more public life, and it is hard to carve out the private life I would like within the confines of a public position.

But I am pleased to say that I find many more things to rejoice at than to deplore. It has been enormously satisfying to serve as President of the University of California during the past two years. Over that time we have reversed the downward trend of state support. For the first time in a decade and a half, the University is receiving the support it needs and is on its way to renewed fiscal health. It has been deeply rewarding to see the change our fiscal condition has made in attitudes and morale throughout the University. There is a renewed sense of the future and a stronger feeling that expectations that were once only dreams might indeed be fulfilled.

The variety, complexities and intellectually demanding nature of the work are also attractive and stimulating, as is the quality of people with whom one has the pleasure of working and serving, including faculty, staff, students, public officials, alumni, donors, journalists, foundation and business leaders, among others.

Finally, every drawback I can think of about being President is more than counterbalanced by the opportunity to be associated with a university as interesting, challenging, and excellent as the University of California. It is not just a remarkable institution; in many ways it is absolutely unique. Any one of our campuses might be compared to a leading American university; taking all nine together, however, there is nothing quite like the University of California anywhere in the world.

In sum, I enjoy serving as President and I feel very privileged to do so. And I am very grateful to you for your warm welcome and for your attention.