

UC Merced

AIARU: Panel 1 - Undergraduate Education and the Research University

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Author

Yudof, Mark

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**Academic Innovation and the American Research University
Symposium**

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Panel #1: Undergraduate Education and the Research University

[Mark G. Yudof, LL.B.](#)

President, University of California

**PRESIDENT,
UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA.
MARK G. YUDOF,
LL.B.**

I'm just going to make a few comments on some of the presentations and I'm largely in agreement with it. On the chart about the decline in the support for public education, there's an old saying that demography is destiny. And in 1950, over 50% of all American families had children under the age of 18. Now it's about a third of all American families. And if you look at another statistic, this comes, it's about ten years out of date from Peter Shaw's book, *Paradise Lost*, if you look at the voting population of California, only 21% of the voters have children under the age of 18. Because the senior citizens tend to vote in a larger numbers than the groups that have the larger family size. So I think you can see that when you're talking about social security, health care, pharmaceuticals for the elderly, lock up the bad guys. I mean, it may be that someone is to blame and we should be mad at the governor or the legislature or something, but I think you can explain a lot of that simply by the demographics of the country, and it's not just the size of the population. It's who votes.

The second thing I wanted to point out, that the Morrill Act was mentioned. The Morrill Act actually

rose in Illinois, passed by the Illinois legislature, made it to Congress, vetoed by President Buchanan. A real visionary. [*laughter*] And then it was, for reasons I'm not clear on, was transferred over to a New York congressman who introduced the bill. And it was signed in 1862 during the Civil War. And then you might look at the education clause of the Massachusetts constitution, which is drafted by John Adams, which refers not just to mechanical arts and so forth but refers to poetry and literature, a broad, humanist approach to education.

And the same thing, of course, with Thomas Jefferson in Virginia. Mostly done during the period of the Civil War--excuse me, the Revolutionary War or shortly thereafter, a time of great instability in America. Which leads me to my conclusion; now is the time for a revised federal role in higher education. My own view which I could explain at length but won't, Rod [Park], is that the president's program, which I fully support, the Pell Grants and all the rest, will not achieve the results that he wants to achieve because American higher education does not have the capacity to absorb all these youngsters since there is, the states are cutting higher education budgets at the same rate, or a greater rate, than the federal government is trying to achieve these great ends of having a larger percentage of our population to be educated.

And I think the administration actually understands this. I'm just hoping we're in line somewhere behind health care and cap and trade and some other things--some minor issues that are there. But it is time, and there is never a better time than now, particularly if you look at these competitiveness numbers. A lot of that is driven...the Chinese are not hung up on states' rights and on local budgets. Universities are a national priority in South Korea and China, parts of western Europe, Japan, and I could go on and on, India.

You know, we have a rather arcane system. It's almost to me like the president's proposal for an electric grid. It's time for some sort of national emphasis; if we left it to the states, the public utility companies. There needs to be a more comprehensive solution. I have some ideas about that. I'm sure others do.

On Rod's proposal to move toward upper division classes, but I assume not entirely to upper division classes because there is the football team, the basketball team, the volleyball team. I think it has a lot of power, and I think our commission will take a look at that. We've already been increasing the targets for transfer students even as, unfortunately, we have been paring back somewhat the targets for first time freshmen. And the only thing I would add to what Rod has said, is that part of the criticism of this proposal is that some faculty and many parents want their students to have the four-year Berkeley experience or the four-year Merced experience or whatever. I mean, people have different views of this. Now I always tell someone if he screwed up in high school, get yourself to one of the local community colleges here, go to the Santa Barbara community college, the ones surrounding Sacramento, work hard, and you'll get to go to a great UC institution.

But there are people who very devoted to this four-year experience, and that's...

And the other thing, and this is speculative, I'm not sure I believe these numbers, but the theory that the upper division courses are more expensive. The class size tends to be smaller, and things like that so that's an issue if we were to go down that route.

And finally, we do have some people looking very seriously at internet-based education. And it's conceivable that to some degree over the next decade many of our campuses will do more of the

freshman-sophomore type classes in an online type of setting. I know that Berkeley is looking at this. I'm not sure about UCLA. And I don't know where this will come out. It's one of these things, it's more of a cultural revolution than a technological revolution, and it's a qualitative thing; what's the quality of those offerings, and will people accept it as being something they want to do. But that may also, you know, obviously your marginal costs if you have the faculty develop and approve the courses, once you do that your production costs may be high. We estimate a quarter of a million dollars a course, but your marginal costs may be quite low, particularly if you teach something arcane, you teach Chaucer; you know, he's not writing any more. If you're teaching biology this could be a real problem, that the course would have to be completely redone every couple of years but, so those are the only comm--oh, one last thing on interdisciplinary work, which I enthusiastically endorse.

I think one of the issues of modern faculties is the fear that you get someone whose interdisciplinary but whose not good at either one of the disciplines. When I was a law school dean, we used to hire law and economics people. And I knew I was in trouble when the law faculty would say, "This man is not much of a lawyer but I guess he is a good economist." And the economists would say, "He's not much of an economist but I guess he's a good lawyer."

I mean, I don't think that's a deep reason not to get involved in this, but you have to be careful if people are deeply rooted in at least one of the two, both, or maybe three disciplines, whatever it is. These are serious, difficult subjects, and you know, we were talking, doing my marine biology really I ought to understand chemistry. And so it requires some depth and you have to be very careful in your faculty hiring, you're getting people of sufficient depth. Thank you.