

UC Merced

AIARU: Panel 2 - Organization and Structure of the Modern Research University

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Panel #2: Organization and Structure of the Modern Research University

Q/A

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MARTHA CONKLIN

He said he was in-between stopping lunch. But we started, this panel started late and we started out saying that we want to invite the audience to come up and talk. So we're...I'm going to suggest that we push back lunch to allow that time and open the mike, and really ask people in the audience to come up and talk about what your thoughts are, or structures, or our multi-objective function that we have to solve, to come up with a not so optimal structure. Did I get your terms right, Jeff? And, so please, come up.

MICHAEL DRAKE

While you all people are doing that, I was, I found some of Jeff's [Wright] comments vexing and I

wanted to make a comment that *[laughter]* ...
Actually, I didn't but I found them stimulating, if I could say that, and I did want to refer back to something else that I said earlier about when we're talking about titles and marketing or strategic communications or different words to describe different things. And when I mention social ecology, I wanted to make sure, since I see the red lights on and I remember YouTube, that *[laughter]* the social ecology school has truly wonderful people. Some of our most, many of our most distinguished faculty are in that particular discipline. They tend to be, though, also, they're lawyers or they're social scientists of various kinds. So they have some other traditional discipline that, that would be easier for me to describe to you in describing what they do. To say they're in public health or they're criminologists, etcetera, than if I said they're social ecologists. And that's what I meant about the names, sometimes. Molecular biology, I think, kind of describes something that's kind of hooked on in work. Cellular biology, you can say, gosh, I have an idea of what that is. And so I think as, as, when you're looking at structure what to the extent that you have neologisms or new ways of describing what you're doing. It has to be described in a way that works well for the people who understand it well but also well as a way to reach out to others to help pull them in. And I wanted to make sure that I didn't say anything that they weren't absolutely outstanding. *[laughter]* *[silence]*

CONKLIN

So is lunch more pressing? *[laughter]* Thank you, Steve [Kang].

**SUNG-MO "STEVE"
KANG**

I heard it from [UC Irvine Chancellor] Michael Drake earlier about unique names, and I just want to relay what I heard from CSU Monterey Bay. In the beginning, California State University Monterey Bay is also one of the newest campuses. So faculty came with all different names. Very unique names,

and they suffer, in fact. They realize that many people do not understand so when they changed the name to more common names, then their enrollment started growing. So now faculty are happy. So indeed we needed to--that's all communication interface, so you know, we can have creative programs but the name is important. Name is important, just like you name John or Leslie or if you make it too unique, sometimes people do not recognize and forget, so I just wanted to relay that experience.

DRAKE

[*inaudible*] I think I'll just--I hear the stomachs growling. But there's a concept of traditions. And one concept is that you, that tradition is worn like a suit of armor. Another is that con, that traditions are worn like an old suit of clothes. In both cases, there are things that come from the past, one more rigid, the other more flexible and adaptable. So to the extent that we can wear our traditions like an old suit of clothes, then we could be comfortable in the traditions but also move forward and be flexible as we advance toward the future.

SHAWN KANTOR

One thing that you noted was that if the faculty locally could figure out how to reward interdisciplinary work or the CAPs [Committee on Academic Personnel] can get it right, then it can thrive locally. But the problem is we all face external constraints. I have to convince my colleagues at Harvard and Yale and Michigan that I'm an outstanding scholar, I'm an outstanding economist. And if they see some bizarre work, you know, if they see somebody not wearing this comfortable clothing that you're, that you're mentioning, then I'm going to have a hard time getting rewarded in an international market.

DRAKE

Right. And so it can't be so bizarre that it doesn't exist. Or that other people can't see it enough. And I agree with that completely and entirely. What I would say, though, using my last analogy, if it's worn like an old suit of clothes, it can be more flexible than the rigid, a rigid copy of what we've done in the past. And what I would mean---I'll be more practical--I have two comments. That one example and then I'll tell you what I mean.

An example I meant was that a--one of our faculty members at convocation one year was talking to students and saying that--these are freshman students first day, they're completely nervous--it's great. And he was saying, you know, in addition to what your concentration is, take something that you're not good at. I mean, if you're an engineering major, take a class in dance or in poetry or whatever else. And really stretch yourself. Go out and do something where you can't succeed. Or where you feel you'll struggle, and that's the way you'll get the most out of your education. And this is, that sounds great. This is somebody who's also though on the Phi Beta Kappa committee, so when you're a senior, this person looks at your GPA to the hundredth point, to determine whether or not you're going to get a pin or not. And so you can't have a structure where you say I want engineering students to go and trip over yourselves and get a C. And then at the end of the line I'm going to give you, I'm the same person's going to give you a prize if you never got a C. So there has to be some flexibility there to allow people to do those things. So how I would say this in the faculty realm, is I'm used to a system where we would split between service, research, and education, as a sort of a tripartite mission. And great. And in the equal balancing, that is about 95%, 96% research, and then about 4% service and education, or so. I used to say 95, and I've learned a little more. I think it's more like 96. *[laughter]* And so I mean, just re-

balancing that to 85, or some--whatever. Just allowing people who are really, really good at certain things to be recognized and not killed by it, I think, I hope, would have enough credibility that your colleagues at other places will be able to see a high, this is a substantial body of work in the discipline. And there are other things that this person did that are creative and thoughtful and that contribute to the strategic mission as well. So we have to be practical as we do these things, and again, we're not, we're not, it's not going from a suit of armor to running naked, but it's being able to be flexible within those traditions while being connected to them.

SAM TRAINA

Let me just add one last point, and that is if you look at most of us, and what we do in our discipline, and we bring someone in from 60 years ago to look at what we do now, you now. I'm a soil scientist--that's what my degrees are in--I would be laughed out of any meeting in soil scientists from 50, 60 years ago, but the field itself has changed. And so, in fact, what we think are these narrow disciplines are often much wider, and that the nature of scholarship changes over time. And the paradigm for what is the discipline is a constantly moving window. If it isn't we're just doing the same thing over and over again. So I, I think it's important to keep that in mind.

CONKLIN

So thank you everyone. Would anyone else like to speak? Questions? [*pause*] Lunch then. So in that I'll be direct. As far as I, we've heard from people.

KANTOR

We can do this later if you like. We can move to lunch.

CONKLIN

Yes. Yes. It seems like the bottom line is it seems like we can either have a suit of armor or we can be like old clothes, to use your analogy. And I assume the old clothes are like the traditional structure, so maybe that's a, maybe we did get

some insight from, on, from this panel. But the other thing that came out very strongly are the importance of names in developing, that as we develop, that we have to be recognizable. And so I think that's a really valuable thought as we move forward, as we try to balance what the expectations of our multiple audiences are, whether they're parents or our undergraduate students as well as our peers judging our work as well as attracting graduate students here and also having them marketable when they're going out. But I'd like to end with is what Sam [Traina] said. It's the faculty that makes a great university. So whatever we have to do is we have to make sure that our faculty succeed and that we have an excellent faculty. So with those gems, let's go eat! [*applause*]