

UC Office of the President

Working with University Constituencies, Within and Without

Title

Remarks by David P. Gardner—UC Merced Founders Day Celebration—University of California, Merced, Merced, California

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/79p245zh>

Author

Gardner, David P.

Publication Date

2012-10-01

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/>

REMARKS BY DAVID P. GARDNER- UC MERCED FOUNDERS DAY CELEBRATION, OCTOBER 27, 2012

CHANCELLOR LELAND, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

THIS IS A VERY SPECIAL DAY, AND ON SUCH CELEBRATORY OCCASIONS IT IS WELL WORTH REMEMBERING THE TRAIL OF HISTORY THAT LED TO UC MERCED'S FOUNDING. MY BRIEF COMMENTS FOCUS ON THE LARGER CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THIS ALL HAPPENED.

IN 1958, CLARK KERR WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA. AT THAT POINT, CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION FACED AN ANTICIPATED BUT MOSTLY UNPLANNED DOUBLING OF ENROLLMENTS DURING THE ENSUING DECADE.

OWING BOTH TO THIS CHALLENGE AND KERR'S LEADERSHIP, THE CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION WAS ENACTED IN 1960 WHICH ESTABLISHED OUR NOW WELL KNOWN AND WIDELY ADMIRERD THREE PART SYSTEM OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION.

IN ANTICIPATION OF THE PLAN'S PASSAGE, AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE REGENTS, KERR MOVED QUICKLY TO LINK UC'S PAST WITH ITS THEN FRESHLY DEFINED FUTURE.

THUS, DURING THE YEARS 1958-1966, UC WAS TRANSFORMED FROM A COLLECTION OF CAMPUSES, SOME WELL ESTABLISHED AND OTHERS JUST FORMING, INTO THE UNIVERSITY FAMILIAR TO US TODAY, AND INCLUDED THE ADDITION OF THREE NEW CAMPUSES: SANTA CRUZ, IRVINE AND SAN DIEGO.

"IN 1966, CLARK KERR, PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY, COULD REPORT THAT THE NUMBER OF GENERAL CAMPUSES HAD RISEN FROM TWO TO EIGHT, ENROLLMENT FROM 43,000 TO 88,000, FACULTY FROM 4,000 TO 7,000, NOBEL LAUREATES FROM FIVE TO TWELVE, NINETEEN NEW COLLEGES AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS HAD BEEN CREATED, AND SIXTY-ONE NEW INSTITUTES, BUREAUS, CENTERS, AND LABORATORIES FOR ORGANIZED RESEARCH. IN EIGHT YEARS, THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA HAD DOUBLED BOTH IN SIZE AND DISTINCTION "(ADAMS AND NEWHALL 1967, P. 16).

NOW, FAST FORWARD TO 1987, WHEN I WAS SERVING AS UC'S PRESIDENT. AT ROUGHLY THE MID-POINT OF MY SERVICE, I ASKED EACH OF OUR THEN NINE CHANCELLORS TO UPDATE THEIR LONG-RANGE PLANNING 1988-2020, AS ENROLLMENTS AT THAT TIME WERE GROWING WELL BEYOND EARLIER PREDICTIONS; AND IN DOING SO I ASKED EACH OF THEM TO KEEP IN MIND THE

FORSEEABLE NEEDS OF A NEW CENTURY AND THE FACT OF A RAPIDLY GROWING AND DEMOGRAPHICALLY CHANGING CALIFORNIA.

THE CAMPUS PLANS WERE IN HAND IN SPRING OF 1988. IT WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT THAT THE EXISTING CAMPUSES COULD MOSTLY, BUT NOT ENTIRELY, ACCOMMODATE PROJECTED ENROLLMENTS: 40,000 MORE STUDENTS COULD BE ACCOMMODATED ON OUR EXISTING 9 CAMPUSES. 20,000 COULD NOT. THUS, WE PROJECTED THE NEED FOR THREE NEW CAMPUSES 2000-2020 TO TAKE UP THE SLACK HAVING IN MIND ENROLLMENT INCREASES EXPECTED WELL BEYOND OUR PLANNING HORIZON.

THE GREAT CENTER OF THE STATE WAS SERVED BY UC DAVIS IN THE NORTHERN PART, BUT BY NONE OTHER. UC'S PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY, OF COURSE, WAS OTHERWISE MUCH IN EVIDENCE: AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, CONTINUING EDUCATION, MAJOR RESEARCH ENDEAVORS, MEDICAL CLINICS AND HEALTH SCIENCE PROGRAMS, AND THE LIKE.

BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER UC CAMPUS TO CONFRONT THE REALITY THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN THE VALLEY ATTENDING A UC CAMPUS WAS ONLY 50% OF THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE. THUS, THE ANSWER AS TO WHICH REGION NEEDED A CAMPUS WAS SIMPLE, ALTHOUGH GETTING THERE WAS ANYTHING BUT EASY.

MOREOVER A SECOND UC CAMPUS IN THE VALLEY WOULD EXTEND UC'S REACH INTO A DEMONSTRABLY UNDERSERVED AREA WHILE FURTHER ENLARGING AND DIVERSIFYING UC'S TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PUBLIC SERVICE MISSIONS.

HOW TO GET FROM WHERE WE WERE TO WHERE WE WANTED TO GO WAS THE CHALLENGE.

ENTER REGENT LEO KOLLIGIAN OF FRESNO, A CHAMPION OF THE VALLEY AND ITS NEEDS, A RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE BOARD, AND A PERSONAL FRIEND.

IN A WORD, WE PARTNERED UP TO GET IT DONE: HE WITH THE REGENTS AND I WITH THE CHANCELLORS TO SECURE THEIR SUPPORT SO AS NOT TO CONFRONT THEIR OPPOSITION, PRESSED AS THEY WERE TO MEET THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITIES WITH FINITE RESOURCES.

IN OCTOBER 1988, MY PROPOSAL FOR A 10TH UC CAMPUS IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY WAS APPROVED. CONSIDERATION OF TWO ADDITIONAL CAMPUSES WAS DEFERRED. THE APPROVAL TRIGGERED A SERIES OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO GET THE BALL ROLLING: PLANNING FOR THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM, PHYSICAL PLANT, ENROLLMENTS, AND FISCAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEW CAMPUS WAS UNDERTAKEN. SITE SELECTION, CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES WERE DECIDED. POLITICAL CONTACTS WERE

MADE. THE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE STATE WERE INFORMED AND SO FORTH.

IN LATE 1992 I RETIRED AS UC'S PRESIDENT. JACK PELTASON, OUR CHANCELLOR AT UC IRVINE SUCCEEDED ME. IT WAS HE IN THE MID-1990'S WHO PROPOSED TO THE REGENTS THE SELECTION OF MERCED AS THE BEST SITE FOR UC'S NEXT CAMPUS. THE REGENTS AGREED.

IN CLOSING, I WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED TO MAKE THIS CAMPUS A REALITY; AND TO THOSE TODAY WHOSE DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO UC MERCED AS MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY, STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION MAKE THIS COMMUNITY WORK FOR THE THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS AND ALUMNI WHO CALL UC MERCED THEIR UNIVERSITY, WE ALSO THANK YOU. GOOD LUCK TO ALL.