

# UC Office of the President

## The Atkinson Presidency

### **Title**

Message at the Beginning of the Academic Year

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## MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY

Welcome to a new academic year at the University of California. I hope you have had an enjoyable summer that has left you refreshed and reinvigorated.

As the fall term begins, I know many members of the UC community are deeply concerned about the continuing conflict and violence in the Middle East. The death of one of our own alumni, Marla Bennett, in a university bombing in Jerusalem this summer, brought the situation particularly close to home. I share the dismay and sadness that many feel over the loss of human life in the Middle East and the elusiveness of a peaceful resolution.

These surely will be matters of discussion on our campuses this fall. With that expectation in mind, I want to encourage all members of the University community to engage in the discussion in constructive and respectful ways.

Civil discourse, the free exchange of ideas, and the thoughtful consideration of divergent viewpoints are critical to the life of a university. We welcome debate, we expect disagreement, and we value opportunities for reasoned exchange that enhance understanding of differing perspectives. But acts of violence, harassment, and intimidation are not appropriate, and the campuses have policies and procedures in place for addressing issues of this kind.

The chancellors and I are committed to preserving a campus environment in which free speech is exercised vigorously, without infringing upon the rights or personal safety of others. We hope you will join us in this cause and will do your part to maintain the University as a place where issues may be debated openly and safely and where, in the end, we may all learn from each other.

Fiat Lux,

Richard C. Atkinson  
President