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## Working with University Constituencies, Within and Without

### Title

Comments to Regents on the problems faced by the University of California in meeting the racial and ethnic balance in its student body as required by the state legislature, San Francisco, California

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Comments by President David P. Gardner on the problems faced by the University of California in meeting the racial and ethnic balance in its student body as required by the state legislature.

May 17, 1990

UC Board of Regents Meeting  
UC San Francisco, Laurel Heights

(Edited)

My purpose in offering a comment is to try and help the board find its way through this very difficult issue. There is no solution to the problems that you are raising. We should say that going in.

Now, what is the policy of the state? The policy of the state is expressed in the legislative resolution enacted in the mid-70s and reconfirmed in the early 1980s, in which the legislature directs both this University and CSU to include in its entering freshman class, or into its undergraduate student body, considerations of what is regarded by the legislature as major public policy purposes. They express this interest in asking, indeed directing, the institutions to -- I don't know whether the term is "reflect" or not, but anyway that's the idea -- in its undergraduate student body the racial and ethnic composition that one finds in the high school graduation class. I'm short-ending it, but that's the essence of it.

The expectation of the State is that the University of California, in its undergraduate enrollments, will be generally approximating the racial and ethnic composition of the high

school graduating classes. That expectation makes no reference to UC eligibility rates among and between the various racial and ethnic groups in the high school graduation class.

The twelve and a half percent that we are to make eligible for admission to the University of California, under the California Master Plan, is an average. CPEC makes periodic studies and we report these to the board, and we have previously, of how eligibility rates break down by race and ethnicity in the State, and even though it averages twelve and a half percent, you get a very different pattern when you break it down by race and ethnicity. Thirty two percent of the Asian Americans completing high school in the State of California are UC eligible. Sixteen percent of the Whites are UC eligible. Five percent of the mix of Latino and Chicano are eligible, but if you broke that out, Latinos would be slightly higher than five and Chicanos would be less than five. And 4.6 percent of the Black high school graduates are UC eligible. That averages twelve and a half percent.

There is numerically no possibility, as long as there are these differentiated UC eligibility rates by race, of reflecting in the undergraduate student body students that, as to race and ethnicity, compare with the high school graduation pool. So, in taking a count of these differential UC eligibility rates, the University of California has made a determined effort to make

sure that those who are eligible at the lower ends of the eligibility scale -- American Indian, Black, Latino and Chicano -- are brought into the University of California, if they're eligible. It's what we've tried to do.

That's been the motivation, that is, to give a preference, as it were, to the students at the lower end of the UC eligibility scale in order to take account of the desire to increase the number of such students in the undergraduate student body.

Now, I want to translate the policy into practice. You have at UCLA and Berkeley especially, roughly 20,000 to 24,000 applicants for freshman admission, almost all of whom are UC eligible. At Berkeley I think there's 3,500 freshman spaces and at UCLA 3,800, roughly the same. So, if you are an admissions officer at Berkeley, what do you do with that? Now, of the 20,000 to 24,000 applicants to these respective campuses, roughly 6,000 are 4.0 students. You could admit only 4.0 students and still turn away 2,500 4.0 students. There are only so many spaces available. There's not 4,500 available, there's not 5,000 available, there's 3,500 to 3,800 available, respectively, at Berkeley and UCLA. That is the number of students who are admitted. Therefore you could fill the entering class with 4.0 students. No university in the United States does that, public or private.

Besides, under the California Master Plan, we are asked to admit

the top twelve and a half percent, not the top one per cent. And this board's own policy asks us to take account after the (a)-(f) requirements have been met -- that is the twelve and a half percent has been met -- to take account of race and ethnicity, geographical, socio-economic and other considerations, characteristic of contemporary California. So, we do. How do we do that? Well, there's the implementing procedures of your policy that were adopted by my office and reported to this board in July of 1988, in which we directed the campuses to admit between 40 and 60 percent -- recognizing this will vary from campus to campus for a lot of very understandable reasons -- 40 to 60 percent are to be admitted strictly on the basis of courses in high school, grade point average and test scores. And, we run them through the computer and admit them. The remaining students to be admitted, therefore, are then put into the pool and other subjective criteria are introduced for purposes of making those judgments.

Now, up until about three years ago at UCLA, if you were American Indian, Black, Chicano or Latino, and you were UC eligible, that is you met the stated standards for admission, you were admitted. They stopped that practice, with the exception of one group, two or three years ago. At Berkeley that practice was in effect through the current academic year, but is stopped for the fall of 1990 admissions because of the growing number of minority students now enrolled in our student bodies.

Now, let's be honest about what is occurring. The overwhelming number of applicants who are 4.0 students are Asian Americans or Whites. That's the truth of it. So, if you can fill the entering class with 4.0 students, you would have a class that is -- with the exception of a handful of percentages -- Asian American and White. That's what you'd have if you only used academically objective criteria for purposes of admitting freshman students. If you do anything other than that, that is if you admit a 3.5, you are by definition turning away a 4.0. It's a zero sum game. So, who are the 4.0s and who are the 3.5s? The 4.0s are overwhelmingly Asian American and White, and the 3.5s are disproportionately Black, Hispanic and American Indian. Now, the racial dynamics of that are not very appealing. It's a problem. What we've done historically is to give really almost a preference to UC eligibles who have been historically under-represented. That's changed in ways that I have described, and we are attempting to refine these policies, based on our experience and the changing composition of the undergraduate pool.

If you argue that we should have a higher proportion of the class admitted on the basis of academically objective criteria, you are by definition telling us to admit more Asian Americans and Whites, and to admit fewer Blacks and Hispanics and American Indians. If you want us to admit more from the twelve and a half percent pool, spread that more evenly, you're going to tell us to

turn away a higher proportion of Asian Americans and Whites, and to admit more Blacks and Hispanics and American Indians. So, we talk about these policies up here as though they somehow all hold together to everybody's satisfaction, when in fact, translated into practice, everybody is unhappy with the policy. The groups that are turned away because they're more eligible on academically objective criteria are unhappy because we're turning them away. Those who think the academically objective criteria are, in fact, discriminatory against them because of special problems and circumstances in their communities, think we ought to rely less on those and more on subjective criteria. Anyone who thinks they have the answer to this problem does not comprehend it. And those who comprehend it don't have an answer.

Two years ago in February we devoted an entire day to this. We had representatives for the various minority communities in the state here. In May the board amended its (a)-(f) requirements by adding a paragraph saying that in addition to meeting the (a)-(f) requirements -- that is the twelve and a half percent academic standards that we have in place -- we want the administration to administer the (a)-(f) requirements so that we encompass within our undergraduate student body, the entering freshman class, characteristics of contemporary California, as to race, ethnicity, socio-economic and geographic considerations.

We adopted a general set of guidelines and sent them out to the campuses; the campuses then further refined them.

The question is, where is the cut point? We have been able to turn away 4.0 students from Berkeley and UCLA because we have found a place for them on one of the campuses of the University of California. What if we are ever to the point, as we surely will be if Prop 111 fails, that we cannot accept all UC eligible California residents seeking to enroll in the University of California? Try turning away a 4.0 at Berkeley and admitting a 3.4 if you cannot assure that the 4.0 at Berkeley is accommodated on another campus of the University of California. That's the dimension of this problem. It is generally not called out for consideration, but I think it's important that you take it into account.