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THE CLARK KERR LEGACY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA^{1**}

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ABSTRACT

Clark Kerr defined and put into place what is essentially the modern version of the University of California and built the wherewithal for developing and sustaining academic quality. He defined the structure of multiple campuses all with the same research mission and equal opportunity. He fostered the ambitious conversion of three specialized sites and the creation of three entirely new campuses, all to become general campuses with equal opportunity. These steps provided enrollment capacity for the next sixty years. He decentralized governance so that the nature and scope of academic programs became defined by campuses individually, subject to Presidential and Regental approval of new colleges, schools, and programmatic initiatives with substantial budgetary impact. He instituted highly consultative methods of decision-making. He placed substantial emphasis on building academic quality, including high standards and strengthening of the Academic Senate's roles in the academic appointment, promotion, and advancement processes. He created strong involvement of the Academic Senate in the initial development of new campuses, thereby helping to assume high academic quality from the start.



Keywords: Higher Education, University of California, Clark Kerr, University Governance, University Structure

It is striking to recognize how much of the academic nature of the University of California as we see it today stems directly from Clark Kerr. Kerr was, after all, chancellor of Berkeley for only six years (1952–58) and president for nine years (1958–67), not unusually long times. Part of the reason for Kerr's importance is timing. He was chancellor at Berkeley as the chancellorship began, and he was president during a period of massive growth and restructuring of the university. But more of the reason was the nature of Kerr himself.

It was during Kerr's time as chancellor and president that:

- the Berkeley campus completed its climb to top overall distinction,
- the decision was made to have a university composed of multiple campuses, all of which would have the same mission and the same opportunities for development,
- the decision was made to proceed with the conversion of three existing sites (Davis, Riverside, and Santa Barbara) and three new sites (San Diego, Irvine, and Santa Cruz) into general campuses to accommodate much increased enrollment,
- the roles of the one president and now ten chancellors were defined in view of those models, and
- the current modes of consultative leadership and continual substantive review for advancement of faculty members came into being in their present forms.

* The University of California celebrates its 150 years since establishment in 1868 by an act of the California legislature. This article is one in a series published by the Center for Studies in Higher Education related to the history of the University of California, and more broadly America's unique investment in public universities.

** This paper is Chapter 3 of the new book by C. Judson King, *The University of California: Creating, Nurturing, and Maintaining Academic Quality in a Public University Setting*, published January 2018. The chapter has been edited here to stand alone. The book is published by the Center for Studies in Higher Education and is available in print book form from Amazon internationally in print and Kindle forms and as an electronic download with working links from the eScholarship repository of the University of California.

Also, beyond the University of California, Kerr was the main intellectual force behind the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education and was, subsequent to his UC presidency, the leader of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and then the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, which produced an array of insightful and influential studies that has not subsequently been matched. Such a broad swath of accomplishment and initiative by any one person is effectively unparalleled in the definition and leadership of higher education in the United States.

1. KERR'S THINKING AND VALUES

In his Godkin Lectures, presented at Harvard in 1963 and written up in a book¹ that went through five editions with added chapters and prefaces in each new edition, Clark Kerr presented a highly insightful and prescient view of the ongoing development of the modern American research university. Among his themes were (1) the growing economic and social values of knowledge generated and codified by universities, (2) the strong influences of two great forces—the land-grant (i.e., public-university) movement and the massive growth in support of research by the federal government after World War II, and (3) the consequent development of what he called the “multiversity,” a complex university of many different purposes and functions, reflecting the societal value of knowledge, growth of multifaceted research, service roles, and synergies among those missions.

Kerr recognized three successive crucial struggles and resultant models that the University of California had gone through during its history.² The first was the contention in the 1870s that resulted in establishing that the university would be comprehensive, constitutionally autonomous, and based on the model of the great private universities in the eastern United States. He denotes this as the Yale-Gilman model. The second struggle was during the remainder of the 1800s, resulting in the appointment of Benjamin Ide Wheeler as president in 1899 with a large transfer to the new president of responsibilities and functions that had previously belonged to the UC Regents.

This strong-president model, labeled by Kerr as the Wheeler-Sproul-Academic Senate Model, continued through the first half of the twentieth century and the twenty-eight-year presidency of Robert Gordon Sproul. That model was substantially enhanced by the buildup of research eminence in the physical sciences³ and other disciplines and by the roles given to the Academic Senate in the Berkeley Revolution of 1919–20. The final stage Kerr calls the Twenty-First-Century Federal Model, marked by a more federated rather than unitary structure of the campuses of the university, the growth of government support of academic research, and an effective national policy of universal access to public higher education.

Kerr's thinking, his manner, and his styles of leadership have been examined by numerous subsequent writers, among them the varied authors of chapters in the book⁴ edited by Rothblatt, authors of books stemming from the UC Center for Studies in Higher Education's Clark Kerr Lecture series on the Role of Higher Education in Society,^{5, 6, 7, 8, 9} and the analysis carried out by Gonzalez.¹⁰

2. THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Multiple Campuses with a Common Mission and Equal Opportunities for Development

When he became the first Berkeley chancellor in 1952 and especially when he became president of the University of California in 1958 Kerr molded the university in ways that set the form that it takes today.

The UC Board of Regents had already, by degrees over time, established that the university would have multiple campuses. That understanding came into being with the establishment of the Los Angeles campus in 1919, the acceptance of the Santa Barbara State College in 1944, the opening of a College of Letters and Science at the site of the Citrus Experiment Station in Riverside in 1954, and the general recognition that activities at the agricultural campus at Davis should be expanded and broadened. But it was Kerr, upon his arrival as president in 1958, who decided that these other campuses should become full general campuses of the university and persuaded the UC Regents to adopt that goal.

It was also Kerr, as the principal motivating force behind the 1960 Master Plan, who secured the position of the University of California as the one and only public research university of the state and who established that the full research mission (i.e., “equal opportunity”) would be available to all UC campuses.¹¹ Assigning the public-university research mission to UC guarded against dilution through funding for the research mission being spread to other public institutions. It also left to UC the important determination of how many research-university campuses there would be, their sizes, and where they would be located.

Furthermore, the formal differentiation of mission among the three public sectors of higher education and the codification of the transfer function, both accomplished by the Master Plan, assured that the California State University and the California

Community Colleges would both carry out substantial amounts of public undergraduate education. This enabled the University of California to give the attention to graduate education that would mesh with and build its research mission.

Controlling Campus Size

Another result of planning initiated by Kerr while he was chancellor of the Berkeley campus was to identify 27,500 as the enrollment cap for the campus.¹² This cap was then extended to the other campuses. The cap was set by combining considerations of the physical capacity of the campus with attention to the quality and individuality of education. When the cap was extended to UCLA and other campuses, it provided a backdrop for manageable rates of growth on individual campuses within the university, even in a period of large overall growth. The 27,500 enrollment cap developed in the 1950s crept upward over the years to become about 30,000 by the end of the twentieth century) and in 2017 about 40,000. But, even though California is by far the largest state in population, the individual University California campuses are still smaller than those of a number of other large public research universities, such as Ohio State at 65,000, Minnesota at 51,000, and Arizona State at 83,000, all 2014–15 figures.

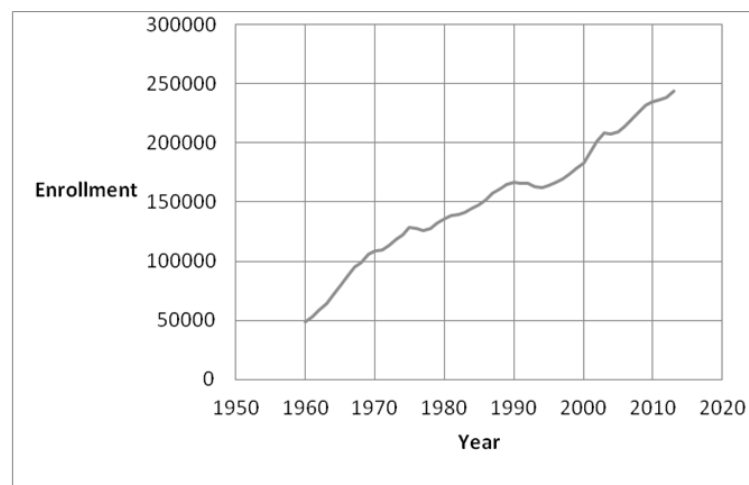
3. CAPACITY AND QUALITY OF NEW CAMPUSES

Planning: Near-Disaster or Triumph? The increase in the total number of general campuses, all with equal opportunity, from two to eight enabled a very large expansion of the university, predicated upon the enormous population growth of the state following World War II and expectations that the large growth would continue. Sir Peter Hall¹³ in his 1982 book, *Great Planning Disasters*,¹⁴ calls the expansion of UC's campuses in the 1960s a "near disaster" and says that when he initially planned the book it was "on the disaster list." To understand this surprising comment, it is important to recognize that Hall's book was published in 1982. What happened was that population growth in what were then recent years had not been as great as in the demographic projections that had guided planning in the 1950s and early 1960s, and state funding for higher education in California ran into difficulties. As Hall relates, the birth rate in California declined in the 1960s and 1970s, and net migration into California in the early 1970s became one tenth the rate of the 1960s.

Total growth in University of California enrollment for the five-year period between 1974 and 1978 was a mere 4.25 percent, and enrollment actually fell from 1976 to 1977. In the late 1970s, it looked like enrollment might actually drop in the 1980s after the wave from the post–World War II baby boom had gone through. In addition, general fiscal stringency augmented by the reactions of government leaders to the student activism of the 1960s led the state of California to tighten allocations to the university. At the time some concluded that it had been a mistake to launch all three new campuses and that the needed growth could have been accommodated to a greater extent on existing campuses (see, e.g., Sinsheimer¹⁵).

The actual enrollments over time, summed for all campuses, are shown in figure 1. Note the sharp rise in the 1960s, the leveling off in the 1970s, a rise in the late 1980s associated with the children of the postwar baby boom, a dip in the mid-1990s as that echo ended, and finally another rise as the new millennium started, reflecting in part the grandchildren of the baby boomers.

Figure 1. Total University of California Fall Enrollment (general campus plus health sciences) Versus Year (data from Kerr¹⁶ and "Fall Enrollment at a Glance"¹⁷)



Hall's conclusion of disaster or near-disaster was from viewpoints twenty or twenty-five years beyond the 1960 Master Plan. We now have the advantage of looking back nearly sixty years after that plan. As is shown in Table 1, the new campuses of the 1960s and the conversions to general campuses that shortly preceded them have now almost fully served their purposes in terms of accommodating enrollment, especially when it is recognized that enrollments at Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz are constrained by agreements with those two communities and that the San Francisco campus is entirely health sciences.

The Master Plan, originally targeted for fifteen years, has served now for almost four times that long. Only relatively recently has the state approached the point of being unable to sustain California public higher education. The new campuses were fully needed in the last part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Fortunately, they were launched when it was feasible from a financial viewpoint. It would not have been financially possible to have such a massive physical development effort at any later time. It was indeed foresighted and opportune that the University of California, through Kerr, chose to undertake the massive development efforts that he did in the 1960s. In that sense, the new campuses of the 1960s are an unmitigated planning triumph. The triumph is also attested to from an academic standpoint, borne out by the very rapid rises of the new campuses to academic distinction.^{18, 19}

Table 1. Total Enrollments of University of California Campuses, Fall 2016²⁰

Berkeley	40,173	Riverside	22,990
Davis	37,397	San Diego	35,816
Irvine	33,467	San Francisco	4,857
Los Angeles	44,947	Santa Barbara	24,346
Merced	7,336	Santa Cruz	18,783
TOTAL	270,112		

4. Governance and Decision-Making

When he became president, Kerr decentralized many governance responsibilities to campuses, giving them essentially full academic responsibility for their futures and devolving support services as well.²¹ Although decentralization did go further in subsequent years, it was Kerr's steps that set the pattern.

Kerr replaced the more autocratic governance style of Sproul and his predecessors with a highly consultative approach that he denoted "pluralistic decision making."²² The Academic Senate had achieved its roles in principle in 1919–20 but had not been fully integrated into decision-making processes. Kerr recognized the capabilities and institutional supportiveness of many faculty members and built many mechanisms of consultation. The Academic Senate chose to reorganize itself from what had been separate Northern and Southern Divisions into its present structure, consisting of a university-wide organization to advise the presidents and vice presidents and a division of the senate on each campus to advise the chancellor and vice chancellors. He also set up several other consultative mechanisms, as follows.²³

- The chancellors met with the president before Regents meetings. This meeting evolved over time to include the senior and then executive vice presidents. A dinner meeting before Regents meetings continues, and supplements monthly, day-long Council of Chancellors meetings with the president, provost, and the more senior vice presidents on the first Wednesday of each month.
- A president's cabinet met similarly, attended by the president, the vice presidents, and the three officers of the regents—the secretary, the treasurer, and the general counsel. This group still meets, now with some additional attendees.
- A Council of ASUC (Associated Students of the University of California) met quarterly with the president. These meetings still occur intermittently.
- There were periodic meetings of those with like functions from the different campuses (e.g., deans of students, deans of letters and science, deans of graduate divisions, librarians, etc.). These meetings still occur.²⁴

Another innovation by Kerr as UC president was to arrange with the UC Regents for the chair and vice chair of the Academic Council to sit at the table with the regents during their meetings with full opportunity for participating in the discussion. This status had been sought by the senate since the 1919 Berkeley Revolution, but had not theretofore been arranged.²⁵ It still exists.

Yet another innovation brought by Kerr to the Berkeley campus during his chancellorship was the Buildings and Campus Development Committee (BCDC), made up of twenty-seven faculty members from a wide range of disciplines, to advise the chancellor and administration on physical planning of the campus. BCDC had numerous subcommittees, and Kerr indicates²⁶ that in his time 15 percent of the members of the faculty were engaged in the physical planning process in this way. That produced a sense of faculty ownership and pride in the grounds and buildings of the campus. The committee still exists.

Over the years BCDC gained the substantial additional role of allocating building space among units on the Berkeley campus. It was co-chaired by the author during his years (1987–94) as provost for professional schools and colleges at Berkeley. While effective for gaining participation in the process and acceptance of decisions, BCDC did prove at times to be a cumbersome mechanism for dealing with transfers of relatively small amounts of space.

Himself a hobbyist gardener, Kerr took pride in beautification of the campus, originating the concept of “the campus in the park,”²⁷ which persists to this day. Strawberry Creek, running through the campus, was cleared and landscaped. Buildings are built in clusters, with open space in between, with judicious use of California redwoods and other trees to create a sense of location and privacy for the buildings themselves. Not all was perfect. Kerr himself²⁸ notes the harsh impact of several of the massive, brutalistic concrete buildings of the 1960s on the campus. Those buildings had the added disadvantage of ultimately being found to be seismically deficient, as building codes for earthquake-prone zones advanced over the years on the basis of knowledge gained from earthquakes around the world.

The creation of equal-opportunity situations among campuses and devolution of much of administrative governance to the campuses reflected both Kerr’s concept of a federated university and his own experiences as Berkeley chancellor. He was careful to make the distinction between a federation and a confederation as that issue arose in the aftermath of the Byrne report^{29, 30, 31} of 1965 which recommended the latter and was pushed by UCLA’s chancellor Franklin Murphy and others.³²

5. BUILDING ACADEMIC STRENGTH

Kerr’s contribution to the academic development of the University of California was large and should not be lost among his major changes in structure, governance, and decision-making processes.

As he determined what to try to do in his newly created and ill-defined (or really nondefined³³) job as Berkeley chancellor, Kerr concentrated upon academic planning, both because it had not been an area of emphasis and because the Berkeley campus was entering a decade where both growth and faculty retirements would be substantial. There were over a thousand new appointments or promotions to tenure between 1952–52 and 1962–63.³⁴ Kerr created and chaired an academic advisory committee³⁵ composed of deans and Academic Senate leaders, an approach that has been repeated in various forms from time to time over the years at Berkeley. Working with this committee, he undertook a process of selective academic building.³⁶ Geiger³⁷ describes a detailed example for sociology, for which Berkeley had had no department at all before 1946.

A strong leader (Herbert Blumer) was brought in from the University of Chicago in 1952 and made a number of distinguished appointments, resulting in the department being top ranked in the 1964 survey. These selective developments were the result of well-chosen and focused releases of faculty positions by Kerr to the departments, as well as judicious replacement, selection, and recruiting of department chairs.³⁸

Kerr also paid particular attention to the review process³⁹ for appointment, promotion, and advancement of faculty members. He strengthened the criteria for that process by scrutinizing the recommendations that came to him from the Budget Committee, the Academic Senate’s reviewing body. Although he indicates that he never appointed, promoted, or advanced anyone against the advice of the Budget Committee, he did decide negatively on a number of cases in which the Budget Committee had recommended positively. He indicates that he never had a protest from the Budget Committee concerning these actions.⁴⁰ Geiger⁴¹ states that, “for a time, 20% of the recommendations that had passed all other hurdles were refused” by Kerr. In this way Kerr established substantially higher standards for review of faculty advancement cases.

As president, starting in 1958, Kerr did much for academic development of campuses throughout the university. Following the usual search process, he selected as his successor chancellor at Berkeley Glenn Seaborg, the Nobel Prize-winning chemistry professor and co-discoverer of plutonium, which meant that high academic standards comparable to Kerr’s own would continue to be applied to faculty personnel decisions. The Santa Barbara campus was a normal school, and then state college, that had been brought into the University in 1944 through a political arrangement. Kerr’s selection for chancellor there, where academic upgrading was a major issue, was Vernon Cheadle who would similarly delve into personnel cases and exercise high standards of his own beyond the selectivity exerted by the Santa Barbara Committee on Academic Personnel.⁴²

For the three new campuses—San Diego, Irvine, and Santa Cruz—Kerr worked with the Academic Senate to create the three faculty committees that served as the first Academic Senates for those campuses. That approach was repeated forty years later for the Merced campus. He was generally accepting and supportive of the ambitious Revelle plan for the San Diego campus, over the objections of chancellors and some regents who thought the approach to be too elitist and expensive. That plan led to the spectacular academic development of the San Diego campus. Seeking a superior education for undergraduates within a large public research university, he worked with Dean McHenry to create, launch, and cultivate the unique experiment of the Santa Cruz campus. And, finally, he carried out the difficult removal of Chancellor John Saunders at UCSF when convinced of the academic need by a senior faculty group (again, chapter 10).⁴³

In the 1963 Godkin Lectures at Harvard, Kerr displayed a deep recognition of the influences that would come from massive support of university research by the federal government. In his structuring of university governance and administration, he factored research in with other academic endeavors, keeping as much integration of research with the rest of the academic world as possible. (later, research and graduate studies) was established university-wide." In line with what happened at other leading research universities, it was not until the 1980s that the position vice chancellor for research was established at Berkeley, and not until 1994 that the position vice provost, later vice president, for research (and, later, research and graduate studies was established university-wide.)

ENDNOTES

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- ²² Kerr, 2001, *op. cit.*, pp. 191–205.
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