

UC Merced

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

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Symposium**

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

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**UC IRVINE
CHANCELLOR,
MICHAEL DRAKE,
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Great. Thanks very much, Martha [Conklin], and also nice to be here and to see everyone. I have three or four comments to share having to do with structure and also with this period in time and the future for the campus. By way of a little background, I was--and I don't know if there's anyone else here who is sitting in this exercise with me. And if so, let me say I apologize for forgetting. But I was on the Merced Planning Committee of the Academic Senate in the 1990s. There was a representative from each campus, and then the members of the Academic Council, forming a group of about sixteen or so people with Fred Spiess from San Diego as the chair. And so we talked a lot, in the 1990s before there was a campus--there was a site, but no campus. And before Carol [Tomlinson-Keasey][Former UC, Merced Chancellor] was actually appointed, she met with us several times before she was appointed, and several times thereafter, about what the initial structure was going to be, who the faculty would be, what would the schools and departments look like, what kind of a structure should there be, because there was really, at that time, a blank piece of paper. And the idea was this group was to work out as the initial faculty to help move things along.

And so a couple of things were themes that the group agreed on and then Carol [Tomlinson-Keasey] of course, was appointed and began to bring this to reality. One was the idea of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute. That was an early idea, and the concept of that was for an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, multidisciplinary focus that would take advantage of the region. And special things that would be important and of world, worldwide significance that we in this site would have a unique opportunity to be able to engage in and explore. So that was a very very important part of it, tying the region to special opportunities, looking at the environment and energy and other things that would be important to the world.

Another thing that was very important at the time of the planning was the environmental sensitivity of the construction of the physical plant. So whatever physical structure, in a structural engineering fashion was going to be the place where this would all take place, there was a great desire to have this be the most ecologically sensitive institution, higher educational institution in the world, so that the idea of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute and the, working with the environment, etcetera, etcetera, could be lived through the construction of the campus. And, in fact, I remember a line that stuck with me from those days, which was that the, there was the concept of having buildings or living lightly on the land was sort of a theme that was being spoken of. And that was improved, I thought, one day to someone saying, you know, we should try to have the environmental impact, the buildings should have the environmental impact of a tree. So that they should actually not just live lightly on the land but actually try to be like the tree where you improve the land, where you filter water, you produce oxygen, you provide shade and habitat and other things that trees do.

So the concept was really try--maybe that was a bit

grandiose--but the concept was really to have the buildings work well with the land and show a way that an institution can actually be quite environmentally sensitive.

A couple of, so those were kind of early planning themes and then of course we all were so aware of the very difficult structural issues that variously came up with the legislature and the fairy shrimp and other things like that that were real barriers to sort of living out the dream, which are the practical things that you have to have a wrench to really work on to make these dreams come to reality.

I have three or four other things just to touch on. One is the Irvine experience. Irvine came into being in 1965. And if I look at the first 40 years, there was a great interest at Irvine in having an instant university, kind of ramping up and being good at lots of things all at once. And I'd say that works some of the time and didn't work as well other times.

The keys to where it works were always faculty. Where there were great faculty who were recruited, put down their roots and grew programs, then great programs have grown up and been sustained over the decades. Where faculty were hired who weren't able to really work so well together, then those have been maybe a little bit more like the empty spaces that Steve [Kang] spoke of between the ping pong balls. So a real focus on faculty hiring for growth and then greatness later on has been very important to us.

One of the programs that we have at Irvine--I'll speak of two programs that we have.

One we have called "Social Ecology" was a program that was developed now a generation or so ago to try to bring together in a really intra--to create a discipline out of interdisciplinarity, if I can say that, so that we would take people who would be

traditionally in different schools or departments and bring them together into a department that has a building to saturate its ideas, to kind of look at the ways that humans and society interact with each other. And it's a great concept. I'd say that the fact that there's only one School of Social Ecology in the country, indicates how this didn't catch on as a great idea. And, I mean, that's a chuckle, but I'll say it was, this was done, you know, in the 1970s as a great idea for the future, to kind of pull something together to give it a topically important name and then to bring really good people in to work on growing it forward and kind of, not invent, but kind of determine what a great discipline the future would be. And I say this, I don't know that it's worked. I meet people now who are psychologists, and I'm not sure if they're in the School of Social Sciences or Social Ecology even when I talk to them, because it hasn't really defined a space that holds up to a title.

And that goes back, it reminds me of something again that again happened here in the Valley, and Mark [Yudof] referred to it a little bit earlier, which is the Doctors Academy at Sunnyside High School. During roughly the same time that I was on the Merced Task Force, I was vice-president for--that's still professor at UCSF at the time, and, but I had a responsibility for the medical education program which was directed out of UCSF. And so we were involved in the Doctors Academy and I was very involved in medical education and worked very closely with Kathy Flores on this and many other projects. And when it was being launched, I didn't like the name. And so I thought it should be called the Health Sciences Academy because the concept to me was that we weren't going to take all of these kids and have them all go to medical school as the be-all end-all met with success, and if they did something else, that didn't work.

The first thing was to get them into high school, get them through high school, get them to go to four-

year universities, as many as possible to think about science that would be great. And if some of them would think of medicine, that's great. But there are many other paths to salvation, and I was hoping that we could stimulate them broadly. So I said, you know, we should call it the Health Sciences Academy. And so we were writing things up, and I had to sign or approve something and I said the Health Sciences Academy is what I want it to be.

And we found some funding and some articulation programs and things were going forward. And I came to visit--actually, I came down with Mike Bishop who was the newly-appointed chancellor. And we came to visit, probably 1999, and we were in visiting, meeting the freshman class, and it was a great thing. And we got brochures and the brochures said, "Doctors Academy." And I thought, "Well, wait a minute. This isn't what it's supposed to be. It's broader than that." And what I was told, and learned, was that parents didn't know what "Health Sciences Academy" meant. They knew what a doctor was. They said they liked the idea of their kids wanting to be doctors. But what does a "Health Sciences Academy" actually mean? And so the name really had to be changed to not maybe describe the broad vision of what the thing could be, but to communicate with the client about what the client was kind of hooking himself or herself up to. So Doctors Academy it was, and has worked well.

But I think that's important, too, as we go forward and particularly think about growing a new entity. I think there are new ways of doing things, but we have to be careful about the names that we put on them because sometimes we confuse people rather than bring them together. The, there's an old adage in medicine. An ophthalmologist, as some of you know, a good answer to what's wrong with the back of the eye is that it's diabetes. If you're not sure, you say, "You know, it could be diabetes." And

actually, you're always right if you say it could be diabetes because it always could be diabetes. And professors know these kinds of things.

It used to be you could say, "It could be syphilis" but that sort of ran out of the, we had to modernize ourselves. And one of the things that I would teach students that we learned about diabetes was that common diseases present in uncommon ways more often than uncommon diseases present. So you're more likely seeing an uncommon manifestation of something common than you are actually seeing something that's uncommon.

And I would try that analogy back to saying that relatively straightforward descriptions of what disciplines might be, can be expanded and modified in ways that have an entirely new meaning more easily than you can teach people to use new words and things in going forward.

My final point would be that I, we all interdisciplinarians like apple pie. You know, too much sugar, too much fat, oh, okay. No, a wonderful thing that we can't say anything bad about. And so it's a great thing. I believe that that really does emanate from the faculty and that the faculty, to the extent that the faculty can be supported and can be bold enough to reward teaching and service and research and reward those in different measure and in different people to allow things to go forward. And can also reward great ideas even though they don't seem to be completely rooted firmly in the past, but reward those great ideas going forward, I think that makes it safe for people to have their careers take these new directions going forward. And to the extent that the faculty say we like interdisciplinarity but then reward and promote people only on a series of traditional milestones, then the only smart thing do is to do the traditional things that people were doing in the past. And so I think that being a young university and going forward, that that cap has a

great opportunity here to show that it means it when it says you can go in a new direction or you can have a different combination of these various activities and we will reward and support that as long as it continues to contribute to the strategic plan. Let me stop there and thank everybody for your attention. Thanks. [*applause*]