



On the Record

What will be the state of the UC in five to 10 years?

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Given the Great Recession and statewide budget woes, I don't see a rosy picture for the highly regarded UC system in the next decade. Whether we lose \$500 million or \$1 billion in the upcoming budget, the downward trend in public higher education for working class and middle class families in California doesn't look good.

This includes the following negative outcomes: incremental tuition fees on a regular basis, the proposal to charge differential levels of tuition, the trend to admit more out-of-state and international students and the proposal to privatize particular schools, such as the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

Additionally, there is also the trend to provide online classes to save money, the lack of resources to maintain and recruit high-quality faculty and students from competing universities and the slip in national rankings among prestigious universities.

Now, while many of us are aware of facts, there is only one way that we're going to prevent the decline of California's prized public university system: We must get involved and do something. Whether you make a donation, pressure a state legislator, write an op-ed, attend a rally or demand for the end of tax breaks for the rich and corporations, we must protect this valuable public resource. This goes for students, staff, lecturers, professors and the thousands of alumni who enjoy the fruits of their great university education.

If we don't act like a collective body today, then the UC will be public in name only and operate more like an elite private university in the near future.

ROBERT SAMUELS

If current trends continue, in 10 years, we can predict that UCLA will cost \$40,000 a year for Californian students, and a third of the students will be from out of state. Likewise, the undergraduate population will continue to expand, and it is possible that students will have the option to take an online version of required courses. Meanwhile, as the government reduces its support for research, we can expect the campus being forced to go to corporations to receive its research funding.

Taking into account the current plan to fund the UC pension, the university may have to pay 20 percent of compensation into its retirement plan in 2021. This financial burden could push the university to allow each campus to set its own tuition and enrollment levels.

The university will try to protect its academic quality and reputation as it seeks to retain its fiscal health. Hopefully, UCLA will realize that the only realistic solution is to delegate most administrative tasks to faculty, workers and students. Not only will this move make the university more democratic, but it will also increase financial stability.

A truly democratic university would safeguard the public nature of our institution by protecting against the corrupting forces of privatization.

DANIEL J.B. MITCHELL

"Never (make) forecasts, especially about the future," advised Sam Goldwyn (the G in media company MGM). I will take his advice and instead suggest two scenarios. I don't know which one UCLA, and the larger UC, will follow. But I know which one I prefer.

The first scenario is an attempt at all levels of the UC, including UCLA, to muddle through the current state budget crisis in the hope that economic recovery will resolve the state's fiscal problem and, therefore, the university's. It is quite plausible that the campus and UC administrations will elect that approach since it is the easiest path to follow.

Unfortunately, it is less plausible that economic recovery in California will actually resolve the university's long-term budgetary problems. The state has fiscal woes that economic recovery will only partially alleviate. California will not be willing to support the UC adequately even after recovery, whenever that comes.

Nonetheless, UC and UCLA administrators are mainly following the muddle-through approach and hoping things will somehow work out. The current muddling through takes various forms.

There are short-term measures, such as furloughs and reactive increases in tuition. There is grasping at technological fixes, such as online education.

But there is also a subtle shift in rhetoric. UCs are now described as great public universities rather than great universities. That shift suggests that UC is separating gradually from the great private universities with which it once compared itself.

What would UCLA become if muddling through continues? Some professional schools will maintain quality by quasi-privatizing. But many components of UCLA, especially in the College of Letters and Science, will slide toward a kind of California State University, Westwood.

The other scenario is to recognize that the state cannot afford a great university. So the top administration of the university needs to sit down with the governor, legislative leaders and key interest groups and work out a contingent arrangement for funding and access.

Because the state is an unreliable partner, the deal cannot be a one-side commitment by the university. A contingent deal would instead say to the state, if you give us X, we will do Y. But for every dollar less than X, we will reduce Y accordingly. Bluntly, reductions in X will lead to higher tuition and fewer admissions of in-state students.

Negotiating a contingent deal would be more risky and unpleasant than muddling through. The payoff in terms of protecting the quality of the university would be mainly achieved after the current crop of UC and UCLA administrators are no longer in the scene.

But there is a different payoff for those at the top. Clark Kerr, the UC president who negotiated the 1960 Master Plan, remains well known in academic circles for his achievement. No one remembers his successor. There is a difference between leadership and administration.
