UCLA MAGAZINE

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Institutional Memory

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Since UCLA began as the "southern branch" of the University of California — almost a satellite campus for the southern region — it has evolved into a world-class research university in its own right. Longtime professors remember the growing pains and share what they see for the future.

Al Osborne, UCLA Anderson senior associate dean

Less than 100 years ago, it was almond and avocado orchards. In 1929, UCLA opened its Westwood campus with four buildings and 5,500 students, and mostly served the local community. Today, 163 buildings serve 43,000 students from 50 states and more than 100 countries. Now a world-class institution with a reputation for global leadership in research, academics, health care and innovation, UCLA remains committed to the community — even as its 112,000 applications for fall 2015 admission have made it the most applied-to university in the world.

On the way to greatness, UCLA has had its share of ups and downs. Here, seven distinguished professors who have been part of the university for more than three decades and have witnessed many of its triumphs and struggles share their memories of the past, their perceptions of the present and their hopes for the future.

Microcosm of the Larger World

Of course, many changes on campus have echoed changes in society. "To give you a sense of the 1950s," says Professor of Philosophy David Kaplan '56, Ph.D. '64, who came to UCLA in 1951, "my wife was a psychology major with a spectacular academic record and great recommendations. When she talked about applying to grad school, the graduate adviser said, 'Look, with a record like this, if you apply, of course we

have to admit you. But do you really want to take a position away from a man who is going to have to support a family at some point?'" Kaplan laughs incredulously. "The same is true of the changing climate of diversity, acceptance of homosexuality — all these changes were taking place within the student body, but also in wider society."

When Karen Rowe, founding director of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, came into the Department of English in 1971, she faced a similar bias. At 25, she was the third woman on a faculty of 70. "I showed up at the reception for new faculty, and one gentleman came up and introduced himself and said, 'Hello, and whose wife are you?' I said, 'I'm your new colleague. I'm Professor Rowe.' He was mortified."

In 1971, there were no women's studies programs at UCLA — a fairly common situation on college campuses at the time. "There was pent-up student need," Rowe says. "My position was that you needed those of us inside the institution to begin to make the changes that would advance women's rights within the institution, because that's the only way to create change in a broader social sense. There were whole departments that had not a single woman."

Patricia Greenfield, distinguished professor of developmental psychology and director of the Children's Digital Media Center, recalls that when she joined the faculty in 1974, the campus had one child care center. In 1983, she donated her lab space and then her office to help start an infant development program. "Now there is enough child care to satisfy the needs of faculty, staff and students. It's taken for granted as part of the campus," she says.

Leo Estrada, associate professor of urban planning

Particularly important in her field has been the diversification of the student body, a key factor in UCLA's rise to academic excellence. UCLA consistently ranks near the top of U.S. News & World Report's list of the country's most ethnically diverse campuses.

"My classes are now like little United Nations," Greenfield says, adding that this is vital because "we do not teach the psychology of the American undergraduate as universal."

Mario Gerla M.S. '70, Ph.D. '73, who came to UCLA as a graduate student from Milan in 1969 and joined the faculty of the Computer Science Department in 1977, distinctly remembers the composition of his first class. "I would say one-third of the students were from the aerospace industry, with crew cuts and shirt and tie. Then there were students on the GI Bill — some had served in Vietnam and would come barefoot, with long beards. The international students were mostly from Europe — there were very few students from Asia, if any."

Reflection of the Students

Society's changes also have influenced what students want from their UCLA education. "It's not enough to have a job, punch a clock, go to work, make a little bit of money, spend it, go home, watch TV," says Alfred E. Osborne Jr., senior associate dean of UCLA Anderson School of Management, founder of the Harold & Pauline Price Center for Entrepreneurial Studies and professor of global economics and management.

Osborne, who joined the UCLA faculty 43 years ago, says, "Millennials want to do well by doing good. (See "The Compassion Effect") So now we have interest in what used to be externalities — what do we do about

the environment, health, inequality, inclusion? They want a life that's richer and more adventurous, combining a commitment to improving society and adding value to their lives."

(right) Karen Rowe, founding director of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, (left) Patricia Greenfield, distinguished professor of developmental psychology

Leobardo Estrada, an associate professor of urban planning who first arrived at UCLA in 1977 — and whose areas of expertise include ethnic and racial demographic trends, inner-city redevelopment and social policy analysis — says, "Undergraduates today come in with very strong critical thinking and analytic skills that have pushed us to increase the amount of content and the sophistication of lectures. We all had to raise our game in order to challenge our students. I look at a syllabus I had back in the 1980s, and I laugh now — maybe one textbook and four or six readings. Now my average class might have 30 or more readings." But he says it's more fun to teach now: "You can give students assignments of a TED talk, for example, and you can integrate that into your lecture, just like you would a reading."

Influence of Technology

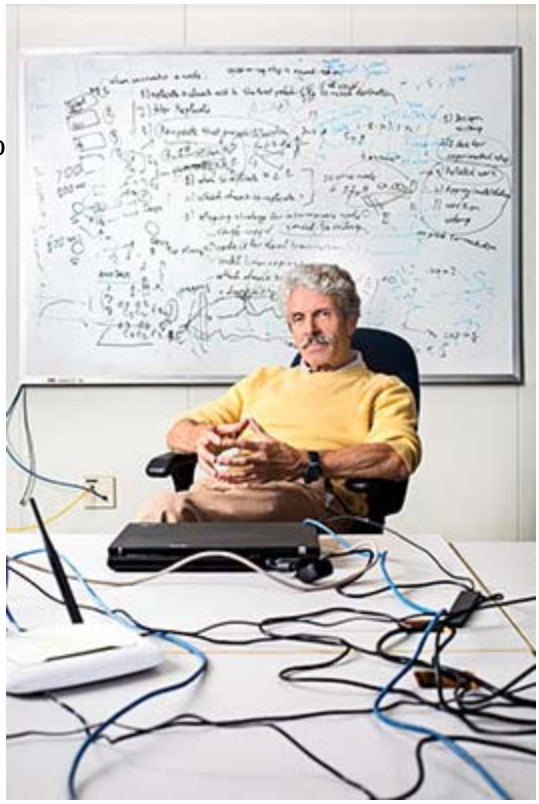
It was a different era when Estrada arrived at UCLA 38 years ago. As with any other campus at the time, "the Internet had just started, and none of us had computers. We all used to have secretaries, so you didn't even have to learn to type," Estrada says. "You had Dictaphones, and your secretary would type up your memos."

In Gerla's early days, he says, "The research was regional. There were two conferences a year, one in Southern California and one in Northern California. You didn't meet many people outside your small world." But he came to UCLA the same year as ARPANET, the prototype that led to the Internet. Now his department is at the forefront of research on artificial intelligence and mobile vehicle networking. "These large projects maintain the reputation of the department to the outside world," he says.

Robert Goldberg, professor of molecular, cell and developmental biology, started out in 1976 earning $16,000 a year as part of a $45,000 "start-up package" that budgeted for his lab, research and salary. "Now it's not uncommon for young faculty members in tech sciences to get start-up packages of 1 or 2 million dollars and housing assistance," he says. "It wasn't as entrepreneurial, as expensive, as fast-paced, but you were still expected to be excellent."

He describes how classrooms have changed. "In the '70s, people were still getting up with their old yellow notes, and I remember when we did away with blackboards and brought in whiteboards. The only ones who resisted were the mathematicians, because they still wanted to smell that chalk." Even in the '70s, Goldberg was teaching what is now called active learning, although he was just following his instinct to make teaching

interesting. “I’d get these reel-to-reel tapes on things related to science and show them in my class, and we’d have discussions. Once VHS came in, I continued that approach.” When the Internet arrived, Goldberg collaborated with the film and television school to make high-end, interactive online classes. “UCLA always provided the resources to do these really crazy things,” he says. Greenfield, who researches the effects of technology on human development, believes that online teaching, electronic communication and the Internet have lessened the personal student-teacher relationship and decreased the quality of information exchange — something she says is particularly important for immigrant and first-generation students. “Students now want to email, rather than come in for office hours,” she says. But she acknowledges that technology has lessened the administrative burden, leaving professors more energy for teaching.



Mario Gerla, professor of computer science

But all of these professors appreciate the benefits of technology. Kaplan created the computer program Logic 2010, on which “students can work on problems from anywhere, in the middle of the night. It corrects their work, gives them hints, tells them why it isn’t right. It allows students to go at their own pace.” This means students are assigned much more work now, “which is the way to learn a subject like mathematical logic.”

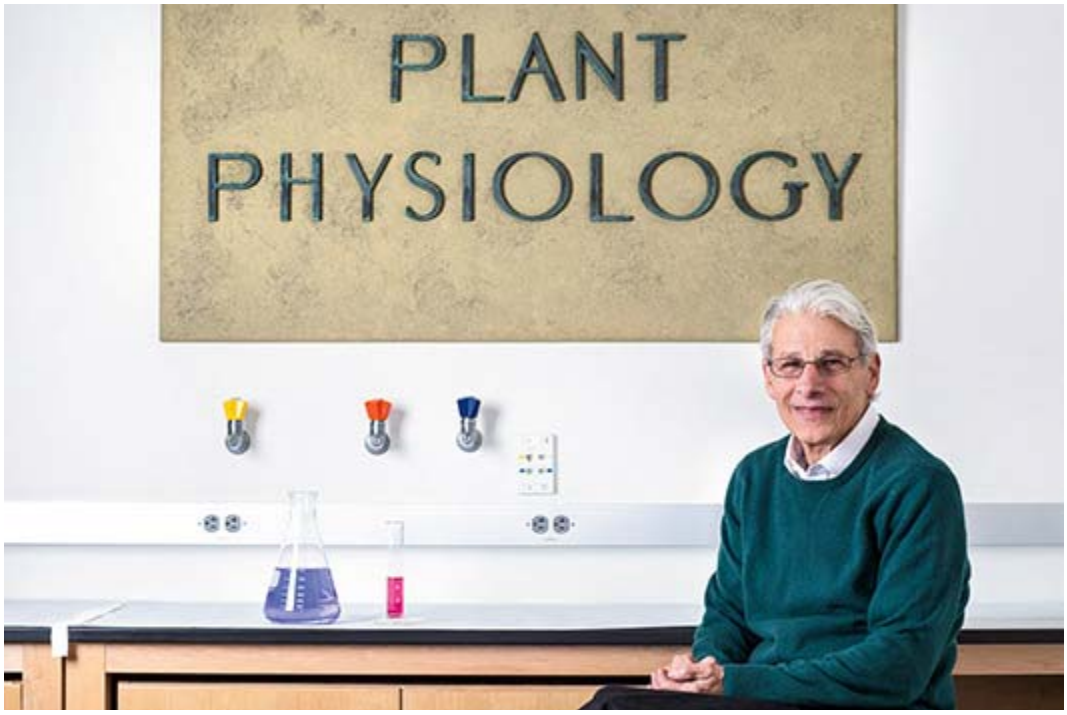
The Internet and globalization have changed not just how students are taught, but the ideas themselves. Rowe says that over time, she has shifted her course on the American Revolution to focus “not only on heralded voices like Thomas Paine’s, but also on the dissenting voices, and to bring in Olaudah Equiano, to look at the voices that are not included.” Rowe teaches literature not just about, but by, Native Americans. She says, “As the institution shifts, you begin to see how your teaching needs to shift.”

Activism Comes Full Circle

Estrada says UCLA is known for having a strong social justice emphasis. “In the early 1970s, we had the hunger strikes around ethnic studies. What was interesting was how it was resolved — the administration and the strikers met to negotiate a solution, and the César E. Chávez Center for Chicana and Chicano Studies was born. Unlike the antiwar protests — where the university was just trying to keep the crowds at bay — when the hunger strike negotiations took place, not only were the administration and the strikers talking to each other, but they also had community people observing. I think we gained a lot of goodwill from that process in the end.”

Kaplan adds, “The antiwar protests led to a kind of general challenging of authority. The role of the faculty and the students was under scrutiny — there was a shifting of political power: Why shouldn’t students be on committees and play a role in deciding things?” Then, at a meeting of undergraduates in the early 2000s, Kaplan asked where the faculty could improve. “ ‘We need more guidance from the faculty,’ they said. ’We need faculty to tell us what courses we need to take, what we ought to be doing — after all, you’re the grown-ups, we’re just kids!’ ”

The Campus Grows Up

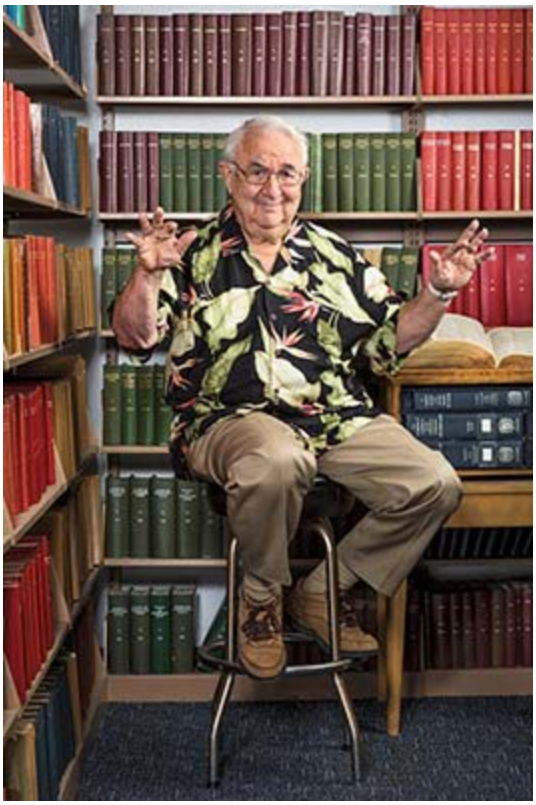


Robert Goldberg, professor of molecular, cell and developmental biology

UCLA's campus infrastructure has changed, too — in some ways dramatically. Goldberg remembers when the men's and women's gyms were the only two buildings in that part of campus: "The rest of it was just dirt. The UCLA ticket office was in a trailer. Where the big, beautiful stem cell building is, that was our greenhouse, a place for growing corn. There were only a few big dorms, so most students lived off campus. [As late as] the mid-'70s, you could run up to where Covel Commons is and actually see the ocean."

The '60s brought modernism to campus in such structures as Bunche Hall, the Young Research Library, the Luskin School of Public Affairs and the Dickson Art Center (where the Broad Art Center now stands). But later decades saw a return to neoclassical architecture and the original red-brick aesthetic, in the Anderson School complex and in many of the buildings along the science corridor.

Staying Accessible



Greenfield remembers a watershed moment in her view of UCLA, when President Bill Clinton spoke at the convocation celebrating UCLA's 75th anniversary in 1994. She was reminded of Harvard's 350th anniversary celebration in 1986, which she also had attended. "The UCLA occasion made me realize how far UCLA had come in 75 years — a remarkably short period of time," she says. "The contrast between the speakers — Prince Charles at Harvard, President Clinton at UCLA — impressed upon me the fact that UCLA had moved into the ranks of a world-class research institution as an accessible state university, quintessentially of this country, rather than as an elite institution with strong cultural ties to England and the Old World."

As for the future, Osborne is optimistic. "I am just totally excited about where we're going now, with the commitment that the chancellor has made to an entrepreneurial ecosystem, providing leadership for invention, creativity, allowing dreams to seek fruition. But more importantly, I'm excited that UCLA students

from our labs and professional schools wind up being leaders in business and government ... they're well-trained and thoughtful. I think it bodes well for our society."

David Kaplan, professor of philosophy

UCLA's most veteran faculty vow to continue until they take their last breath. Kaplan says he wants to drop dead in front of his students. Estrada says, "I want to give a lecture and then walk out the door. Those of us who've been professors a long time can't imagine anything other than being with our students at the last moment."