

July 6, 2009

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

The three hundred signers of this letter write to you as members of the US National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine, and as professors at the University of California to express our deep concern about the latest round of proposed cuts to the UC budget. Current proposals being weighed by your office and the Legislature call for a 19% reduction from 2007-8 levels in state support for UC, producing an \$800 million shortfall in the UC budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year. This will lead to increases in student fees, reductions in pay or furloughs for faculty and staff, and cuts in virtually all University services. These cuts will be devastating to every part of the University's mission, but as scientists and engineers we are particularly concerned about their effects on the future of science and technology in California. While we recognize that our state faces an unprecedented financial crisis, the proposed cuts come on top of a decades-long trend of declining state support for the University of California. The situation has reached a breaking point.

Further cuts of the magnitude being contemplated in the latest round of budget proposals are likely to destroy UC's status as *the leading public university in the United States*. This would undermine prospects for economic recovery and damage California's competitiveness for decades.

Before making a decision in the heat of a crisis that will have negative consequences for decades to come, we ask that you consider the following:

- It is estimated that 85% of per capita economic growth in the United States is due to technological change¹, and the University of California has been a leading driver of that change. Productivity growth produced by UC technological innovation is estimated at \$5.2 billion from 2002-11, leading to more than 100,000 new jobs in California.² For every dollar that California invested in research and development at UC in 2000-1, UC researchers brought in another \$3.89 of private and federal research money.³
- UC trains the highly skilled workforce that drives California's economy: 85% of biotech firms⁴ and 57% of research and development-intensive communications

¹ "Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future", report of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine, 2007, pg. 1. Available at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11463.

² "California's Future: It Starts Here", a study of the University of California's impact on California, 2003, pg. 6. Available at <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/itstartshere/report/fullreport.pdf>.

³ Ibid, pg. 7.

⁴ "Assessing the Role of the University of California in the State's Biotechnology Economy: Heightened Impact Over Time", Industry-University Cooperative Research Program Working Paper Series, C. Yarkin & A. Murray, 2003, pg. 9. Available at http://ucdiscoverygrant.org/about/reports_ca.htm.

firms⁵ in California employ holders of advanced degrees from UC. The co-founders of Intel, Apple Computer, Sun Microsystems, and MySpace all hold undergraduate or graduate degrees from UC.

- In 1970, the fraction of the state of California's general fund devoted to UC was 7%.⁶ By 2008-9 it had declined to 3.2%.⁷ Thus further cuts to UC would come from a portion of the state budget that has already declined by more than a factor of two in relative terms in past decades.
- Between 1990 and 2008, inflation-adjusted state support per UC student fell by 40%. As a result, the total inflation-adjusted education expenditure per UC student (including student fees and contributions from UC General Funds) decreased by 19%, while student costs rose by 138%.⁸ Further cuts will hit disadvantaged and lower-middle-class students the hardest, since they rely on financial aid, outreach, gateway, and tutoring programs, all of which will be under extraordinary pressure. This will inexorably reduce services to the component of California's population most in need of access to a distinguished public university.
- UC's status as a leading research institution depends on its ability to attract and retain the best scholars, but faculty salaries were *already* 12% below market as of 2006-7.⁹ The salary reductions resulting from the proposed budget cut would widen the gap to 19%. UC will find it impossible to attract and retain leading faculty with a salary gap of this magnitude.
- The impact of salary cuts on young faculty, many of whom have mortgages that they are only barely able to pay now, is likely to be particularly devastating. If their salaries are cut and they are faced with the prospect of losing their homes, these future scientific leaders can and will move elsewhere. This will produce a huge brain drain from California.
- If this damage is done, it will not be easy to undo. Even if UC salaries and research support were to recover after the crisis passes, it would take years to replace the professors who leave, and many of the investments that have been made in research and teaching programs would be irrevocably lost. Even worse, worries about the stability of funding and the safety of jobs at UC would hinder efforts to recruit talented scholars and teachers for years or even decades to come.

⁵ "The Role Of University Of California Scientists and Engineers In The State's R&D-Intensive Communications Industry", Industry-University Cooperative Research Program Working Paper Series, C. Yarkin & A. Murray, 2003, pg. 3. Available at http://ucdiscoverygrant.org/about/reports_ca.htm.

⁶ Larry Hershman, 2005-06 Budget Presentation Regents meeting, November 2004.

⁷ UC Budget summary, available at http://www.ucsc.edu/budget_update/article.asp?pid=2991.

⁸ University of California 2009-10 Budget for Current Operations, Summary of the Budget Request, pg. 5, available at <http://budget.ucop.edu/pubs.html>.

⁹ "Faculty Salaries at California's Public Universities, 2007-8", California Postsecondary Education Commission Report, pg. 9. Available at <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/completereports/2007reports/07-15.pdf>.

For the past 40 years, California has been struggling to run a world-class university on ever-declining state support. In the face of the current crisis, the past strategy of incremental cuts at the margin will no longer be viable, and major changes will be set in motion. The actions of the Governor and the Legislature in coming weeks will be seen, both by the scientists currently employed by UC and by the young researchers who will consider moving here in the next decade, as a clear statement of whether the state of California intends to maintain a leading research university or not. If it does not, California must be prepared to accept the long-term loss of educational, economic, and technological benefits that UC produces. The forefront of innovation will move elsewhere. This is the prospect with which we are now faced.

In a time of crisis, our attention rightly focuses on using limited resources to meet the needs of the moment. However we must remember that the University of California represents our state's investment in the future. When the crisis passes and we begin to repair the damage, our prospects for success will be determined by how well we protect that investment today.

Sincerely,

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