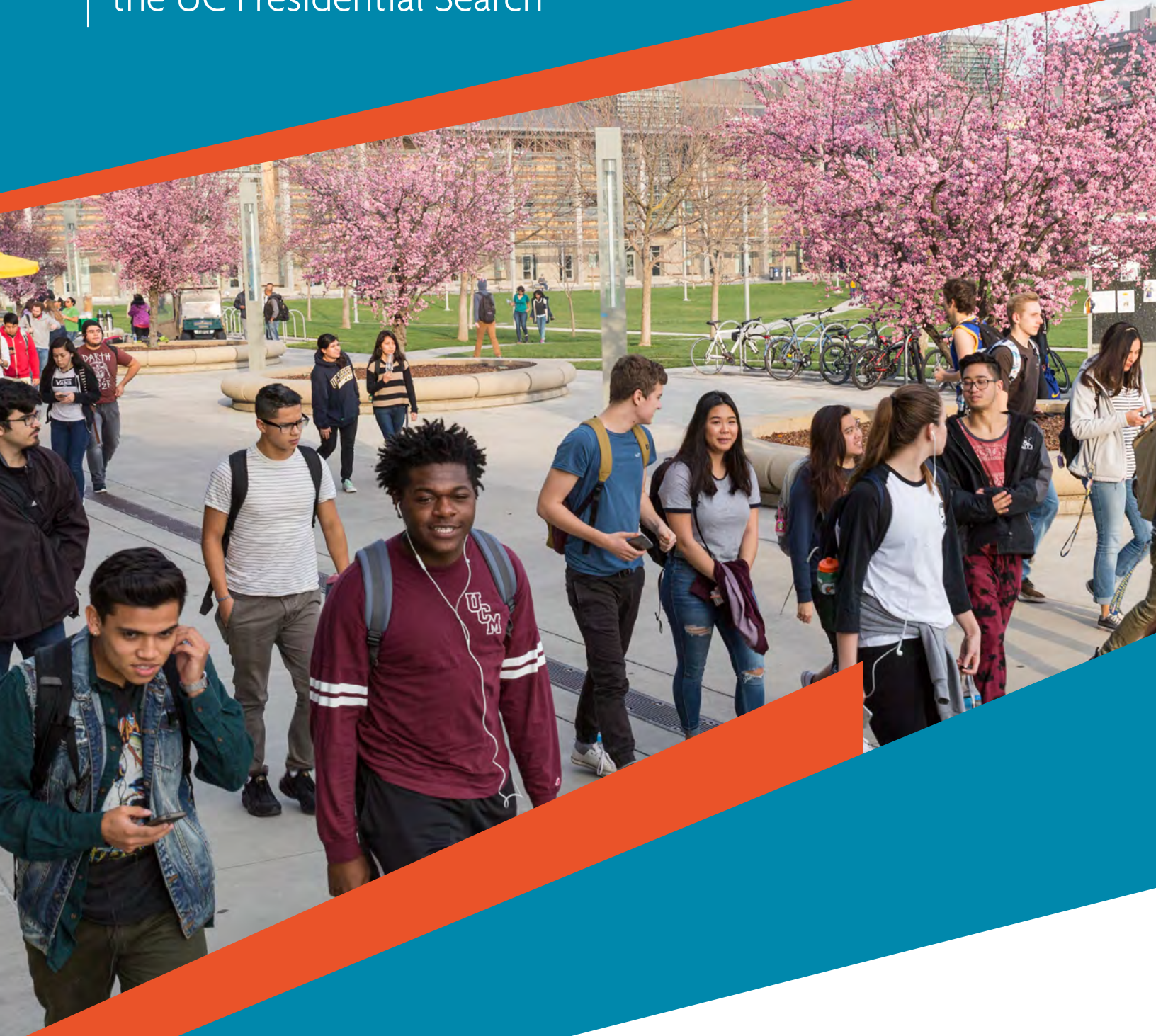


A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA:

Perspectives on Priorities for the UC Presidential Search



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*More Graduates for a
Thriving California*

INTRODUCTION

The selection of a new leader for the University of California comes at a time of great change and opportunity for higher education in our state. California is now investing more money per student than when the Great Recession began in 2008. Remedial education reform, improved counseling and services, and streamlined college pathways are moving increasing numbers of students toward academic achievement and degree completion.

Each of the state's higher education segments is making progress on ambitious goals: the California Community Colleges aim to increase transfers by 35% over a five-year period ending in 2022; the California State University wants to raise graduation rates to 70% within six years by 2025; and the UC is targeting a 20% boost in the number of undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded by 2030.

Amid the gains, however, the institutions are grappling with big challenges. Lack of capacity is forcing the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems to turn away tens of thousands of eligible students every year. Black and Latino students continue to be underrepresented on campuses and experience lower rates of graduation than white students, even as California has become more racially diverse. And as the cost of housing and other living expenses soar, many students are unable to afford the full cost of attending college.

The leadership transition at the UC, among the world's premier postsecondary research institutions, will help shape the future of higher education in California and beyond. The potential for change is heightened by the simultaneous search for a new president of the CSU, the largest four-year public university system in the United States.

The process of selecting a UC president has traditionally focused on gathering input from stakeholders from within the university system, including students, faculty, staff, and alumni. To bring external partners to the table in this search, College Futures Foundation organized two forums. The events, held at UC Davis in December of 2019 and UCLA in January of 2020, provided the UC Regents' presidential search committee with testimony from organizations working in the field of postsecondary education, workforce and economic development, and student success.¹

The speakers' perspectives varied, but they had a common goal: to ensure that the UC has strong leadership that can build on the state's legacy of accessible postsecondary education and continue the momentum to expand opportunity and student success. This report outlines the themes that surfaced from the speakers' testimonies, detailing their ideas on the roles, priorities, and culture that the University of California should advance in the next decade and beyond.

¹ A list of the speakers can be found in the appendix.

THEMES FROM TESTIMONY ON UC LEADERSHIP: AT-A-GLANCE SUMMARY

ROLES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A driver of socioeconomic mobility

A collaborator for a seamless education system

Lead with vision, humility, and passion

PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Communities of color

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Students from underrepresented regions

A track record on equity, action plans, and courage

THE CULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Transparent sharing

Welcoming climate

Trust and empathy

THEMES FROM TESTIMONY ON UC LEADERSHIP

In their comments, the speakers were asked to address these questions: What kind of leadership does the UC most need to carry it into tomorrow? What are the top issues facing today's students and how should the UC leadership address them? Which skills and experiences should the UC look for in a new president? Collectively, their testimonies provided a landscape of the current moment as well as concrete proposals for the future.

Speakers' remarks highlighted the following themes and key points:

ROLES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The University of California looms large over the Golden State; all California residents, directly or indirectly, are impacted by what the institution does. Speakers cited the various ways: As a research institution, the UC leads innovation that creates economic growth. As a public university, the UC develops and keeps talent in the state. As an employer, the UC is one of the state's largest, with campuses that are economic and social anchors for their regions. Throughout California, the UC wields tremendous influence in shaping policy and practice.

“We need to re-energize the dream of education in California.”

–Rachel Bonkovsky, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools

Under the next UC president, the institution will continue to play all those roles. But to overcome the challenges ahead, speakers urged UC leadership to lean into the two most important ways that the institution serves California: as a driver of socioeconomic mobility and a collaborator building a system to move students seamlessly through their educational goals, from K–12 to a college degree.

A Driver of Socioeconomic Mobility

From its founding, the UC has been one of the state's most critical agents of transformation, fueling economic growth and social mobility. UC graduates make up a large part of the state's workforce and tax base and are leaders in many important fields, including government, education, technology, business, and health care. Speakers emphasized that for many students, a UC education is a way into the middle class. Earning a college degree improves their chances of securing a well-paying job and expands opportunities for their families and future generations.

“It is imperative that the next UC president help the state and its communities meet future-defining economic equity challenges.”

– Joel Vargas, JFF

Yet even as the UC has helped transform California into the world's fifth-largest economy, nearly half of the state's working families are living in poverty. This bifurcated growth is unsustainable and dangerous. The UC can continue to boost the state's economy, speakers said, but in a way that makes life better for all Californians.

“The next UC leader must take the necessary steps to reassure both stakeholders and the public that the University is committed to making the California dream a reality for all students.”

– Dr. Darlene V. Willis, Concerned Parents Alliance/College Bound Programs and UC San Diego Community Based Organizations

A Collaborator for a Seamless Education System

The UC is seen as the most prestigious segment of the state's public education system, but its outcomes are as connected to K–12, the California Community Colleges (CCC), and CSU as theirs are to the UC. As a receiver of high school graduates and transfer students, the UC should focus particularly on intersegmental partnerships that encourage and ease students' transitions.

By collaborating with K–12 districts, the UC can help prepare students for higher education and enable them to see themselves as future college graduates. Speakers offered several examples: As early as kindergarten, students need to visit campuses and participate in programs that link academic subjects and careers.

“The next UC president has a tremendous opportunity to not only improve the experience for hundreds of thousands of students but also lead change in how higher education can more equitably drive our state's economy.”

– Dr. Su Jin Gatlin Jez, California Competes

Because the UC approves the courses that meet admissions requirements, it should work closely with high school teachers to rewrite curriculum to improve and expand offerings. The UC also needs to join CCC and CSU in sharing data with K–12 districts on CaliforniaColleges.edu, an online platform. With all three institutions participating, high school counselors and families can more fully assess, plan, and track their students' pathways and progress to higher education.

“Increasing community college transfer is an essential strategy for increasing baccalaureate achievement, while at the same time promoting mobility for residents of a state plagued with the nation’s highest cost of living.”

– Dr. Darla Cooper, RP Group

Increasingly, transferring from community colleges is an important pathway to universities and socioeconomic mobility. Many students are unable to attend a four-year university immediately after high school because of costs, family responsibilities, or other factors. Others started college, but never finished. During a recent five-year period, nearly 300,000 students had made significant progress toward transferring but were stuck, unable to transition to a university, according to a study by RP Group. Speakers said that as with the K–12 segment, the UC can work with community colleges to align coursework, improve support services, and remove barriers. With smoother transfer pathways, students can move forward and improve their lives.

“At UC Davis, 1 in 3 of our undergraduates begin their higher education pathway at a community college. The success of the UCs literally depends on a strong community college system. We are all in this together.”

– Susanna Cooper, Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research at UC Davis

Lead with Vision, Humility, and Passion

In a diverse, rapidly changing economy and society, the UC needs a president who can think fast and far ahead. But speakers also felt that the ideal candidate would lead as much from behind as in front. Humility and the ability to work with others will be essential. To create equitable economic growth, the next UC president needs to work in partnership with the other educational segments as much as with state and business leaders. The challenges are difficult, but the next UC president should be passionate about the power of higher education to make change.

“Look for a bold and transformative leader who really understands the intersections between K–12 and post-secondary...who realizes that there is way more to be gained than lost through planned and purposeful partnerships.”

– Anne Stanton, Linked Learning Alliance



“When I think of the next UC president, I think of a relentless collaborator and a selfless leader.”

– Catalina Cifuentes, Riverside County Office of Education

PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

In leveraging its key roles, speakers wanted the UC to focus most on increasing student access and success. The capacity crisis at the state's universities is constraining the ambitions of individuals and communities and could imperil California's economic prospects. By 2030, the state will face an annual shortage of about 1.1 million workers with a bachelor's degree, according to the Public Policy Institute of California. Recognizing the need, the UC has set a goal to produce 200,000 more degrees on top of the 1 million undergraduate and graduate degrees that are already projected by 2030.

"We want our next leader to be an advocate for data transparency, courageously embracing and looking at ethnic subgroups and asking, 'Are we doing all we can in every policy and practice that we put forth to upend inequities that result in disproportionate outcomes for our most vulnerable students?'"

– Jessie Ryan, Campaign for College Opportunity

To have maximum impact, speakers said the UC should prioritize the students who have been historically underserved. Students from low-income families and communities of color make up more than 60% of the state's K–12 population; many of them live in regions that have been traditionally underserved such as the Central Valley and Inland Empire. Raising their rates of college access and success is as much an economic necessity as a moral imperative.

"We have a governor who wants a state, a California, for all. We can't produce that if we can't have a real talk about race."

– Tara Gray, Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce

Students of Color

In some ways, black and Latino students are more disadvantaged now than two decades ago. Since 1996, race has been prohibited as a factor in admissions, and on selective campuses, black and Latino students are not represented at the level before Proposition 209. At UCLA, just 3% of students are black; African Americans currently make up 10% in the population in the Los Angeles area and 7% in the state. Some initiatives have helped attract more students of color, and speakers said the UC should aggressively build on their progress.

The UC has been a leader in supporting undocumented students, and this should continue, especially in the uncertain political climate. The Transfer Guarantee Program, which gives highly qualified transfer students an advantage when applying, should be expanded as well as replicated for first-generation students. For graduate students, a program that recruits at historically black universities should include more schools and extend to studies outside of STEM fields.

But recruiting students is not enough. Speakers also want the UC to call out and change policies and practices that have disadvantaged students of color, such as requiring SAT or ACT scores for admissions, which may not be the best indicators of college readiness. Racial diversity is desperately needed among the faculty; 66% are white. Speakers said the UC needs to have frank conversations about racial inequities, break down data by race, and develop solutions that explicitly and specifically improve outcomes for students of color.

"It is imperative that diversity and inclusion at UC becomes a more prioritized factor, and this goes deeper than simple admittance to UC institutions; it's very important that these students also feel understood and represented."

– Chisomebi Obi, BLU Educational Foundation

Students from Low-Income Families

Given the opportunity that a degree offers, students cannot afford to forgo college. Nor can many of them afford the growing cost of attendance. In a state with the highest rate of poverty, speakers said, today's students are more likely to be struggling to pay for housing, food, and other basic needs—non-tuition costs that are not covered by most financial aid. In any given month, one in three California students said they suffered food or housing insecurities, according to the recently released Student Expenses and Resources Survey from the California Student Aid Commission.

"Students have played by the rules and have worked hard. Their Achilles' heel is that they come from impoverished backgrounds and have no parental safety net...We owe it to them to remove financial barriers so that they can succeed."

– Marlene Garcia, California Student Aid Commission

“Are kids from the Central Valley having an equal chance for admissions into the competitive UC system if they don’t have access to the same amount of services?”

– Frank Ramirez, Youth 2 Leaders Education Foundation

Speakers want the UC to partner with state leaders to find new approaches to funding financial aid that covers the true cost of attending college. Additionally, the state and the UC can streamline services such as CalFresh so that students who qualified in high school can receive the same help in college without having to reapply. The UC also should help students balance their multiple responsibilities by offering night and weekend classes, access to childcare, and other support services. As more students finish their degrees and raise their earning potential, the investment from the UC and the state will pay off for years.

Students from Underrepresented Regions

Higher education attainment in the Central Valley and Inland Empire has long been low but speakers from those areas worried that the situation could get even worse. Their students are predominantly from communities of color and low-income families, groups that are historically underrepresented at the UC. Additionally, compared to large metropolitan areas, speakers said, the Central Valley and Inland Empire offer fewer college preparatory classes and other opportunities in their high schools. Now, the two regions are projected to suffer disproportionate shortfalls in university capacity by 2030. Students are facing tough choices: Move away for college or give up on higher education.

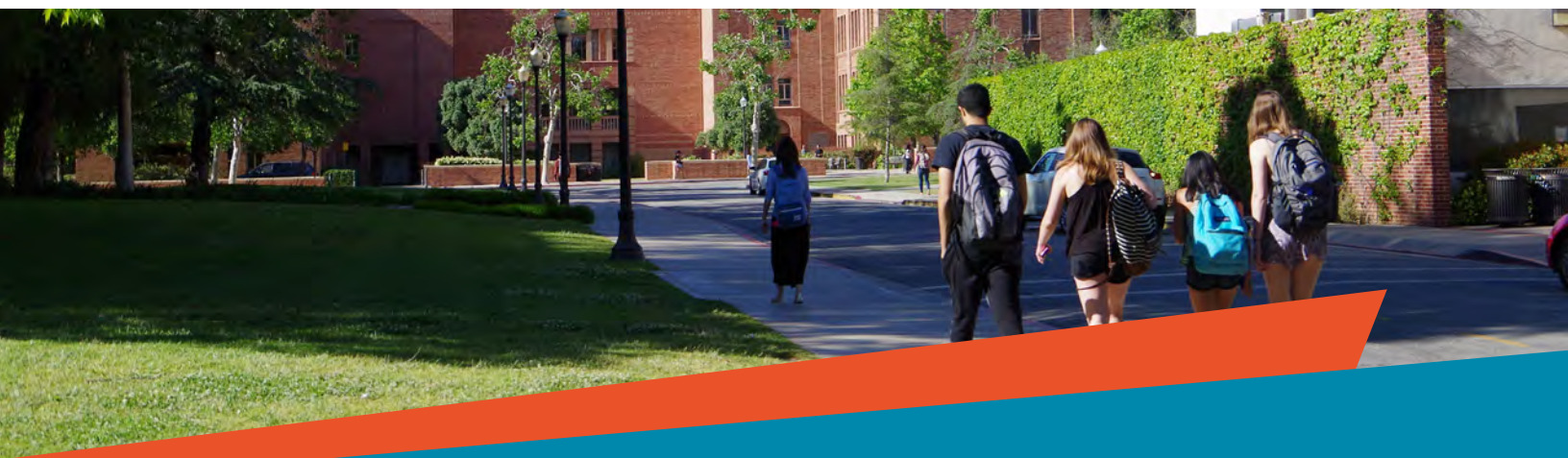
Speakers want the UC to expand access for Central Valley and Inland Empire students, both in their regions and at other campuses around the state. For students with financial limitations and family responsibilities, attending school in their home region is more affordable and practical. They also are likely to stay after graduation and contribute to their community. Campuses outside the regions could use geography as an admissions factor, to ensure more equitable opportunity for students. In enabling more Central Valley and Inland Empire students to earn their degrees, UC can help put their families and regions on a better economic trajectory.

A Track Record on Equity, Action Plans, and Courage

Unquestionably, speakers said, the pool of UC presidential candidates must be diverse. All 20 previous UC presidents have been white; Janet Napolitano has been the only woman. But neither a diverse candidate pool nor a commitment to equity and inclusion is sufficient. The next UC leader must have a demonstrated track record of reducing equity gaps, and once at the UC, be ready to tackle the issues immediately. Upending systemic inequities will be difficult, and the president must be determined and courageous. The UC should find a leader who knows that concrete and actionable plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion are what the university system and California most need.

“If you want to expand the numbers of students, especially from the communities I come from, we need to reconsider the way we open the doors for them.”

– Luis Santana, Reading and Beyond



“We need to create more spaces for students of high need to be able to transform their families and their communities and for California to move into the next phase.”

– Dr. Carlos Ayala, Growing Inland Achievement

THE CULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

With its long history and world-wide reputation of scholarship and innovation, the UC has much to be proud of. What further sets the UC apart from other prestigious universities is its status as a public institution, built by and dedicated to serving the state of California. For the UC to soar to even greater heights, speakers said that its work must emphasize that identity and ensure that stakeholders feel invested. As such, the UC must promote a culture that is transparent and welcoming.

“A strong UC leader will hold a balcony-level view of the system while also intentionally and collaboratively engaging on the ground alongside students, faculty, and other education segments, and advocacy organizations.”

– Yvonne Muñoz, The Education Trust-West

Transparent Sharing

UC’s role and work involves and impacts sectors across the state, and speakers said UC leadership must make itself approachable and ask for input. The UC must actively engage with students, families, labor, and community groups, as well as high-level state, education, and business leaders. In turn, the UC should share what it knows, too, and be transparent about its data and information. Sharing data and holding open conversations may result in discomfort initially. But ultimately, grappling with issues and seeking diverse opinions and ideas can result in the development of more effective solutions and a positive culture change.

“I would really love to see the new president visit campuses and interact with students and actually hear about their concerns.”

– Rogina Bozorgnia, UC Santa Cruz Student Union Assembly



“The next president of the UC system should look deeper at the stories of prospective students...Behind an SAT score, there is someone who is working hard, despite personal struggles. There are students who are motivated and capable of so much.”

– Wiliam Lopez, Linked Learning Alliance

Welcoming Climate

Just as much as than quality academics, a welcoming environment is critical to enabling students to fulfill their potential. Campus climate is particularly important as the UC seeks to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups. Students need faculty and staff who look like them, understand them, and will advocate for them. Speakers also cited additional ways that the UC could be responsive to its changing student population: flexible class schedules and timing for events that consider commute, work, and family responsibilities; policies that prevent immigration officers from coming onto campuses; expanded mental health services; and outreach to help students know about and access resources. The message to students should be loud and clear: You belong.

Trust and Empathy

The next UC president should get to know students and other stakeholders and in turn, allow them to know the person behind the title. The speakers said that being trustworthy and trusting in others on and off campuses will help the next leader achieve more. As a developer of people rather than material goods, the UC president must be able to promote a culture of deepening and expanding relationships.

CONCLUSION

The leadership transition at the University of California is occurring at a unique moment, when the nature of learning, work, and the economy in our state are undergoing significant transformation. In outlining the changes and improvements that the UC should make, forum speakers also emphasized their commitment to and confidence in the venerable institution.

College Futures is thankful to the speakers for their dedication to advancing higher education, workforce and economic development, and student success. We also are thankful to the UC presidential search committee for inviting input into this important process and allowing us to support the forums.



“We need a president who can relate to diverse student experiences and is committed to providing supports that place students at the center of the equation.”

– Alison De Lucca, Southern California College Access Network

APPENDIX

College Futures Foundation organized two public forums to seek input about the UC presidential search from organizations working in the field of postsecondary education, workforce and economic development, and student success. The speakers worked in and hailed from diverse regions of the state. Many of the speakers had a personal connection with the UC—for example, as alumni or parents of students.

SPEAKERS AT UC DAVIS, DEC. 13, 2019

- Marlene Garcia and David O'Brien, California Student Aid Commission
- Susanna Cooper, Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research
- Rogina Bozorgnia and Lauren Woo, UC Santa Cruz Student Union Assembly
- Jessie Ryan, The Campaign for College Opportunity
- Joel Vargas, JFF
- Tara Gray and Kaya Herron, Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce
- Yvonne Muñoz, The Education Trust-West

SPEAKERS AT UCLA, JAN. 14, 2020

- Dr. Carlos Ayala, Growing Inland Achievement
- Anne Stanton and William Lopez, Linked Learning Alliance
- Dr. Darlene V. Willis, Concerned Parents Alliance/College Bound Programs and UC San Diego Community Based Organizations
- Catalina Cifuentes, Riverside County Office of Education
- Michele Siqueiros, The Campaign for College Opportunity
- Frank Ramirez, Youth 2 Leaders Education Foundation
- Rachel Bonkovsky and Dr. Karlo Silbiger, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools
- Chisomebi Obi, BLU Educational Foundation
- Dr. Darla Cooper, The RP Group
- Dr. Su Jin Gatlin Jez, California Competes
- Luis Santana, Reading and Beyond
- Alison De Lucca and Hazel Ramos, Southern California College Access Network

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- Richard Sherman
- William Um
- Hayley Weddle
- Governor Gavin Newsom, ex-officio member
- John A. Pérez, ex-officio member

Board of Regents Chair John A. Pérez appointed regents to the special committee that will consider candidates and bring a recommendation to the Board. The committee is consulting broadly with constituent groups, including academic, alumni, student, and staff advisory committees, laboratory directors, vice presidents, and chancellors to establish the relevancy of the criteria for the president and discuss potential candidates.

More information about the presidential search can be found at presidentialexsearch.universityofcalifornia.edu/index.html. Comments or questions can be emailed to UCPresidentSearch@ucop.edu

ABOUT COLLEGE FUTURES FOUNDATION

At College Futures Foundation, we believe there is nothing more transformative for individuals, our economy, and our society than educational opportunity, and that the pathway to a college degree should be clear and open to the diverse students of California.

Right now, that is not the case. Not all hardworking young people are getting a fair shot at a better life. The vast majority of our state's K–12 students are people of color and from low-income households, yet when it comes to graduates from our public universities, these students are in the minority. At every step, they face roadblocks. We are working to change that.

College Futures Foundation partners with organizations and leaders across the state to catalyze systemic change, increase bachelor's degree completion, and close equity gaps so that this vision of a seamless, student-centered educational path to opportunity becomes a reality—and one that's available to every student, regardless of zip code, skin color, or income.

Visit us online at www.collegefutures.org

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