An invitation to envision The University of the 21st Century

1 OUR PAST AND PRESENT

I have been honored and humbled to serve as chancellor at this university the past five years and look forward to future challenges and opportunities with tremendous optimism. During my time as chancellor, my experiences at UC Davis have made it abundantly clear to me that we have many outstanding qualities and an even greater potential for excellence that we are now poised to fully realize. We can be The University of the 21st Century in ways that no other UC campus can. Since its early beginnings, UC Davis has focused on solving social problems and improving quality of life for all, doing so in a truly collaborative manner that requires the participation of every discipline on our campus, from the arts and humanities to the sciences and medicine. When we ask how we can improve the health and well-being of a community, we need the humanists to help define the cultural and social conditions, as well as the constraints, that will affect any medical, scientific, clinical or technological solutions we identify. We will need artists who will help translate possible solutions into inspiring messages that can engage the public into action. We need everyone—faculty, students and staff—to work alongside one another to find these answers. And we need to work together in ways that educate and empower our students to become the main actors in these endeavors so they can lead society forward as citizens and as scholars and professionals.

Over the past five years, UC Davis, a major public research university with one of the largest and most prestigious academic health systems in the state, has been able to navigate one of the most difficult periods in its history as state funding was reduced by almost 40 percent in less than 18 months. These cuts, while attributed to the deep recession that hit California and the nation, were part of a larger trend, reflecting a steady reduction of public funding for higher education in California over the past three decades. Cuts in state funding for higher education have not only been occurring over many years, they are also not unique to California. Historical data show that in all 50 states, funding to public universities—and more specifically to public research universities—has been consistently eroding for an extended period of time. The fact that there is not one state where funding to public higher education has been restored to historical levels during times of financial stability and economic growth underscores the argument that reasons for reduced public support are far more complex than simply bad economic times.

In California, the steady reduction of state funding reflects erosion of public support for our state’s farsighted and venerable Master Plan for Higher Education that has advanced California’s system of public colleges and universities for more than 50 years. As a result, it has increasingly become the responsibility of the three systems in California (UC, CSU and CCC) to find alternative methods for ensuring continued student access to education. For the UC specifically, the reductions have been far larger than the other two systems and have forced the ten campuses to increase tuition and increasingly rely on fundraising to support vital academic functions and address critical capital needs. This ongoing privatization of UC by the State of California has not been a strategy purposefully conceived and
practiced, but rather an emergent pattern that reflects a fundamental change in public values and attitudes toward higher education and, arguably, towards the role of government overall. This change in attitude has come to view higher education as simply another expenditure of tax dollars, rather than an investment in the state's future. Indeed, when we talk about privatization, we are citing the paradox of being required to rely more on private rather than public funds, even as we must retain our steadfast commitment to the university's public mission and its service to residents of California.

2 The Vision of Excellence

During the 2009-2010 academic year and in the midst of the Great Recession, we took stock of the values that characterize us as a top public research university and we defined excellence in ways that could guide our actions. The Vision of Excellence framework was the result of our efforts to create a compass that would lead us through a difficult financial landscape, help us balance our budgets without irreversibly compromising the quality of education, and build the foundation for UC Davis to become a global university. Some of the strategies we followed included our 2020 Initiative to strategically add 5,000 undergraduate students, 300 faculty and 2,500 graduate students by decade's end, with the aim to diversify and internationalize our campus; the reform of our Research Office; the Fundraising Campaign for UC Davis and its successful completion at $1.13 billion one year earlier than expected; establishment of the World Food Center with its UC Davis-MARS Innovation Institute on Food and Health to better leverage and maximize UC Davis' activities in Food and Health and accelerate innovation in these critical areas; the Betty Irene School of Nursing to revolutionize nursing education and reform the profession; and the "One UC Davis" public awareness campaign as a reminder that we are One University with multiple schools and locations but one set of goals and objectives and one diverse community of multiple needs and interests guided by one set of values.

While the Vision of Excellence succeeded in guiding us academically, it did not anticipate that the financial challenges of 2008-09 would be felt both nationally and state-wide and bring social unrest that would engulf our campus communities in unique ways. The Vision of Excellence document identified the importance of having a campus environment that allows all to perform to their potential, but it missed the opportunity to deeply examine the social implications of a severe economic downturn and the extent to which they would impact campus life. The drastic reduction of state resources required UC Davis to take many difficult steps to manage these cuts, including layoffs, furloughs and salary reductions required by substantial increases in the university's obligations to employee pensions. In addition, the UC Board of Regents instituted an unprecedented tuition increase of 33 percent at a time when our students and their families were experiencing their own dire financial challenges that included everything from lost incomes and jobs to diminished property values, home foreclosures and a deteriorating quality of life. Those conditions, along with growing economic displacement and a bleak job market, contributed to the political and social unrest on all ten campuses. Widespread protests in 2011 at UC Davis and elsewhere—including the infamous pepper spraying of students protesting peacefully on our campus—were a shocking reminder that for UC Davis to continue to excel, we needed to face our underlying weaknesses and reconsider strengths we could build on for the future.

As we focused the university on how to best work through these many challenges, it became clear that the Vision of Excellence framework needed a substantive revision to recognize and address the profound questions we were asking ourselves as never before. In a multitude of campus discussions and forums,
the UC Davis community considered questions such as: What is free speech and how do we define the space where it happens?; What is the role of the university police department and how does it add to or take value away from the education we try to offer?; Why are we privatizing the university and to what degree is this a choice or a forced condition?; How do we better engage with our students and do we have the necessary practices and structures in place to maximize their success?; How do we continue to provide access to an excellent education while we achieve the more rigorous financial discipline required of the university?; How do we embrace more complete and transparent accountability, even at the cost of limiting the choices we could make?; How do we provide access to excellent medical care to indigent populations and accomplish this within a fiscally constrained environment?; How do we remain committed to our state while at the same time build a global university to help solve major social problems impacting our state and nation in the context of what is happening around the world?

During the past three years, we have immersed ourselves in many such conversations and dialogues, realizing that our ability to succeed as a top public research university depends on our willingness to answer these questions in ways that will empower us to create the university we aspire to be members of. For these reasons, I believe this is the right moment in our history to ask ourselves what university we want to create after we first determine and articulate the answers to big, aspirational questions that define our university and the excellence we aspire to for the generations who follow us. We will then be able to determine how best to get there and which strategies and metrics we must embrace to be successful.

3  OUR FUTURE: UC DAVIS AS THE UNIVERSITY OF THE 21ST CENTURY

It has been the outstanding work by members of our UC Davis community during recent years that has positioned our campus to have this opportunity to re-define ourselves as the leading University of the 21st Century. While that vision has the promise to propel us to the absolute top tier of public research universities, the necessity for defining the university we want to be a part of and the excellence it will inspire is more essential and timely than ever.

Through our actions, we can demonstrate that excellence, humility and diversity can be our touchstones if we seize this opportunity to dream unconditionally, even in the midst of adversity, and if we have the discipline and academic and administrative rigor to make our dreams a reality. We can demonstrate to the rest of the world that disciplinary boundaries can be permeable, and that institutional and intellectual silos can be removed if they do nothing more than reinforce our biases and our fears. We can demonstrate our ability to re-define the University of the Future as a place where learning, teaching, and creation and translation of new knowledge are integrated into everything we do and where aspiring to achieve excellence becomes a lifestyle. We can be the first institution in the world to transform itself from the 20th century university community of scholars to the 21st century university community of learners, where we all—faculty, students and staff—use learning as a way to achieve excellence; where the answer to every question creates a path toward a new inquiry; and where statements and demands give way to dialogue and debate.

To be The University of the 21st Century we will have to become the University for the World, where our community will be extended to embrace all of its members, not just in California and the U.S., but around the globe. We will need to become global in our reach and perspective and use this attribute to
change our attitudes and understanding. We can be a university where our entire campus, with all of its state, national and international sites, becomes our classroom and laboratory. A university where our classrooms are transformed into wonderlands of exploration, where the truth is not an absolute or an individual pursuit, and where a journey to discovery is what we share in common.

Despite the current financial recovery and the prospects for a favorable economic environment in the state and the U.S., opportunities for upward economic mobility for young people during the past few years have been disappointing. In addition, the cost of education and health care are increasing in ways that are challenging our ability to combine quality with access. In our effort to define ourselves as The University of the 21st Century, we should reaffirm our commitment to the mission of the University of California to provide excellence, affordability, and access to higher education and medical care while we vow to become global in our perspective and reach in everything we do.

4 CREATING THE VISION

How shall we as the UC Davis community craft our vision for being "The University of the 21st Century?" Doing so is a complex task. Today's higher education landscape is more fluid and competitive than ever. The viewpoints and individual interests of the extended UC Davis community are diverse, complex and at times conflicting. Our students and their families, being major stakeholders, have interests and perspectives that need to be heard and incorporated into our academic planning.

Technological advances in educational delivery have spurred changes in the learning process and have impacted the way our students interact. The “flipped classroom” is encouraging students to be more active learners. Some technologies are promoting customized learning, while others have facilitated greater access to higher education for individuals around the world. Despite these changes, many young people say that they continue to yearn for a residential educational campus experience complete with face-to-face access to outstanding faculty members. They want the connectivity of being a member of an educational cohort of students with complementary aspirations. They want the richness of campus co-curricular organizations and, perhaps most importantly, they want the unique experience of being part of a world-class research university where we not only teach and learn, but also create knowledge through the discovery and innovation inherent in our research mission.

Our exceptional faculty and staff are recruited from around the world. They elect to join UC Davis because it provides opportunities to expand their professional development, scholarly and clinical pursuits. They come here because they are committed to teaching and mentoring outstanding students and because they want to be members of a vibrant intellectual and clinical community that reflects a rich tapestry of diverse perspectives illustrative of our nature as a comprehensive land-grant university. All members of our community expect to fulfill their work life in an environment that values diversity as an enabler of excellence, provides opportunities for continuous learning and personal growth, and encourages and rewards creativity and risk-taking. On a daily basis, students, faculty and staff on our campus work hard to advance our research, learning, and public service missions.

Recognizing our strengths and being cognizant of our weaknesses, this is an appropriate time to undertake a serious and aspirational community dialogue about the direction we must take to ensure the greatness of UC Davis for the next 50 years. It will be important to create a vision that recognizes these realities and embraces the many innovations the future will bring in tools, educational models,
services and products, as well as the skills that will be needed to support the economies these innovations will drive.

5 IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

UC Davis, with a budget of $3.9 billion and a community of faculty, students and staff in 2014-15 of 60,000 people, has generated $7 billion of annual economic activity in the Greater Sacramento region. It has also become the second largest employer in Northern California after State Government. This has connected UC Davis to many different stakeholders, including not only those who directly relate to it but also those who are affected by its well-being and any decisions and directions that may have an impact on its mission or future. The University of the 21st Century must fully recognize its reach and impact and the responsibility that comes with it. This responsibility requires the university to be engaged rather than insular, and externally oriented and aspiring to become a major driver in improving the quality of life of the communities it serves.

If this becomes the platform on which The University of the 21st Century will be built, we will have to identify our strengths and build on them; recognize the importance of being bold, creative and optimistic; and embrace risk-taking as a way of freeing ourselves from past barriers.

Concepts and opportunities that could be discussed and addressed among others are:

- **Making UC Davis the leader in the state, nation and the world in discovery and innovation.** To be able to contribute to solving the world’s biggest challenges, which require both inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaborations, we need to build on our strengths and invest in new pathways in discovery and innovation. The World Food Center, the One Health and the Population and Global Health Initiatives are among those that deserve to be considered. The questions we need to ask are: How do we invest in the initiatives that will help us build the UC Davis of the future? How do we make the initiatives we want to invest in successful, visible and impactful to the communities we serve and to the rest of the world? What global societal challenges is UC Davis uniquely positioned to address? How can we leverage inter-disciplinary and intra-disciplinary collaborations to be a more visible and impactful leader in addressing the society’s greatest challenges?

- **Creating a community of learners.** What new intellectual directions, in both our educational programs and research directions, do we need to consider that will have the potential to establish UC Davis as the UC of the 21st Century? How can we ensure student success by making learning and critical thinking the core of our educational experience? How can we ensure that the educational experience of our students mirrors their diverse perspectives and needs, and supports their aspirations both personal and professional? How can we prepare students for the world and a future we may not even know or understand? How do we create the right environment for our faculty to succeed in their scholarship and achieve their intellectual pursuits? How do we inspire excellence and continuous learning in everything we do? How do we recognize faculty, students and
staff for their contributions to their intellectual and professional communities and for the innovation and creativity they bring to their workplaces, their classrooms and their laboratories?

- **Becoming more visible and impactful in Sacramento.** By creating a presence that will bring together activities that need proximity to state government and access to an urban population, UC Davis can become a more vital educational leader in higher education in the state. How can we bring together our policy activities and student internship programs that benefit from being adjacent to the Capitol? How can we establish ourselves as the leader in education and clinical outreach at the nexus of Food and Health? How can we achieve these educational and research objectives and at the same time lead the region to become the fourth economic powerhouse in the state along with San Diego, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area? How do we create a vibrant UC Davis City Center in Sacramento to provide our arts, humanities and sciences with an urban laboratory for their educational programs, scholarship, and outreach to an urban population? How can we achieve the above in a financially responsible way?

- **Creating a sustainable financial environment.** What should our priorities be in generating revenue as we try to address our immediate and long-term needs in academic programs and facilities to accommodate growth on our campus as part of the 2020 Initiative? How can the university’s resource model enable and fuel our academic mission? What novel perspectives can we take on the complex portfolio of revenue sources such as State of California support, tuition, philanthropy, and extramural research funding? How can we best organize ourselves to steward the resources that we currently have through administrative efficiencies?

- **Creating an environment that supports human equity.** What further policies, procedures, and practices can we consider to ensure that our diverse faculty, staff, and students experience an organizational environment characterized by equity, inclusion, academic freedom, freedom of expression, social justice, and a shared responsibility for supporting and enabling the success of others?

- **Creating the Academic Health System of the 21st Century.** How do we provide the best education in the health professions? What investments and environment would allow us to make the most impactful medical discoveries? How can we become the health system that provides the best access to excellent health care? How do we best serve our communities while we lead the world in medical innovations?

- **Becoming an engine for economic growth.** Regarding our public service mission, how can we best leverage University and regional resources to foster innovation and entrepreneurship so that our discoveries have a positive impact on society through new companies and products, improved public policy and support for non-profit organizations domestically and abroad?
Becoming a global university. How do we balance our commitment to our state with our responsibility to the world? How do we help our students become global citizens? How do we impact the world through our values, principles and actions? How do we have an international impact through our programs, scholarship, innovation and clinical outreach?

6 Visioning Process and Blue Ribbon Committee

As we move through the New Year, we are initiating a UC Davis-wide effort to include all members of our immediate and extended communities in defining The University for the 21st Century. I have formed a Blue Ribbon committee to help us engage the campus and our neighboring communities in a vigorous discussion about the future of UC Davis, and to produce a report that outlines the result of these discussions while providing guidance moving forward. This committee is co-chaired by James Hildreth, Dean of the College of Biological Sciences; and Steve Currall, Chancellor's Senior Advisor for Strategic Projects and Initiatives.

This past summer, also under the leadership of Steve Currall, then Dean of the Graduate School of Management, we reached out in a separate initiative to a group of faculty, students and staff—as well as alumni and community leaders—to start asking whether a bigger presence in Sacramento would serve UC Davis well in its efforts to strengthen its policy, clinical and education programs as they apply to disciplines at the Nexus between Food and Health.

We embarked on that effort because, even though UC Davis is the most comprehensive of all UCs and has a prestigious academic health system, our visibility in Northern California and the state is primarily connected to our science, educational and clinical activities in Davis and at the Medical Center campus in Sacramento. Despite being located relatively close to the State Capitol, our visibility in Sacramento in relation to policy, food and health has not been as significant as it could or should be. Feedback we received from the multiple groups that met to respond to this idea suggested that the best way to answer this question was within the context of UC Davis’ overall future, a recommendation we are incorporating into this more expansive process.

The University of the 21st Century committee and its broader purview will help us define this university in a way that reflects our aspirations and dreams, and the committee charge includes a request to produce two over-arching results. First, a definition or vision about what would constitute The University of the 21st Century and, second, what goals and objectives must be in place to realize that vision.

The committee has been asked to submit a report describing its findings and recommendations by June 1, 2015. This report will become available for a public review and critique during the fall of 2015. The committee will inform our constituent communities of its forums, town hall meetings, invited speaker seminars and group discussions via its website, which can be found here.

This process will be extensive and inclusive, accomplished in partnership with the UC Davis Senate, Academic Federation, staff, students, alumni and other external constituents. Together, we want to determine what strategic questions we must address to further articulate what it means for UC Davis to
be the University of the 21st Century and how we differentiate our university from other world-class universities, public or private.

7 REFERENCES

UC Davis Vision of Excellence
UN Davis Economic Impact Report
21st Century University Website
Achieving our Vision of Excellence: campus assessment and planning