

Peltason calls for reassessing UC's future

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PELTASON CALLS FOR REASSESSING UC'S FUTURE

University of California President Jack W. Peltason today (Friday, May 21) called for a fundamental rethinking of the UC's operation and future in light of crippling state budget cuts.

As part of that effort, Peltason said, "We need to consider the likelihood that we will not be able to enroll all qualified California students who wish to come."

Four years ago, the University adopted a long range plan to accommodate an expected 63,000 additional students by the year 2005 through expansion of existing campuses and the building of a tenth campus. But not once in the four years since, Peltason said, "have we been given the (state) budget to implement that plan. We are now operating the University of California with one billion fewer dollars than projected."

Because the cuts came so quickly and unexpectedly, Peltason said UC responded with a series of stop-gap measures, including offering early retirements to senior faculty and staff, pay freezes and cuts, and hikes in student fees.

"It is now apparent," he said, "that the time for ad hoc measures is past. The state funds we have lost are not likely to be restored. This means that the 1988 plan, though it remains our ultimate goal, is no longer a realistic guide through this decade. We need to rethink, in fundamental ways, what our future is going to be like and how we are going to get there."

Peltason told the Board of Regents at its meeting in San Francisco that he has asked Walter E. Massey, UC's provost and vice president for academic affairs, to give his highest priority to the reassessment of UC's future. Peltason said he will also ask a subcommittee of Regents to act as consultants through process. Wide consultation will take place with faculty, staff, students and administration on each campus, he said.

"We have to face the fact that no matter how well we manage the University of California, reinvent it, or restructure it, we cannot deliver the same high-quality undergraduate programs at the same charge to all the students who want to come. Not only are we unable to build (for now) a tenth campus, we are having difficulty sustaining the present enrollments on existing campuses. To admit the students without adequate faculty, staff, or resources to provide them with a quality education would cheapen the degrees of all students."

Peltason said the review will be guided by the principle of "one university" and priorities will be set to retain and extend academic strengths.

"Each campus can and should develop its own centers of excellence and we must move to avoid costly duplication, but each campus must retain the teaching, research and public service missions of this university," he said.

Peltason offered five specific areas that will be part of the comprehensive re-evaluation.

^ "We must review all educational programs, campus by campus and between and among campuses, and consolidate resources behind those with the highest priority."

^ "We need to review our professional schools and our graduate programs, decide whether there can be consolidations or eliminations, and then we must look to new sources of funds for them."

^ "We need to review our fee system and begin to consider a tuition program. We need to review the fee policies for professional schools and consider ways in which they can become more self-sufficient."

^ "We need to shorten time to degree, make better use of summer sessions, and do more to capitalize on educational technologies."

^ "We must review our enrollment targets and set them at more realistic rates in light of the constrained resources of the last four years. If we are forced to restrict enrollment, however, we must do so in a fashion that will enhance diversity so that our student body will reflect the diversity of the people of California."

At the same time, Peltason said the University is working to be responsive to California needs.

"If there are not sufficient funds to educate all the people, the Legislature needs to help us accommodate those realities," he said.

"The state must realize, however, that California will be a lesser place if the University of California and its companion institutions -- the California State University, our community colleges, and our independent colleges and universities -- are so starved of resources that the next generation of Californians will be less well educated than the present one. There could be no greater tragedy for the state than the dismantling of its system of higher education."

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