

## Australian American Leadership Dialogue: Remarks concerning UC Jan 11/2010 R. C. Dynes

UC is a great public university. I will begin by giving my views as to why it is a great university. How it got to where it is and what makes it unique.

I will then go over the reasons that I believe it is in jeopardy. Some of them are obvious and some not so obvious. Some spin out from the beginning discussion as to why UC is so great in the first place.

Then I will generalize from those observations to make some provocative comments about public higher education in general and where the dangers lie in its future.

Firstly, why is the University of California a great university

- 1) It is a public university. It has a mission of RD&D.  
(Research, development and delivery of ideas and people).  
This is not just intellectual property but the people who will carry the torch. It is a partially public supported university.
- 2) The California Master plan for higher education. All California high school graduates have the opportunity to go to college.  
The top 12.5% are UC eligible  
The top 33% are California State University (CSU) eligible.  
All are eligible for the California Community Colleges (CCC)

There is great mobility between each institute. 1/3 of UC graduates are CCC transfers.

- 3) It is huge. And functions as a system. 10 Campuses, 3 National Labs, 5 schools of medicine, business schools, law schools, 11-12 hospitals. Agriculture schools. Vet schools.

And they are all different and encouraged to excel in some areas but not all areas.

UC educates more students than the sum of all Ivy Leagues, and all privates in Ca. In general, the public universities in the US educate the vast majority of students in the country.

But.....none of this is guaranteed. In 1968 I entered the US from Canada to go to work at Bell Laboratories. In my field it was the best research lab in the world. It was Camelot, and we dominated. The two largest companies in the world were AT&T and General Motors. At 25 years old I thought these were constants..They were not.

Having watched closely I have observations about UC but I think these observations can be more generally applied to global higher education. The innovative environment is the most precious asset in the university and must be protected as we go through budget struggles. As I see it, the dangers are as follows.

- 1) There is much talk about privatization of the public university system. I believe going down this road would irreversibly harm UC and hence the state of California. I think the reasons can be extrapolated globally.

In the case of UC, the system would splinter, and the campuses would compete with each other for resources (public and private), students, and faculty. UCSD would never have become what it is today if it wasn't part of the UC system. It could never have blossomed. A large number of students would not receive the quality education they are getting today and we would lose many faculty from the newer campuses.

2) The flow of people through CCC would atrophy and the role of the University as the gateway to productive and prosperous life would seriously shrink. The "public mission" would decrease and the talent pool that California has enjoyed would shrink.

3) The current 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century structure must be revised. In my view, the UC of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is made up of structures like CALIT2 ( Cal inst for telecommunications and information technology) and QB3 (Quantitative Biology).

At CALIT2, UCSD and UCI pool computer and information sciences, materials sciences, physics, chemistry, mathematics, life sciences, earth sciences, arts, social sciences, etc in a single institute that allows a global interface.

At QB3, UCSF, UCB, UC Santa Cruz and the Berkeley National lab brings together the life sciences, infomatics, physical sciences, clinical trials and some of the most sophisticated instruments in the world. Both of these institutes are true R,D&D efforts which act as attractions to institutes and people around the world. Again they serve as a global interface which will allow the attraction and movement of the most innovative people anywhere.

Finally, the crisis facing public universities throughout the world, is how does that vision translate to the local or regional political entities that make the decisions to support such a long-term investment?

In California, more is spent per year to incarcerate a prisoner than to educate an engineer, or an artist. Long term investments are difficult to sustain in an environment where near term goals dominate.

Furthermore, justifying a world class university simply on a return of investment is a difficult thing to prove. Existence proofs are the best evidence, and the time for the return is decades. Experiments are irreversible and short term pressures dominate.

It is my belief that research universities must globalize in their enlightened self interest and this necessity adds to the political pressure. While budget compromises must be made, the innovative climate must be preserved.