

Remarks at All-UC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni Event, San Francisco War Memorial Veterans Building, May 6, 2008

President Robert C. Dynes

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It's a pleasure to be here tonight. It's a pleasure to have you here tonight. I look around the room, and I see several generations of UC graduates. I see some former Regents, to whom I'm eternally grateful. I see some current Regents, to whom I'm eternally grateful. I see some alumni, I see some staff, and I see a whole group of people who are devoted to the University of California. If you weren't, you wouldn't be here tonight, so you're on our team tonight.

[Following roll call of campus alumni groups:] This is truly an historic event, as Debbie (Cole) has said, and tonight, in my view – I'm going to speak a little personally – in my view, it marks the termination of one voyage and the beginning of a larger voyage. So let me talk a little bit about UC and the LGBT community in UC, and I will talk a little bit about the history and my own recollections, and then I'm going to challenge you at the end, because I think it's time for a transition, and so I will challenge you as we go forward.

When I think back on my 13 years as chancellor and then president, and when I think back on the struggle that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community has had in California and in the nation, there are two events which come to my own mind, and again, this is a personal reflection.

The one is a Regents meeting in 1997. It was at UCLA, and the Regents were being asked to consider a recommendation from the University to extend retirement benefits to same-sex partners. I don't know if any of you were there or if any of you remember that. I was there. I was the chancellor at UC San Diego at the time. And that was probably the most contentious Regents' meeting I have ever attended. I and the other chancellors were working hard privately to talk to Regents about the issues that were being faced and what the decision was really all about and whether they needed help in making this particular decision.

It was the only Regents' meeting I have ever been at where all 26 Regents attended, including the Governor, including some newly-appointed Regents, all 26 Regents attended. The University, ultimately, the Regents, did make the right decision to extend retirement benefits to same-sex partners by a vote of 13 for, 12 against, and one abstention. It was a remarkable event. I'll never forget the joy that occurred in the room from the UC folks, from the chancellors and the staff that were in the room, the joy that exploded at that event. And I'll never forget the lesson that I learned personally. The lesson that I learned is that justice never happens overnight. You have to lean. You have to believe. You have to make logical, sensible, intelligent, and correct arguments. And it takes time. But it will prevail. I'm an optimist, and I learned that lesson during that Regents' meeting.

The second event was a more joyous event. It happened in 1999 on November 8, which happened to be my birthday, which was not relevant ... and we were opening the LGBT Resource Center in San Diego. I don't think any of you were there at that event. Those of you that live in Southern California know that in early November, the weather can be just superb, just wonderful. But on November 8, 1999, it was raining. And because we were expecting a large crowd, like this crowd, we scheduled it to be outdoors. And this is the God's honest truth, it really is true: it had stopped raining, it was dark and dismal, and as we began the event, the clouds opened up, and a rainbow appeared. It really did happen. It

was in the afternoon, the sun was in the west, and there was a rainbow behind the podium during the event. It was just remarkable.

Since that time, and before and during that time, we've built [LGBT] resource centers on nine of the campuses, and I'd like to recognize the directors of the resource centers that are here tonight from the various campuses:

From UC Berkeley, Billy Curtis
From UC Davis, Sheri Atkinson
From UCLA, Ronni Sanlo
From UC San Diego, Shaun Travers
From UC San Francisco, Shane Snowdon
From UC Santa Barbara, "Sam-well" Santos
From UC Santa Cruz, Deb Abbott

We will have a similar event in Los Angeles on Thursday night, and I think we will have covered all the resource centers by then.

Let me transition now to the future. As you just heard, I will be leaving the presidency in about six weeks, and I'm going back to San Diego where my wife is – she refuses to live up here – and I hand over the keys to Mark Yudof. I will return as a full-time professor of physics. Mark is an outstanding choice, and he needs our support. I urge you to give him your support, because the University of California is facing some very difficult times. In order for this to remain the finest university in the world, he needs the support of all the alumni. And so I urge you to support him as we go forward.

My challenge to you is to support him in every way you possibly can in order that Californians invest again, as they have not very well, invest again in higher education. Because if we do not invest in the future, in our future and in the future of our young people, California will become just another state, and I don't want to see that happen. So I ask you, I urge you, to support the University of California in every way. Many of you know, perhaps this audience more than any audience knows that you have to persist for just causes. If you care about the University, and I know you do or you wouldn't be here today, then support the University. Come back to the campus, act as a mentor, help whatever campus is close to you, and support us as we go through some difficult times.

Let me close with a personal observation, and then I'll open up for questions and comments. One of the reasons that I decided to step down, in spite of what you read in the newspapers, is that I have been married now for only about a year, a little over a year, so I'm a newlywed, and I want to spend more time with my wife, with Ann. She has become the joy of my life, and she's enriched my life beyond measure. I cannot imagine what it would be like if Ann and I could not enjoy the full benefits and blessings of a married life. I believe that every American should have access to those benefits and blessings, and I know that if we persist, every American will in the future.

Thank you for being here, thank you for caring about the University of California, thank you for helping us celebrate this first-ever event, and now I'll open the floor for comments and questions.