

ESSAY A

Academic Planning in a Changed Fiscal Environment

As noted in the *Introduction*, we had originally planned to present a theme essay on “Facilitating Interdisciplinary Education and Research.” In the past year, however, UCLA’s fiscal environment has changed dramatically. Fiscal support from the State of California for the University of California has fallen 20%. Although the state funds represent only 8% of UCLA’s total budget, these funds are what sustain our academic programs, including faculty salaries, classrooms, academic advising, and much more. Because it is extraordinarily unlikely that this precipitous decline in state support will be reversed in the next few years, the current situation is not a fiscal crisis; it is a changed reality.

Under these circumstances, we refocused our efforts and replaced the original essay with one on academic planning in a time of rapid change. The new fiscal environment has been central to every discussion in the past six months and will continue to figure into all aspects of institutional planning in the year ahead. UCLA has been developing a campus plan that was introduced in [Essay 1](#)¹ of our *Capacity* report. *Transforming UCLA for the Twenty-first Century* is the first institution-wide plan for UCLA. The draft plan was reviewed by various constituencies, subsequently revised, and then [posted](#)² for further review and comment.

The plan is grounded in four principles: 1) ensuring financial security; 2) sustaining academic excellence; 3) facilitating civic engagement; and 4) increasing diversity and fostering scholarship related to diversity. The use of the word “transforming” in the title signals our ambitions; however, in the current fiscal climate, the specific goals will need to be adapted and aligned with existing resources.

We begin this essay with descriptions of the budget crisis, the specific budget reduction plans that have been put in place, and the campus-wide process developed to support budget planning and ensure that resource allocations will align with campus priorities and goals. This discussion anchors our presentation of the other three principles within the academic plan and how it relates to the WASC themes. We conclude by looking ahead to how we will assess the success of our planning efforts—in particular, how they will have enabled UCLA to sustain excellence and innovation in a challenging and shifting environment.

The Current Budget Crisis

The 2009-10 budget for the State of California authorizes an \$813 million cut in state support for the University of California (UC). This corresponds to a 20% decrease in the general funds that largely support instruction, including faculty and staff salaries. UCLA’s share of this reduction will amount to more than \$117 million. When combined with the \$14 million in cuts carried forward from 2008-09 and unfunded cost increases of approximately \$26 million for utilities, benefits and retirement contributions, the total shortfall is more than \$150 million. A budget reduction of this size is unprecedented within the university and was not announced until late Spring 2009. UCLA’s immediate challenge is to accommodate these enormous budget cuts while preserving the quality of education and research programs.

In our initial planning for these budget cuts, we set out to achieve our budgetary targets through a combination of permanent reductions and one-time transfers from reserves. The campus plan to address the expected shortfall of ~\$131 million for 2009-10 includes the application of new

revenues, as well as the use of mandated salary savings, across-the-board cuts, and targeted budget reductions; to date, these include:

- \$7.5 million in new revenue from an increase in the UC Educational Fee (i.e., tuition) paid by UCLA students;
- \$37 million in expected salary savings from an employee furlough program³ mandated by the UC Office of the President for one year (2009-10);
- \$33 million from across-the-board cuts of 5% in state funds implemented by deans and vice chancellors;
- \$30 million in targeted cuts to be identified the Chancellor and Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost (EVC/Provost), and
- \$23.5 million in one-time reductions in UCLA reserves from various sources.

To the extent possible, the Chancellor and EVC/Provost will apply additional cuts to selected campus operations. For example, the campus could save \$5 to \$10 million by streamlining and consolidating campus administrative functions, capturing income from auxiliary enterprises and the medical center, and rescinding selected chancellorial commitments to units. Also, the campus could save \$5 to \$10 million by consolidating information technology services, reducing central administrative costs, and implementing enhanced energy conservation strategies.

In the near future, UCLA budgetary decisions will be guided by principles and recommendations developed through the *Budget Toolbox Project* and the new academic plan. The *Project* was initiated early in 2009 to support future campus academic and budgetary planning. Three taskforces were appointed to assist the campus in developing plans for sustaining academic strength through: 1) realigning academic programs with new budget realities; 2) maximizing cost savings and efficiency; and 3) increasing non-state revenues. Each taskforce included faculty and administrators and met frequently between January and April 2009. Three reports were issued:

- The report⁴ from the Academic Programs Taskforce recommended options for reducing the cost of the academic program and re-allocating resources within the academic program to meet budget reductions;
- The report⁵ from the Cost Savings and Efficiency Taskforce recommended options for reducing administrative costs and improving operational efficiency; and
- The report⁶ from the Revenue Taskforce recommended options for increasing non-state revenues to support academic and administrative programs.

The most important recommendations emerging from the *Toolbox* reports concern the need to review and revise curricula to protect the core of UCLA's academic programs. For example, the report recommends: 1) consolidating academic units and reducing the number of majors and minors offered; 2) prioritizing course offerings and developing an efficient mixture of course formats that preserves seminars, capstone courses, and the like; 3) reviewing academic requirements to determine if they are necessary for today's students; and 4) expanding the use of educational technology. These recommendations are grounded in the campus priorities described in our *Capacity* report and in this *Educational Effectiveness* report.

Targeted cuts for 2009-10 for education and research programs supported by state funds include reductions of:

- 50-75% in the hiring of new faculty by limiting authorized faculty searches to no more than 25;
- 10% in temporary instructional costs (lecturers and teaching assistants) by consolidating course offerings and eliminating selected courses;
- 30-50% in state funding for research centers;
- 40% in state funding in support to clinical teaching services; and
- 10% in state funding for student services.

A serious concern is that these steps will lead to larger classes and an increase in faculty teaching workload, impacting the quality of instruction. To mitigate some of the negative impacts, we are taking three steps. First, the EVC/Provost has allocated over \$7 million in temporary bridge funding to enable units to fulfill their obligations to students. We anticipate that additional bridge funding will be available for Fall 2010 but at a lower level. Second, we will reduce undergraduate enrollment to improve the student-faculty ratio and reduce average class size. Third, the campus is engaged in a planning process to align student needs, academic offerings, and budget.

In his memo to the campus, EVC/Provost Waugh noted that: “Given limited time for analysis and discussion and budget uncertainties, the recommendations emerging from these reports point to ideas that are worthy of further consideration, not full-blown proposals ready for implementation.” These *Toolbox* reports thus represent only the first phase of work; the next phase is to use these principles and ideas to undertake critical assessment of specific proposals for which further study is needed, and to develop implementation plans for approved projects to go forward. Waugh also noted that: “While the size of the budget cuts UCLA will continue to face in 2010-11 and beyond is not yet known, the unprecedented nature of this fiscal crisis requires the campus to undertake new approaches to fiscal, operational, and academic planning.”

Relevant to this essay are several principles identified by the Academic Programs Toolbox Taskforce.

1. *UCLA should protect the quality of the academic enterprise to the greatest degree possible.* A large percentage of UCLA’s state funding is committed to faculty salaries and benefits. Consequently, a portion of the budget cuts will need to be accommodated through faculty attrition, even as we cut administrative costs and seek new revenues. Our academic programs must be tailored to these new circumstances, as must the pace at which we implement innovations such as capstone experiences. These efforts are consistent with our commitment to excellence, in that cost-cutting and revenue-generating activities have the potential to improve overall quality by focusing our efforts on priorities and strengths.
2. *Across-the-board solutions, including budget cuts, mandatory furloughs, and hiring freezes may be necessary but are neither sufficient nor desirable in all cases.* Where possible, targeted solutions are preferred, so that we can protect activities that are core to UCLA and create space for new opportunities.
3. *Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are necessary.* Many cost-cutting and revenue-generating activities should occur at the unit level. For example, academic departments are

best able to identify the courses that are core to a major, while an administrative director is best able to determine how to reduce the number of staff. There remains a role for central administration in reviewing and assessing local activities to ensure that they meet institutional needs and are consistent with university policies and values.

Selected and strategic implementation of the *Toolbox* recommendations started in Summer 2009. In a [July 2009 letter](#)⁷, EVC/Provost Waugh asked deans and departments to implement taskforce recommendations relevant to educational programs. Waugh also convened a budget advisory group comprised of administrators and faculty. Based on the feasibility and anticipated benefits of the ideas generated, the advisory group is expected to assist the EVC/Provost in establishing priorities for follow-up, determining action plans for each high-priority recommendation, and developing an assessment framework for the implementation phase.

The Emerging Academic Plan: Excellence, Diversity, and Engagement

UCLA's *Transforming* academic plan will establish our framework for moving forward. The plan is grounded in three priorities. Each is discussed here in light of UCLA's reaccreditation.

Academic excellence requires us to recruit and retain the very best students, faculty, and staff. To achieve this goal and remain competitive, we must make the UCLA campus among the most desirable work environments in the country. To that end, we plan to increase housing for students, post-doctoral scholars, faculty, and staff, and we will strive to ensure competitive salary levels for faculty and staff, as well as increased financial support for students.

Academic excellence is also vested in the strategic choices we make in the coming decade to advance our tradition of world-class scholarship and teaching. Among the many elements that highlight UCLA's distinction is interdisciplinary teaching and research. As noted in [Essay 7](#)⁸ of our *Capacity* report, the campus has extraordinary capacity for interdisciplinary scholarship. In the past decade, UCLA has supported initiatives in biosciences, nanosystems, international studies, environmental studies, society and genetics, stem cell research, digital humanities, the arts, and more. We continue to strive to remove barriers to scholarly and pedagogical interactions, improve collaboration and consortium building, and seed new opportunities for integrative learning by undergraduate and graduate students.

Diversity has long been championed by UCLA, both because it is central to providing a broad, enriching educational experience, and also because our students, faculty, and staff should reflect the remarkable diversity of the State of California. As a minority-serving institution, UCLA is already one of the most diverse research universities in the nation. Yet, as discussed in [Essay 3](#)⁹ of our *Capacity* report, despite having a diversity initiative in place for a decade, we have made only modest progress in increasing the diversity of our faculty and student body. In their report, the WASC Site Visit Team noted that:

UCLA has made remarkable and commendable progress building an institutional based infrastructure for diversity oversight. Many of the nationally recognized "best practices" are now a part of the university's culture and practice. University leaders have created administrative positions and established advisory councils, including broad based advisory groups that report directly to the Chancellor. In addition the academic community has set goals that intend to invigorate campus attention.

Chancellor Block identifies diversity as a [core value](#)¹⁰ and a top campus priority, and the *Transforming* plan focuses on research, scholarship, and teaching/learning related to diversity. In

addition, the Chancellor's Advisory Group on Diversity has drafted a campus [Diversity Plan](#)¹¹. The Plan is organized into five sections that discuss *challenges* and specific *action plans* for: 1) increasing the diversity of our faculty; 2) increasing the diversity of our graduate student body; 3) increasing the diversity of our undergraduate student body and introducing more issues of diversity into the curriculum; 4) increasing attention to issues of diversity and campus climate by Student Affairs; and 5) increasing the diversity of UCLA's campus staff. Three themes unify all five areas: 1) improving campus climate; 2) building an academy that promotes the academic 'pipeline' from freshmen to faculty; and 3) improving communication about diversity and diversity programs within the campus and externally. The draft of the Diversity Plan will be reviewed by campus agencies during 2009-10 before it is finalized.

Civic engagement at UCLA means working to make a difference in the civic life of Los Angeles. We do so by directing the knowledge and skills of our students, faculty, staff, and senior leaders to address societal problems and improve the quality of life in our community. UCLA endeavors to advance community-based, applied, and translational research, as well as civic education, through classroom instruction, service learning, and professional training. These activities are already widespread at UCLA; our challenge is to coordinate and focus them, elevate civic engagement as a core institutional value, and make this work more visible on campus and in the community. UCLA's status as an international university complements this focus on civic engagement. The benefits of international engagement to UCLA and Los Angeles include the direct economic impact of preparing students for the global workforce.

Action Plans for Transforming UCLA

The draft academic plan outlines actions to be taken in several areas, including faculty recruitment and retention, teaching and education, and civic and international engagement. Four sets of actions center on teaching and education themes that were developed as part of UCLA's reaccreditation:

1. articulate and assess learning outcomes;
2. continue to develop opportunities for capstone projects;
3. improve teaching space and expand capacity in educational technology; and
4. develop new methods to enable faculty to teach outside their own departments.

The first action listed above is at the core of *Essay B* of this report. UCLA expects all degree-granting programs to articulate learning outcomes, to develop a system for assessing them, and to describe in their Academic Senate Program Reviews any changes that were informed by, and resulted from, the learning outcomes assessment. Also, the administration and Academic Senate are designing plans to ensure that processes for evaluating educational effectiveness are sustained and embedded in the culture and practices of the campus. The second action is described in *Essay C*. The third action is the focus of *Essay D*.

The fourth action is part of a broader goal to establish UCLA as "the leader in fostering new forms of collaborative, multidisciplinary research and teaching." One component of this effort, the "Costs of and Alternatives to UCLA's Buyout Model," was addressed in *Essay 7* of our *Capacity* report and in Appendix B of the Academic Programs Taskforce report. Many courses are offered by interdisciplinary programs, "yet long-established practices have created obstacles to faculty teaching outside their own departments" which results in a costly system causing campus units to pay twice for teaching. The report concluded:

In short, the buyout culture means that many departments expect to be reimbursed for the “loss” of a faculty member who might teach in the department if he or she were not teaching outside the department. The reimbursement is intended to cover all or part of the cost of a lecturer to make up for the absence of the latter faculty member. In practice, however, the department does not always need to hire a lecturer when a faculty member commits to teaching a course outside the department. Furthermore, the practice implies that departments have no ongoing responsibility to support interdisciplinary teaching when, in fact, UCLA is committed to a variety of programs that do not fit within the departmental structure, such as the Freshman Clusters, General Education, and IDPs.

Appendix B of the Academic Programs Taskforce report ends with a series of recommendations to address changing UCLA’s “buyout culture.” These recommendations, as well as actions outlined in the *Transforming* plan, frame the “road map” suggested by the WASC Site Visit Team in their [report](#)¹² submitted to the WASC Commission in November 2008.

Accountability and Assessment

UCLA’s *Transforming* plan is intended to provide direction until the 2019 centennial, which coincides with UCLA’s next WASC reaccreditation. Our progress in establishing and assessing learning outcomes, expanding capstone experiences for undergraduates, enhancing teaching and learning with educational technology, and facilitating interdisciplinary research will reflect our commitment to academic excellence and innovation. We have just begun to identify the measures and outcomes that will allow us to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of our academic planning efforts and adaptive responses to the changing environment. The following are some of the questions that will anchor this reflective analysis.

- What will we have learned, as an institution, through the capstone and educational technology initiatives? To what extent will these initiatives have enhanced academic excellence and contributed to our capacity for innovation? How, and to what extent, will these initiatives have contributed to student success?
- Were the strategic actions taken in this challenging environment successful in transforming UCLA into a diverse academic community, an exemplar for problem-based teaching and research, and a leader in fostering new forms of multidisciplinary collaboration in research and teaching?

To address institution-wide planning questions, we will establish an accountability framework and assessment plan. At the unit level, the framework will be grounded in the academic program review process that provides a means for assessing the unit’s effectiveness and progress. At the institutional level, the quantitative tools available to us include a new [accountability framework](#)¹³ being developed by the UC Office of the President; a common core of performance indicators and measures for each unit, including workload measures, enrollment, resources, and performance indicators unique to the unit that reflect that unit’s context and goals; and trend data, including comparisons with peer institutions.

Looking ahead. The impact of the budget cuts is only beginning to be felt. The consequences of further cuts and higher student fees are likely to include fewer graduate students, concerns about retaining faculty and staff, and widespread feelings of apprehension. Although the changing fiscal environment will impact the pace at which we are able to make progress in the initiatives described in the following essays, it will not diminish our effort or commitment to achieving the goals we have set.