

ONE UNIVERSITY: THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA
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ABSTRACT

The one-university idea—that the University of California is a single institution whose campuses are united in the pursuit of a common mission and common standards of quality—has been a guiding organizational principle since UC President Robert Gordon Sproul first articulated it in the 1930s. This paper examines the origins of the one-university idea in the Sproul era, the role it has played in UC's institutional development through waves of decentralization and campus expansion, and whether it remains relevant today.

We are building one great university in California. Let no small mind direct you along the paths of suspicion, distrust, or jealousy.
President Robert Gordon Sproul to the students of UCLA, September 27, 1932

President Sproul's admonition to UCLA's students came at a sensitive moment in the history of the University of California. In 1932 the Los Angeles campus—long fought for by southern California citizens and interest groups, long delayed by University leaders in the north, and only recently settled in the hills of Westwood where it stands today—had recently made UC the nation's first multicampus university.¹ UCLA was a fledgling institution at that point, very much in the shadow of its distinguished older sibling four hundred miles away at Berkeley. Sproul's remark was an attempt to lift morale and instill a sense of solidarity between north and south. The phrase he used—"one great university"—has come to symbolize the institutional identity of the University of California as a set of research university campuses united by a common mission and common standards for the admission of students, for promotion of faculty, and for high academic quality. This characteristic makes UC different from other American multicampus systems, most of which have been organized around existing and sometimes very different kinds of educational institutions. The one-university idea is widely regarded as a key organizational reason for UC's emergence as one of the world's most distinguished universities.

The second, equally powerful theme of UC's evolution into a multicampus system—the institutional preference for administrative decentralization—has led to a sometimes uneasy co-existence with the one-university principle. Sproul recognized that the more decision-making became local, and the more campuses were seen as independent actors in their communities, the less loyalty would be channeled to the one great university California was in the process of building. The University of California might well fragment into a series of local institutions, he feared, without a strong centering force—the president and the universitywide administration. As articulated by Sproul, the one-university idea was more than an expression of institutional character. It was also an organizational framework, a means of containing the tensions of competing campuses, and a statement about the role of the president.

A quarter of a century after Sproul's ringing speech to the students of UCLA, President Clark Kerr and the Regents dismantled the highly centralized organizational edifice he had created. The University committed itself to an administrative enterprise governed by two values: authority at the center coupled with considerable independence everywhere else. Maintaining organizational equilibrium between these two values has been a major task of successive presidents. This task occurs entirely outside the purview of most faculty, and virtually all students, alumni, and members of the public. And why not? Students learn,

¹ On February 1, 1927, the Regents officially designated the campus—which had been known simply as the Southern Branch since its beginnings in 1919—the University of California at Los Angeles.

faculty teach and discover, and the process of education goes on, whatever administrators do or whatever they think about the organizational philosophies that govern their work.

Yet the all-but-invisible struggle between authority at the center and independence on the campuses has become surprisingly public in recent years. An obvious contributor has been a steep budgetary downturn. State funding has gone from bad to worse to devastating in the wake of California's longstanding budget problems and the international economic cataclysm of 2008. Economist Gary Gorton has compared the public reaction to the meltdown on Wall Street to what happens after a massive electrical blackout: once the panic begins to subside, what follows is an intense upsurge of interest in understanding how the system works and what went wrong.² Something analogous has occurred within UC, raising fundamental questions not only about its fiscal strategies for survival but also about the integrity and efficiency of its organizational structure.³

This budgetary reversal of fortune is not the whole story, however. The University was already in a state of internal disequilibrium even before the worst of the financial storms hit. A much-publicized controversy over UC executive compensation in 2005 and 2006 made the Office of the President, the University's systemwide office, an object of public and legislative anger.⁴ In 2007, the Regents cited the executive compensation disaster as "illustrative of a broader governance problem" in the Office of the President.⁵

The governance issue was also amplified by campus criticisms of UCOP management that had begun to catch the attention of the Board of Regents. Regents' chair Richard Blum has been outspoken in characterizing the Office of the President as an "outmoded and dysfunctional" bureaucracy.⁶ When he commissioned an external consulting firm, the Monitor Group, to assess the organization, effectiveness, and efficiency of the University's administrative and finance functions in 2007, its mandate was to begin with the Office of the President.⁷ Blum criticized what he saw as the absence of clear lines of authority as well as delays and other bureaucratic inefficiencies throughout the University's administration. The planned restructuring of its central office, he announced, would make it "a model of transformation to efficiency and service" as a first step toward serial reform of UC's administrative operations generally.⁸

The message of the 2007 Monitor Group report—an unremittingly negative assessment of the organization, culture, and performance of the Office of the President—was that UCOP was too large, too bureaucratic, and too opaque in its decision making, imposing requirements on campuses instead of partnering with them, and insufficiently oriented toward service. The Regents then set in motion a fundamental restructuring that, as of May 2010, has reduced UCOP's budget by \$85 million (\$30 million, or more than a third of this amount, is in the form of transfers of UCOP functions and budgets to campuses, however) and its workforce by 28 percent, according to UCOP sources.⁹ The cuts in the Office of the President have been extraordinary, given that even the Monitor Group report noted that costs within the Office of the President were relatively modest compared to those of the system as a whole.¹⁰ The loss of institutional memory and analytical skills has been considerable. The chair of the Academic Council wrote President Yudof in 2009 about the difficulties the staff cutbacks presented for the work of the

² Gary Gorton, *Slapped by the Invisible Hand: The Panic of 2007* (Oxford University Press, March 2010), pp. 7-8.

³ See, for example, the Academic Senate's "Futures" report and its criticisms of the longstanding UC budget strategy of alliances with governors and reliance on the partnership agreements with the State: "Current Budget Trends and the Future of The University of California," University Committee on Planning and Budget, May 2006.

⁴ For a description and analysis of the 2005-6 executive compensation controversy, see Patricia A. Pelfrey, "Executive Compensation at the University of California: An Alternative View," Research and Occasional Paper Series, Center for Studies in Higher Education, UC Berkeley, May 2008. Available at <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/publications.php?id=309>.

⁵ Letter from Regent Sherry Lansing, Regent Russell Gould, President Robert C. Dynes, and Provost Wyatt R. Hume to President and Executive Director Ralph Wolff, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, January 18, 2008.

⁶ Quoted in "Mark Yudof's Impossible Fix," *San Francisco Magazine*, February 2010. Available at <http://www.sanfrancmag.com/print/node/9834>.

⁷ See "Monitor Group Report to the Regents: University of California Organizational Restructuring Effort," September 2007.

⁸ Richard Blum, "We Need to Be More Strategically Dynamic," August 22, 2007. See the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "UC's Top Regent Bashes System," August 23, 2007.

⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Regents' Committee on Finance, May 19, 2010.

¹⁰ "Monitor Group Report to the Regents: University of California Organizational Restructuring Effort," September 12, 2007, p. 2: "UCOP's administrative spending for both personnel and non-personnel is \$127 million, whereas the combined campus expenditure on administrative personnel alone is estimated to be between \$650 million and \$750 million." The University's own analysis comparing the growth of academic and non-academic employees in 1997-98 and 2008-09 concluded that "increases in employee FTE have been driven primarily by expansion in Teaching Hospitals, Research and Auxiliary Enterprises," which includes "thousands of nurses, doctors, custodians, food service workers, and other staff who provide direct services to students, faculty and the public" ("The University of California Academic and Non-Academic Personnel Growth FY 1997-98 to FY 2008-09," Executive Summary, UCOP Institutional Research, March 5, 2010, p. 1).

universitywide Senate.¹¹ A year later, an Academic Senate report recommended reducing campus staff, if necessary, rather than making further cuts in UCOP personnel.¹²

An internal task force, chaired by UC Davis chancellor Larry Vanderhoef and charged with redefining the Office of the President's role in the new administrative framework, recommended that UCOP focus exclusively on policy, oversight, and other clearly executive functions.¹³ Anything that could be defined as "operational"—such as a continuing education program for attorneys and a study-abroad program for UC students, for example, both administered by UCOP—should be removed from the Office of the President and reassigned to the campuses or managed elsewhere.

The Vanderhoef report was a strong reassertion of the decentralization principle that campuses manage programs and the Office of the President manages policy. In this respect, it echoed the three major organizational reports of the past fifty years—the Cresap, McCormick, and Paget study of 1959, an analysis of the role of the Office of the President and the campuses done in 1976, and a report on UC organization commissioned by outgoing president David Gardner and incoming president Jack Peltason in 1992. The consistency of their conclusions suggests that decentralization has remained unfinished business. But while the message may be the same, today's context and circumstances give it a very different import. To explain why, it is necessary to take a closer look at the recurring debate over the role of the president and the Office of the President, the shifting balance of centralization and decentralization in UC's multicampus system, and the origins and evolution of the one-university model.

ROBERT GORDON SPROUL AND ONE UNIVERSITY

The concept of one great university, so eloquently articulated by Sproul, began as a defensive tactic before it became an organizational philosophy. By the 1930s, at the beginning of Sproul's long presidency (1930-1958), the University had campuses at Berkeley and UCLA, as well as the medical school in San Francisco, the University Farm at Davis, the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, Scripps Institution of Oceanography at San Diego, the Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton (near San Jose), and a series of agricultural experiment stations throughout California; in 1944 it would add the state college at Santa Barbara as well. California's population had increased by two-thirds during the 1920s and demand for education along with it. The University was in competition for public funds with the seven state teachers' colleges and the thirty-four community colleges; the regional college movement was underway and the possibility of new State-funded institutions, created in response to local demand, was an ever-present threat.¹⁴ There was much discussion in the legislature and elsewhere about the organization of higher education in California, including the question of whether UC should take over the state teachers' colleges. In this context, Sproul worried about two related matters.

The first was the constant struggle for the money to meet the needs of the Berkeley campus. Initial opposition to a second campus in southern California grew out of fears that it would drain resources away from the original northern campus. Sproul recognized the need for a southern California presence but thought the State would balk at supporting two first-rate campuses. Under the pressures of population growth, local boosters, and Los Angeles business interests, UCLA might be split off to become a separate, regional university. This he was determined to oppose.¹⁵

The second issue was how to defend the University generally against similar political or regional threats. In 1923, before becoming president, Sproul had served on a legislative commission to study the organization of agricultural research in California and the nation. The impetus was a move by the state's powerful agriculture leaders to separate agricultural research from the University.¹⁶ This was headed off by the commission's recommendation to develop the Davis campus as a center of agricultural research and thus leave it within UC. But the danger that agriculture or other functions of the University might be moved out of UC remained. At the same time, there was the possibility that the unsettled conditions of education in the state might mean that

¹¹ "The Senate relies on the institutional memory and analytical strength of key UCOP staff to support its analyses and recommendations. [The Academic] Council's increasing concern arises from the departure or reassignment of long-time colleagues, as well as the move of unique analytical functions in specific subject areas to centralized units." Letter from Academic Council Chair Mary Croughan to President Mark Yudof, March 11, 2009.

¹² "The Choices Report," Submitted by the University Committee on Planning and Budget, Systemwide Academic Senate, University of California, March 2010, p. 4.

¹³ "Report of the Working Group on the Roles of the Office of the President," Governance Committee of the Board of Regents, January 8, 2008. Available at

¹⁴ Verne Stadtman, *The University of California 1868-1968* (McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 261ff.

¹⁵ Agnes Roddy Robb, "Robert Gordon Sproul and the University of California: A Memoir by Agnes Roddy Robb," introduction by Garff Wilson, UC Berkeley Regional Oral History Office, 1976, p. 13.

¹⁶ Robb, p. 9a.

UC would be asked to absorb the state teachers' colleges. What form of organization could bring safety and coherence to an increasingly far-flung academic empire?

Sproul's strategy was to present the University as a single organic institution in which removal of any constituent part would damage the whole. Over time, this aspect of the one-university idea began to evolve. In the mid-1930s, according to Verne Stadtman,

A subtle shift in the One University concept occurred at about this time. Sproul and other administrators began to speak not of just UCLA and Berkeley, but of "two great major campuses, and five others to be conducted as a single institution." The "five others"—Mount Hamilton, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, San Francisco, the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, and Davis—had been around before UCLA was established, but they were generally regarded as auxiliary facilities of the Berkeley campus and not as separate entities.¹⁷

Sproul dedicated himself to driving home this message to the legislature, the public, and the various economic and industrial interests in the state: the University of California was a single institution. More, its founders had always intended it to be a single institution. As Sproul put it in one of many similar speeches:

That we have today a truly great University on . . . campuses scattered over almost the whole length and breadth of California, is a direct result of the planting of fertile and right growing seeds by a handful of men who came to our State during the days of the Gold Rush . . . These early leaders, it is interesting to note, had their troubles with sectionalism just as we do today; it was necessary for them to reiterate constantly that they were not interested in a University of San Francisco or a University of Sacramento, but in a University of California. . . . When we speak of maintaining the unity of the University of California, we are not referring to some recently coined slogan, manufactured as a matter of political expediency. Instead, we are talking about an ideal that has been part of the University ever since it was established, and which has been transmitted in strength and vigor to each new campus as it developed.¹⁸

At the same time, Sproul felt it essential to emphasize the symbolic meaning of his office, to make clear to the faculty, the students, and the local campus communities that the University of California was a single university with a single leader—the president. Although his official home was on the Berkeley campus, beginning in 1936 he made it a practice to spend considerable time in residence at UCLA to make this point. When the Berkeley and UCLA football teams played each other, Sproul sat on one side for the first half and then took a ceremonial walk across the field to finish the game on the other. In a 1976 oral history his assistant, Agnes Roddy Robb, said that Sproul "envisaged the University ultimately, I think, as being somewhat like the British Empire, with a king or queen who would be the symbol of the singleness of the University, and the various campuses similar to the dominions of the British Empire. He pretty closely followed that; he was the head, not a figure head, but definitely the symbol of the University."¹⁹

Sproul did not believe that the University could be unified on the basis of geography. It was too big and too scattered. In 1937, he presented the Regents with a report on the organization of UC and proposed three alternatives: a centralized administration with one president and "such vice presidents as are necessary"; a decentralized university, again with a number of vice presidents; and separation into two independent universities, one in the north and one in the south. Sproul reminded the Regents that in December 1935 he had recommended that the University follow the advice of a recent report on California higher education and agree to incorporate the state colleges, "believing that such a plan would be the best of all the possibilities open to the University." The Regents felt the existing campuses were more than enough responsibility, however, and rejected this idea. Of the three alternatives put before them, they approved the first—a centralized administration with strong presidential control of the details of campus decisions and operations.²⁰

As Sproul considered the internal problem of uniting the university, he came to feel that the solution was to think of the organization not in terms of separate campuses but in terms of disciplines. Groups of related academic fields—letters, social sciences, natural sciences, and arts—at both Berkeley and UCLA would each report to a universitywide vice president, who would travel back and forth between the campuses to keep in touch with faculty and departmental needs. Sproul called this "the functional university," and the organizational model was agriculture. Just as agricultural programs at Davis, Berkeley, Riverside, and Los Angeles reported to a single statewide official so, under Sproul's plan, would the various disciplinary fields throughout

¹⁷ Stadtman, p. 270.

¹⁸ Speech to the California Club, 1948, quoted in Robb, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹ Robb, p. 13.

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Educational Policy, Board of Regents, February 11, 1937.

the University, whatever their location. Monroe Deutsch, Sproul's vice president at the Berkeley campus, wrote him a series of passionate, handwritten letters opposing the president's fixation on organizing UC along functional lines. A Latin professor turned administrator—in fact he had been Sproul's Latin teacher—Deutsch was especially disturbed by the prospect of a series of peripatetic vice presidents. "Each Vice President will presumably have to have an office—and a staff—on the Berkeley and Los Angeles campus . . . When I think of the constant duplication of reports and letters for each office and the probability that not infrequently important correspondence will be in the other office—as has certainly been the case with the President—I feel that endless confusion will result."²¹ Although Sproul's grand design was never fully realized, his approach led to centralizing authority over most key academic and administrative matters in the president or the comptroller, who at that time reported directly to the Regents.

The administrative contradictions and difficulties this organizational scheme engendered continued to mount, along with the burden on the president. None of this shook Sproul's belief in his vision of the functional university. In 1947, he was offered the presidency of Columbia University. He told the Regents that before he made a decision, he had two questions to ask them. Did they want him to stay? Would they pledge to safeguard the unity of the University? Yes, the Regents replied to both, adding that "the unity of the University shall be considered sacred."²² Sproul stayed.

SEPARATING OUT

In 1948, a report on the University's organization conducted by the Public Administration Survey concluded that the problem was "inadequate delegation by the regents to the president; conflicting delegation with respect to business affairs and accounting; insufficient intermediate administrative posts to which the president might delegate; and inadequate major staff assistance to the president."²³ At that time, UC's enrollment was 48,000, with a faculty of 3,200 and an operating budget of thirty-seven million dollars.²⁴ Although Sproul himself recognized the need for administrative reform, he sat on the report for nine months before sending it to the Regents. It was to take three more years and Regental pressure before the chancellorship was established at UCLA and Berkeley in 1951.²⁵

Even so, Sproul managed to remain in charge, in fact if not in name. Clark Kerr, the first chancellor of the Berkeley campus, found himself decidedly underemployed during his time in office. Having suffered for years under Sproul's possessive presidential eye, Kerr was determined to make the chancellors masters in their own house when he became president in 1958. In the late fifties and early sixties, he initiated a wave of decentralization in which approximately three-fourths of the Office of the President's staff—750 out of 1,025—were reassigned to the campuses.²⁶ Before the decision to decentralize, every decision to transfer funds from one account to another in the University of California had to be approved in the Office of the President; afterwards, 80 percent of these transactions were handled on the campuses.²⁷ More than anyone else, Kerr was responsible for redefining the relationship between the Office of the President and the campuses, and in the process he transformed UC from an institution run by a few at the center to one of distributed power and responsibility. "In this administration, the burden of proof will always rest with the centralizers," he declared in his 1958 inaugural remarks at UCLA.²⁸

This reorganization, Kerr later wrote in language suggestive of the struggles of early American federalism, changed the University from a "consolidated nation state" to a "federation of campuses" while saving it from disintegrating into a weak "confederation."²⁹ In the process, he thought he had solved all the problems caused by the extreme concentration of authority in the Sproul presidency. He soon had occasion to revisit that conclusion.

In 1960 he recruited Franklin Murphy, a physician-administrator from the University of Kansas, to be UCLA chancellor. Murphy had enjoyed a much freer rein in Kansas than he found in Los Angeles. He was a man whose sense of outrage was easily ignited, and he battled unceasingly with Kerr throughout much of the 1960s—about authority over tenure decisions, about who could talk to Regents, about whether the president or the chancellor had the right to lead in a UCLA academic procession, even

²¹ Letter from Vice President Monroe Deutsch to President Robert Gordon Sproul, April 26, 1941, University Archives.

²² Minutes of the Board of Regents, January 24, 1947. Quoted in Eugene C. Lee, *The Origins of the Chancellorship: The Buried Report of 1948*, Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Three (Center for Studies in Higher Education, 1995), p. 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56. Provosts at UC Riverside, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Davis were designated chancellors in 1958; the title was first used at UC San Francisco in 1964.

²⁶ Clark Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue*, Vol. I (University of California Press, 2001), p. 198.

²⁷ "The Role of the Office of the President in the Management of the University of California," Office of Educational Relations, Office of the President, August 1991, p. 28.

²⁸ Quoted in Kerr, Vol. 1, p. 160.

²⁹ Kerr, p. 219.

about whether the president had an obligation to obtain permission from the chancellor before setting foot on campus. Murphy's anger must have come as something of a shock to Kerr, the master decentralizer, but in a way quite independent of Murphy as an individual, it represented UCLA's experience in the multicampus UC system. Skirmishes with Murphy over symbolic issues were especially bitter, centering on who should have precedence during campus ceremonial events, such as visits from foreign dignitaries. Kerr's experience with the UCLA chancellor, and several other clashes with chancellors, brought home the limits of any administrative reorganization, however well-planned and orchestrated. By 1965, as he later wrote:

The president had, and exercised, great influence but kept almost no final item-by-item authority over the campuses. Thus, I thought, the governance issue was settled for all time . . . How wrong I was. What I came to realize only slowly was that to some chancellors use of the tools of authority meant use of all of its symbols as well; that nearly all chancellors would welcome both in their entirety; and that in microbattles over power—which are everywhere and all the time—there is never a final solution.³⁰

The president who had done so much to liberate chancellors had some retrospective doubts about the unprecedented authority he had delegated to them. Pondering the changes in UC governance over the previous half-century in his 2001 memoirs, he perceived a gradual shift in the balance of power from the Office of the President to the campuses, from the president to the chancellors. "The reforms I largely led from 1952 to 1966 were directed too much, I now think, at empowering the chancellors and too little at building a Madisonian system of checks and balances. . . . I paid too little attention to how their [the chancellors'] aspirations might outrun reasonable attainments."³¹

ONE UNIVERSITY THEN AND NOW

This brief excursion into the struggle between two presidents is intended, first, to clarify not only what divided them but what they had in common. They shared a belief in the one-university ideal and its organizational implications: a strong president with a symbolic role reinforcing internal and external awareness of UC as an indivisible institution and (despite Kerr's disclaimers of presidential power) an Office of the President with the professional staff and analytical capabilities to ensure campus compliance with policy and the president's ability to act in the interests of the University as a whole. For both Sproul and Kerr, this meant a center strong enough to counter the centrifugal forces inherent in a huge multicampus system.

The second purpose is to give some context for thinking about the very different world in which the one-university model now exists. Kerr's successful break-up of Sproul's empire was done in the service of creating a modern university about to grow into new areas of the state with three new campuses—Santa Cruz, Irvine, and San Diego—and thousands of new students. A major assignment of the Office of the President was getting these additional campuses started—an operational responsibility if ever there was one—and the State provided the money to do it. The guiding assumption of this expansion was the one-university idea that the young campuses would have the resources to begin the climb toward the academic standards of Berkeley and UCLA.

By 1975, President David Saxon believed, the University's campuses fell into two major categories: the mature campuses—Berkeley, Los Angeles, and to a great extent Davis and San Francisco—and the campuses in a state of "interrupted development" because of the University's budget problems at the time—Irvine, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz. The organizational report he commissioned in 1976, "Systemwide Leadership"—another call for greater decentralization—was intended to address what Saxon considered the Office of the President's tendency to veer between exercising too much or too little control, without taking sufficient account of each campus's unique circumstances and stage of development.³²

Differences in quality among the campuses remain today, but these differences have shrunk over the decades since Saxon's time, as three National Research Council studies of graduate program quality have shown.³³ Davis, Irvine, Santa Barbara, and San Diego have joined Berkeley and UCLA as members of the Association of American Universities; no other university system comes close to UC's record-setting six AAU campuses. This steady improvement of academic quality systemwide is what the one-university model envisioned and striking evidence of its success. Although Kerr saw chancellorial ambition as the leading cause of a slow shift of power away from the Office of the President to the campuses, that phenomenon—if it has indeed

³⁰ Kerr, Vol. I, p. 206.

³¹ Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue*, Vol. 1, pp. 224-6.

³² A major goal of his administration, Saxon said, was to "retain and to extend and develop endemic excellence . . . throughout the University of California." David S. Saxon, "The Endemic Excellence of the University of California," Address to the Academic Senate, Fall 1975.

³³ National Research Council, "An Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States," 1982; "Research Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change," 1995; and "A Data-Based Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs in the United States," 2010.

occurred—can just as easily be seen as a reflection of growing campus size, distinction, and maturity. But does this campus evolution also work against a sense of common stake in the university as a whole?

Certainly many would disagree with Kerr's assertion that chancellors and campuses have acquired too much independence. The major theme of organizational studies, as noted earlier, has been the push for more decentralization and chancellorial discretion, not less. "Decentralization not only allows for more policy leadership at the executive and board levels," the Transition Team wrote in its 1992 report, "but it also puts decision-making closer to the operational level, where more informed choices can be made."³⁴ President Richard Atkinson (1995-2003), a former chancellor himself, made some of the largest delegations of authority to the campuses since the Kerr era. These took the form of changes in how the Office of the President allocates both enrollment and overhead reimbursement funds to the campuses, and the net effect was a major transfer of budget authority from the president to the chancellors. Control of the budget is one of the most powerful tools presidents have to influence campus decisions and development. Atkinson's decision made it clear he saw no conflict between the one-university idea and maximum campus autonomy.

He also had reservations about the ceremonial and symbolic aspects of the president's role, so important to Sproul and a number of later presidents. The president, he felt, should be careful not to appear to diminish in any way the chancellors' role and stature in their campus communities. As a result, the chancellors inherited more symbolic as well as budgetary responsibility. Atkinson was a believer in the one-university paradigm, but his was a more open and fluid version of Kerr's federation, with a little more emphasis on the diversity than on the unity of the University. UC, he wrote in 1996, is "a collection of ten research universities—a single but not monolithic institution of ten campuses—not all identical and not all moving to the same template."³⁵

The emphasis on removing operational activities from the Office of the President, a major theme of the restructuring that began in 2007, is the latest manifestation of the long decentralizing trend within UC. The complexities of administering a large research university system, however, do not slip easily into a neat division of responsibility between operational activities (campuses) and policy (UCOP). Historically, the Office of the President, along with its primary responsibility for universitywide policy, has taken on operational activities when that approach made fiscal, organizational, or managerial sense. One of the central administration's most important and least recognized functions—acting as a buffer between the campuses and various external critics and agencies, including the State and federal governments—has operational as well as policy dimensions. In carrying out this role, the Office of the President has deflected many shocks that would otherwise reverberate on the campuses.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the exuberant growth of State and Federal reporting regulations and the passage of new collective bargaining laws created their own rationale for a central response in some areas to meet legal requirements or avoid duplication of effort on the campuses. Other UCOP operational activities were legacies of choices made long ago—the decision that the UC system would have its own retirement system, for example, and that the Office of the President would administer a program of benefits for all retired faculty and staff. Some programs were originally located in the Office of the President because of their universitywide character (student admissions and financial aid, for example, as well as grant programs in the health sciences for which various campuses compete).

Today, long after the 2007 restructuring began, 55 percent of UCOP's budget goes for systemwide academic programs.³⁶ Even the Transition Team's 1992 recommendations for greater decentralization, many of them implemented during the administration of President Jack Peltason (1992-95), co-existed with the practice of "earned delegation" from the Office of the President, in which campuses were expected to demonstrate their ability to devote the necessary resources and expertise in areas such as technology transfer before they were delegated authority for them. As a 1991 report put it, "the principle of *selective centralization* is a corollary theme [along with the principle of decentralization] which has also guided the evolution of the Office of the President . . ."³⁷ The division of labor and authority between the Office of the President and the campuses has reflected both administrative imperatives and a pragmatic willingness to cross the boundary between policy and operations when that was in the best interests of the University.

However organized, the Office of the President must have the standing and resources to represent the interests of the University of California as a whole. The institutional assumption has long been that these interests are best served by the one-university

³⁴ "The University of California Transition Team Final Report," Volume I, September 1993, p. 6.

³⁵ See Richard C. Atkinson, "The Future of the University of California: A Personal View," in *The Pursuit of Knowledge: Speeches and Papers of Richard C. Atkinson*, ed. Patricia A. Pelfrey (University of California Press, 2007), pp. 39-53.

³⁶ Minutes of the Regents' Committee on Finance, May 19, 2010.

³⁷ "The Role of the Office of the President in the Management of the University of California," Office of Educational Relations, Office of the President, August 1991, p. 30.

principle, for reasons that date back to Sproul and that have been explored in this paper. California gains from the geographical distribution of high-quality university campuses, each with its own character but the same mission, throughout the state. The University itself is stronger as a unified system of campuses than as ten separate institutions vying for public support and government funds. New campuses find room for realizing their aspirations and a legacy of academic quality that acts as a magnet for talented faculty and students.

As every UC president who has lived through a budget crisis can attest, the most powerful threat to the one-university idea is the politics of scarcity. They unleash fierce competition for resources and the spirit of suspicion, distrust, and jealousy Sproul warned about long ago. Although his functional university was not the answer, his analysis of the problem remains relevant. Multicampus institutions must deal regularly with external threats and pressures that threaten their goals, their institutional integrity, and their future. Within the system, campuses compete with each other for students, faculty, facilities, money, and prestige. The one-university idea has been a way of moderating competition and encouraging cooperation.

Some of the proposals that have emerged in the wake of current budgetary stress underscore closer cooperation among campuses and the advantages of leveraging UC's potential as a system. Others—from a two-tier university with differential student fees to the request by the dean of a campus school of management to sever its financial link to UC and go private—suggest that in some parts of the University, the temptation to go one's own way is considerable. To date, the strongest statements of support for the one-university principle have come from the universitywide Academic Senate. The Senate has gone on record as opposing campus stratification and restating the its "longstanding belief that UC's commitment to one University and to treatment of its ten campuses as inherently equal is responsible for California's uniquely great university."³⁸

California's entrenched budget crisis has made it clear that a fundamental rethinking of all aspects of the University's organization and future path is inevitable—indeed it is already underway. A decision will have to be made about the appropriate balance between the University's historical values of authority at the center and independence on the campuses. The issue is not decentralization—the case for its importance was made long ago—but the future of the one-university model. Does this paradigm still apply at this stage of the University's development and in today's environment of unprecedented financial turmoil? And if not, what alternative would take its place?

The one-university idea has been a brilliant strategy for presenting a united front in an uncertain political world, a force for internal coherence and cohesion, an act of collective imagination that created a great university system. If its time has come and gone, the burden of proof rests with its critics.

³⁸ Letter from Academic Council Chair Mary Croughan to President Mark Yudof, August 6, 2009.