

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Berkley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco,

Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz.

Robert Powell, Chair
UC Davis Division of the Academic Senate
University of California, Davis
402 Mrak Hall
Davis, CA 95616

Monday, November 1, 2010

Dear Dr. Powell,

Here is the text of the speech I gave earlier today to the Representative Assembly:

Chair Powell, Assembly Members, Chancellor Katehi:

In deference to the fact that this year's Graduate Student Assembly is still in the process of setting forth the specific organizational priorities to be pursued this academic year, I will confine myself here to commenting mostly on broad issues entailed by a consideration of two main categories of academic and societal politics which were approved by last year's Graduate Student Assembly, as part of a general mandate in preparation for this current academic year.

Those two main categories are: shared governance and social responsibility.

We students greatly appreciate considerations given by the faculty toward students regarding the shared governance of our university, including both UC Davis and the UC system as a whole. We ask that those considerations be continued and, where appropriate, extended—this, as part of a new and emerging era of cultural and political pluralism, into which we have been headed now in California for more than a decade.

While we understand that shared governance does not mean that the university is a democracy *per se*, we also hold that university governance cannot be the functional equivalent of an institutional autocracy. It is crucial that shared governance not be merely a rhetoric which serves only as window dressing. Social institutions cannot thrive without the inclusion of authentic democratic processes of various types.

The events of 2009 have shown that the constituents of this university system will no longer tolerate being bypassed in issues of governance, supposed states of fiscal emergency notwithstanding. Unilateral administrative actions of the type which occurred in the summer of 2009 have no moral standing. A university system leader must acknowledge that without constituents there would be no programs to administer and no clients to serve. A university system president who has lost the respect of the constituents has also lost the moral standing to continue as leader, and must either acknowledge that fact and take dramatic steps to remedy the unsatisfactory state of affairs, or step aside.

At this juncture in world history, as part of the worldwide rising tide of forms of intra- and intercultural unity of all types, including blended forms—that is, intellectual, political and social changes and movements which underlie and give purpose and meaning to all economic phenomena—let us re-dedicate ourselves to the best ideals of the past, including those of social justice, justice in general, and equity, while at the same time consider dedicating ourselves to the newly emerging ideals of the present, and push ahead toward newer visions of academic excellence.

We propose that increased and special consideration should be given to those who serve as the face of the university toward its main clients, that is, the teaching assistants, readers and tutors. During times of economic downturn, these important university employees should be given *first* consideration on questions of salaries and benefits, due to the special role which they play. Their entreaties—*our* entreaties, as graduate student employees—are not mere impositions to be handled by business-style bluffs, delays and negotiations, but rather represent the lifeblood of this university which serves to enable and give meaning to the structure and whole context of the system.

New social-democratic forces will soon be knocking very loudly on our metaphorical institutional door, demanding to be let in. These new social

forces will likely permeate all our departments and institutional structures and transform this university into more complex and more effective forms which are unimaginable today. Making preparations for the new era requires bravery on the part of all concerned today, as well as competency and wisdom. Those who are reluctant to face the responsibility of making preparations for this upcoming reality should therefore step aside and allow others to step in to lay the necessary groundwork.

In conclusion, authentic shared governance must include all sectors of the university and its citizens. A conscientious exercise of acts of social responsibility will be required to address longstanding inequities and shortfalls of the system. This includes the fair treatment of overworked and under-appreciated graduate student employees, without whom this institution could not properly function. These are all moral issues which transcend and give life to all issues of policy and governance.

Finally, we would like to thank the faculty for all you have done and will do in regard to these important issues.

Thank you.

[End]

Sincerely,

Brian Riley, Chair