

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO

ACADEMIC SENATE



www.ucsf.edu/senate

Tamara Maimon, Director
500 Parnassus, MUE 230
San Francisco, California 94143-0764
(415) 476-3808 Fax (415) 476-9683

Leonard S.Zegans, MD, Chair
Deborah Greenspan, Dsc, BDS, Vice Chair
Jon Levine, MD, PhD, Secretary
Jean Olson, MD, Parliamentarian

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Dear Fellow Senate Members,

In my welcoming remarks on our Web Site, this past autumn, I noted that these were difficult times for the University and that we must all work as a partnership to navigate through the challenges that lay ahead. As bleak as the financial situation of the State looked then, the consequences for the University as a whole are today far more dire than anyone of us could have imagined. Enrollments are being cut, and fees for graduate students, professional students and undergraduates are rising at an alarming rate, with little additional support for student aid. Students who have worked hard to enter the UC System in High School face being diverted to the Community Colleges, even though they possess the credentials expected by the University. The Community Colleges themselves are overcrowded and stretched to the limit of their capacity to absorb a rise in their enrollment; the same is true for the State University System. Many of those students turned away from UC, and who have the means, will undoubtedly apply to private universities. Disproportionately, those from poor and underprivileged families will be deprived of the only available opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to compete in the global employment environment. These consequences are a betrayal of the farsighted Master Plan of University enrollment and a severe blow to the economic and cultural future of the State.

Naturally, we all have our own personal investment in maintaining the resources and reputation of the UC System. But beyond our individual aspirations as clinicians, researchers and teachers, we must be concerned about the future health of our State and its young people. The University represents the highest aspirations of a society. It brings together teachers and students of the most diverse backgrounds and goals to share the common pursuit of preserving and advancing knowledge. It is incomprehensible that our political leaders would act to threaten and weaken this system that has served the State, Nation and World so well for so many years. If the University's unity and coherence can be threatened, then what else is also vulnerable to be compromised? If the education of our future leaders of law, medicine, engineering, business, the arts and humanities is held in light regard, what are the values that our State will uphold and preserve? We are told by political figures that we are all in this together and must "tighten our belts and make sacrifices." Yet it is evident that the sacrifices will not be equally shared by the children of prosperous families. The belt tightening will be disproportionately borne by those who have limited resources to advance in our society. This is unacceptable and shortsighted; it does not advance any shining dream of a prosperous and optimistic California.

The time has come not simply to be passive and bemoan the weakening of the University. We must come together – students, faculty, administration – and let our grave concerns be heard in the highest reaches of our State. AS WAS ONCE SAID, IF WE ARE NOT FOR OURSELVES, WHO WILL BE FOR US? IF WE ARE ONLY FOR OURSELVES, WHO ARE WE? IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN?"

Sincerely,
Leonard S. Zegans, MD
Professor and Chair, Academic Senate

*** We will be contacting other leaders on campus and systemwide to try to work together so our voices can be vigorously heard. We will explore ways that we can be effective in letting our political leaders know that they are about to place a great institution in critical danger. The State and the University must keep our promises to young people.*