



RESOURCE GAP BETWEEN CAMPUS AND ELITE PRIVATES IS GROWING

## Sharpening UCLA's competitive edge

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It is a question of vital interest to the entire university community — faculty, staff, students and alumni: How can UCLA maintain its academic excellence at a time of shrinking resources? More to the point, how can UCLA compete for the best faculty and graduate students when the gap in resources — funds available for faculty salaries and other compensation, and for



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Executive Vice Chancellor Daniel Neuman leads a task force aimed at keeping UCLA competitive in recruiting the best faculty and graduate students.

graduate student support — is widening between what major public universities like UCLA and elite private institutions can offer?

Chancellor Albert Carnesale asked campus leaders to consider this challenge at a retreat held in Ventura last September. The consensus was clear: UCLA must move forward quickly to develop and implement strategies that will ensure that the campus maintains and grows its status as one of the nation's top-tier universities.

In October, the chancellor appointed Executive Vice Chancellor Daniel Neuman to lead a 12-member Competitiveness Task Force, representing a broad cross-section of academic leaders, to recommend an action agenda. The task force is coordinating the work of six action groups that will each focus on a specific area of concern. The groups are scheduled to submit their reports to the task force by Feb. 15. A unified set of recommendations from the task force will be going to the chancellor for consideration April 1.

UCLA Today Editor Cynthia Lee spoke with Executive Vice Chancellor Neuman to find out more about this initiative.

### Q. What is the basic goal of the task force?

**A.** To remain competitive with the very best institutions in the nation, public and private, we're going to have to be smarter, and act smarter, in order to compete for the best people — the best faculty and graduate students. That, simply put, is what we mean by competitiveness. Focusing on academic excellence, the task force brings together academic leaders from all sectors of the campus to help us develop more effective processes to address the resource gap that exists between us and our major private competitors. The disparity between the resources we have, based on the number of dollars we receive per student, compared to those of the nation's very best universities with whom we compete, has been large and is growing. By bringing together the talents and thoughts of the wonderful, bright people we have here, we can come up with new ideas to make us better at what we are already doing very well.

### Q. What are some of UCLA's comparative advantages?

**A.** There are many factors that have kept us competitive — our multidisciplinary strengths, for one. A prime example of this is the California NanoSystems Institute, which has attracted much national attention and interest.

In another area of strength, our research funding has broken records. Between 1997 and 2000, UCLA rose from 12th in the nation to third in the amount of federal funding it received for science and engineering research, leapfrogging over Stanford, Harvard, MIT, Michigan and Penn, among others. As directed by the chancellor, we've concentrated on those areas that make a great university — on core academic activities, the libraries and the College of Letters and Science, to name a few. The chancellor's initiatives — especially UCLA in LA — have also been highly productive.

But we cannot stand still. We need to be concerned about our vulnerability with respect to retention and recruitment issues, particularly in this budget climate. Private universities, especially the ones with whom we compete, are not as vulnerable because although they may have lost the value of some of their portfolios over the last two years, they have still done relatively well and are able to adapt more flexibly.

### Q. What are some specific concerns on which the action groups are focusing?

**A.** One of the key questions is how do we allocate our resources more wisely to recruit the best graduate students in high-priority areas. If you're a first-rate scholar, you want to be in an environment where your colleagues and your students, undergraduate and graduate, are first-rate. That's

what helps maintain your edge as a scholar, teacher and a researcher.

We are often on the losing end when competing with the best universities for graduate students because the Stanfords, Harvards and Princetons can offer more generous packages.

But it's not only about money; it's also about who mentors you and who chairs your committee. Exceptional graduate students know which are the best departments and the best people in their fields, and they will naturally want to study with professors who are distinguished in their fields so that these students can learn from them and benefit from their prestige within their disciplines. It's better to think of a holistic approach to this challenge in terms of the facilities, faculty, staff, research support and first-rate graduate student peers, all of which we have here.

Another of the action groups will focus on identifying the processes we need to gather information and seek advice to help the chancellor, provosts and deans decide how best to allocate and reallocate resources. For many, it's unclear how academic leaders make informed decisions with regard to resource allocation. These are hard decisions that people may or may not like. What we want to do is make that process transparent, explicit and understandable.

Another group will focus on how we can more efficiently deploy existing resources to enhance competitiveness and diversity. For example, ensuring that quality child care is available for faculty is a matter of great importance. Yet another group will identify processes we should follow to best utilize space to make us more competitive.

### Q. What is the role of staff in keeping UCLA academically competitive?

**A.** UCLA is quite remarkable because the staff infrastructure here is incredibly strong. The staff provides as much a foundation for the ability of this institution to compete for the best and the brightest as does its faculty. Staff mem-

bers are as critical to our achieving that competitive edge as any of the other components that make us an outstanding public research university.

### Q. What is the Academic Senate's role in this process?

**A.** In my address to the Legislative Assembly last fall, I talked about the task force. And both the chair and the vice chair of the Senate are members of the task force. True to our tradition of shared governance, we would very much expect to continue consulting with the relevant Senate committees and councils about the recommendations that will come through this task force.

### Q. What is the relationship between the task force and the current tight budget situation?

**A.** The difference between what we can provide and what our competitors can offer would exist whether we were living in a time of plenty or a time of poverty. The scale may be different, but the problem is basically the same. Although we most certainly face short-term challenges posed by the budget, the task force is taking a longer view of these concerns. In the short term, there may be some task force recommendations we must wait to implement.

But we aren't just looking six to 18 months down the road; we're asking how we can enhance our ability to compete over the next five to 10 years. With the current budget situation, this is a good time to examine how we should focus our resources and set priorities.

This entire process will inevitably bring about change. While it is difficult for institutions to adapt to change, I have every confidence that our campus leadership will find a way to continue our progress and meet the competitiveness challenge ahead.

To read an Oct. 22, 2002, interview with Chancellor Carnesale on UCLA's future and the challenges posed by a lean budget environment, go to [www.ucla.edu/bulletin/future.html](http://www.ucla.edu/bulletin/future.html).

## THE COMPETITIVENESS TASK FORCE

The Competitiveness Task Force, led by its chair, Executive Vice Chancellor **Daniel Neuman**, is comprised of 12 faculty members: academic leaders who are decision-makers with budgetary responsibilities, and the chair and vice chair of the Academic Senate.

"Virtually since its inception, UCLA's strategy for excellence has been based on growth of faculty and new programs," explained Chancellor Albert Carnesale in a letter to campus leaders.

"Now, we must achieve our goals and maintain our leadership position through different means," he said. "The work of the Competitiveness Task Force and the related action groups will be of great value as we move forward."

The task force is overseeing the work of six action groups, which have already begun to discuss an assigned specific area of concern. Each action group is being chaired by a task force member.

Task force members include **Clifford Brunk**, vice chair of the Senate, professor of organismic biology, ecology and evolution; **Tony Chan**, dean of physical sciences, College of Letters and Science;

**Aimee Dorr**, dean of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies; **Geoffrey Garrett**, vice provost of the International Institute; **Frank Gilliam**, associate vice chancellor of community partnerships; **Duncan Lindsey**, chair of the Senate and professor of social welfare; **Claudia Mitchell-Kernan**, vice chancellor of Graduate Studies/dean of the Graduate Division; **Barbara Nelson**, dean of the School of Public Policy and Social Research; **Alan Robinson**, vice provost of medical sciences/executive associate dean of the School of Medicine; **Leonard Rome**, senior associate dean of research, School of Medicine; **Judith Smith**, vice provost of undergraduate education, College of Letters and Science; and **Scott Waugh**, dean of social sciences, College of Letters and Science.

The six areas the action groups are focusing on are:

- **Graduate Student Support.** How can we achieve optimal allocation of resources to recruit the very best graduate students in high priority areas?
- **Faculty Non-Salaried Compensation.**

How can we achieve optimal deployment of resources to improve faculty quality of life (e.g., housing, child care, schooling, spousal employment)?

- **Deploying Existing Academic Resources.** How can we more efficiently deploy our existing academic resources to enhance competitiveness and diversity (e.g., upgrading, recruitment and retention funding, tenure/non-tenure appointment proportion, special initiatives)?

- **Space.** What processes should we employ to achieve optimal utilization of space and to support space planning to enhance academic competitiveness?

- **Process for Allocation and Reallocation.** What processes should we employ for information gathering, consultation and decision support that will guide allocation and reallocation decisions at the chancellorial, provost and decanal levels?

- **Generating New Resources.** How can we ensure optimal use of available revenue-generating opportunities? What new revenue streams can be developed?

For a complete list of the members of the six action groups, go to [www.today.ucla.edu](http://www.today.ucla.edu).