

After publishing an op-ed article in the San Francisco Chronicle on the University of California's vital role in the state, a group of UC supporters sponsored its adaptation and placement as an advertisement in the May 18 edition of five major newspapers across the state.

Will we shrink from the competition that makes California great?

The University of California — The heart of an economically vibrant California.

California's economic growth is closely tied to the rise of its research universities. For decades, UC has led the nation in creating new knowledge and its application to pressing problems of the day. New industries have been created, new products have been invented, and new medical technologies have been developed to both save lives and enhance their quality. The University of California has continually expanded the frontiers of knowledge and made an enormous impact on the daily lives of all Californians.

UC represents perhaps the most impressive community of great minds in the world:

UC graduate programs are quite simply the best and broadest in the nation; of the top 10 graduate programs in 41 academic disciplines surveyed by the National Research Council, 119 of these 410 programs were in California, with 77 of those at University of California campuses.

Of the 72 new members elected to the National Academy of Sciences last week, 14 were from the University of California.

Fully one in three biotech companies has been founded by UC scientists, including five of the world's largest such firms.

The university has been able to compete at the highest levels with salaries that are not only in line with those at other great institutions but in many cases lower than those at comparable universities or, certainly, in the private sector.

In the competition to hire and retain the finest educators, researchers, and administrators, the University of California must vie with elite peers such as Stanford, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Yale, and Caltech. These are private universities with massive endowments and without UC's public mission.

Nevertheless, over the past week, audit reports have led the media and certain legislators to question compensation at the University of California. The policy exceptions cited so far, while being taken very seriously, amount to well under 0.1 per cent of the university's total budget.

UC President Robert Dynes and the Board of Regents have already begun implementing a comprehensive 11-point plan to address problems identified in the audit reports. Additional reforms and safeguards are being investigated.

But while changes can and must be made, we should not allow this magnificent institution to be bureaucratized into mediocrity. Through patience and careful analysis, we can create a transparent compensation structure that will enable the university to continue to compete for the finest academic and leadership talent. That is the competition that makes California great.

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