



## Testimony for JLAC Hearing - UC Audit

April 6, 2016 - Joint Legislative Audit Committee

### Statement

Good morning everyone. Thank you for the invitation to join you today.

My name is Kevin Sabo, and I am proud to serve as President of the University of California Student Association and as a fourth year at UC Berkeley. I am here today to represent the quarter of a million UC students and share with you their perspective.

I want to thank Assemblymember Gipson for his commitment to transparency and passion on this subject. I also want to thank the Members who understand we can be critical of the UC while still wanting to make it a better and more accountable university system. Many of you and your colleagues described it perfectly at yesterday's press conference: we all love the University of California but that is no reason not to hold it accountable as a public institution. We are committed to working with President Napolitano and her team to ensure that we make a world-class education accessible and affordable to all Californians. This will also take help from you, the Legislature, as well as Governor Brown.

When I first read this audit I was stunned. Each page had me more in disbelief than the last. It is clear that our university system, while still one of the greatest in the world, is also still letting too many people down. My intent is not to take away from the great achievements of this University and I will happily tell you about many of the great things our students, faculty, and staff are doing. But that's not what an audit is for. An audit points out the areas in which we are not serving our mission, and that too is more than



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worthy of a conversation. I know President Napolitano is committed to tackling these issues and we invite both her and our legislative partners to engage the constituency most affected by these shortcomings: **students**. Assemblymember Gonzalez said it succinctly, as she tends to do, when she expressed that as a proud alumna of the University of California: we can not shy away from tough conversations that will ultimately make our higher education system stronger.

Students aren't naive; we know that administrative salaries aren't entirely causing our budget problems - but state divestment from higher education is. Assemblymember Medina shared as much during his comments yesterday, and I thank him for his honest examination of the conditions that have led us to today. Let me say what I think the University should have said in the face of this audit. While many of these points clearly show the University needs to change its behavior, these problems didn't start yesterday. They are systemic, and they are far-reaching. President Napolitano has extended her hand when it comes to working with UC students, and we will fix the issues for which we have a seat at the table.

Students will see new policies that can help change our course which may require we bring in new leadership with bold ideas. But Sacramento must recognize its own shortcomings as well. While steady reinvestment has been positive, we hope the Legislature knows what students know - paying double what previous generations did, it simply is not enough. We live in a different era. To be frank, many of our top students are admitted to the university of their dreams, take out loans to pay the costs of attendance, work hard, make incredible contributions to their home campuses, and at



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the end of their undergraduate and graduate journeys, get jobs that don't compensate enough to allow them to get out from the crushing burden of historic student loan debt. This should not happen in the Golden State or in this country. The UC has existed for more nearly a century and a half and was free for California residents under the provisions of the Master Plan for twice as long as it has had tuition.

I want to recognize that there is the need for room for students from every walk of life and a global perspective. However, we must ensure that the University **OF** California remains first and foremost a **university FOR California**. I will work with students and the University in the coming weeks to identify what we believe is a sensible and balanced approach. But we need to embrace the diversity we already have right here within our own state, rather than spending millions of dollars to import others. Anything short of this is an alarming farsightedness that ignores the talents of students of color right here in California who we often lose to other states and institutions.

I firmly believe that the challenges we face in providing a world class public higher education are surmountable. If we work together, we can reinvest in California's future and prioritize reinvestment in the greatest guarantor of economic mobility and security: the best public universities in the country. We should also be proud we make such a quality higher education accessible and affordable to more Californians than any other state provides for their population. But to deliver in this, we must maintain a commitment to our shared and common goal of a more transparent and accountable University of California.



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To be clear: students need and demand leadership from decision-makers in Sacramento as much as we do in Oakland. While power politics wages on between the UC and the state, students are caught in between. Students are still hungry. Students are still homeless. Students are still struggling with mental health. Students are still being priced out of an education. We need leaders to prioritize governance through policy, not politics, in these difficult times.

Thank you. I look forward to working on real and tangible changes that will help the University of California continue to stay the premiere public university system in the world.