UCR 2020:
THE PATH TO
PREEMINENCE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
UCRIVERSIDE

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

*Report of the Advancement Subcommittee*

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<u>Introduction</u>

"UCR is embarking on the development of a strategic plan that will provide a framework for the growth of the campus and the investment of resources for the next decade. A major part of the strategic planning process will be the work of a Steering Committee and eight subcommittees. A key organizing principle informing the work of the subcommittees is for UCR to move from prominence to preeminence by achieving the profile of an AAU-member institution. At the same time, it is imperative that we maintain the diversity of our undergraduate student population, and that we increase the diversity of our graduate student population and our faculty." *("What We Will Accomplish," from the UCR Strategic Action Plan Homepage)*

<u>Charge</u>

The Advancement Subcommittee was tasked with the following charge:

- To make recommendations on aligning campus-wide and unit-based advancement activities and attendant resources with the broader academic vision of UCR

- To evaluate approaches to increasing and leveraging campus investments in relationship-building functions that promote external support and financial investment

- To assess how to strengthen the UCR brand as a tool for generating increased advocacy and raising public perceptions of the University's stature at the state, national and international levels

<u>Executive Summary</u>

UC Riverside stands poised to achieve greatness on many fronts. Advancement holds unique opportunities for a variety of reasons. First, private giving has reached a plateau in recent years. Second, as the economy recovers, history has shown that there will be a reversion to the mean that will open a window of increased giving. Finally, the act of strategic planning – creating a clear, concise, focused academic vision and using it as the basis for a case for giving – is a critical step in raising the bar for philanthropy at any nonprofit institution, and is a prerequisite for any kind of organized fundraising campaign.

As benchmarked against national peers, UC Riverside has had a mixed history of performance. A history of underperformance has been punctuated by periods of impressive accomplishment and innovation. UC Riverside's challenge is to create a record of achievement that is decidedly upward sloping, sustainable, and inspiring to its external audiences. In order to accomplish this, the subcommittee recommends three broad strategies:

1. <u>Build a sustainable culture of philanthropy</u> – students must learn from the moment they make contact with UC Riverside that this is a place where giving back is a core value,

where their success is built on the shoulders of those who came before, and where the relationship they forge with their alma mater will last their lifetimes.

2. <u>Grow the national profile of UC Riverside and increase awareness and pride among stakeholders</u>[1] – UC Riverside can no longer be the best kept secret in California or the nation. As the caliber of research, faculty, students, and programs has grown, public perception has lagged reality. It is time to educate the public about UCR's strengths and accomplishments and reintroduce our alumni – and even our own faculty, and staff – to the great institution that UCR has become in the 21st Century.

3. <u>Strengthen agility, flexibility, efficiency, and responsiveness in the advancement organization to support UCR's aspirations</u> – a dozen years of seven vice chancellors and unrelenting turnover on the advancement staff have created disruption and discontinuity in the advancement operation. The resulting inefficiency must be assessed, addressed, and resolved. UCR's advancement team must focus on its core values of collaboration, integrity, and quality to maximize its value to the campus.

No one believes all of this will be easy, but we believe it is the path forward if we are to be successful in generating external support to advance UC Riverside.

<u>The State of American Philanthropy and Opportunities for UC Riverside</u>

The timing of this discussion could hardly be better. Economic recovery has historically preceded large growth in the philanthropic sector. Giving to education, comprising 13% of philanthropic activity in the United States, was $41 billion in 2008. Total giving has increased in every year but two: 1987 and 2008. Estimated giving to education per American household has grown from $202 in 1988 to $351 in 2008 (adjusted for inflation). Education is second only to religion as a destination for philanthropic dollars.[2].

Although some argue that the era of mega-gifts (generally considered to be those over $100 million) is on the wane, many of the largest gifts will still make their way to education. Within that sector, five of the seven gifts to education in 2008 of at least $100 million were directed to medical research and education, a promising statistic for a campus that is ramping up the first new public California medical school in 43 years.

Research suggests that many of UC Riverside's key initiatives hold promise for increased future philanthropy. One study suggests the importance of creating a strong connection between an organization's purpose and its donors[3]. UC Riverside's efforts to increase contact between donors and scholarship recipients have been rewarded by a 20% increase in gifts to student aid for the first three quarters of calendar year 2009 versus the same period in 2008. Another study showed that parents' giving is associated with giving behaviors of offspring[4] This suggests potential for UC Riverside's growing Parents' Association with added focus on giving – even at a modest level – among those who have entrusted their children to the University's care.

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[1] In this context, "stakeholder" is defined as one who does or should care about the long-term health and success of UC Riverside.

[2] Giving USA Foundation, 2008.

[3] Journal of Consumer Research, 2008.

[4] Wilhelm, Brown, & Rooney, 2008.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education found giving to be flat in 2008 and predicts a 1.7% decline in 2009, with some suggesting a rebound in 2010-11. If history is any indication, the coming philanthropic cycle is likely to resemble prior patterns. Ironically, one of UC Riverside's challenges is a direct consequence of its strength as one of the few comprehensive doctoral research universities that is designated by the U.S. Department of Education as a *Hispanic-Serving Institution*: education giving ranks low among charitable preferences for Hispanics.[5] This suggests a need to instill the value of supporting education for all of our students from the earliest stages.

Nature of Advancement

In the context of strategic planning, it should be understood that advancement is a service unit and as such does not inform strategy per se. Rather, the strategic planning process provides an opportunity to examine UCR's advancement functions and ensure that they are organized optimally to respond to priorities and goals that emerge around students, faculty, research, and programs.

Encompassing alumni relations, communications & marketing, and development, the core mission of advancement is to build enduring relationships that promote advocacy and financial support of UC Riverside. By its very nature, advancement is an intensive human capital industry, and has undergone professionalism in the relatively recent past. The Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the field's predominant professional association, was established in 1974, and has grown in 35 years to include nearly 3,400 institutional members in 59 countries serving more than 61,500 individuals.

The component functions of advancement operate in concert, with best-in-class results achieved through smooth integration of alumni relations, communications, and fundraising to build external support. While there are many different ways to organize these departments, the key drivers of high performance are collaboration, innovation, and consistency. In addition, the nature of the continuum that begins with prospective students and ends with engaged alumni demands close partnerships with student affairs and academic units, to ensure that a culture of philanthropy begins early and is reinforced throughout the life of a current/former student.

Advancement at UC Riverside

Although advancement has been practiced for centuries among the nation's private institutions, public colleges and universities have developed at a slower pace. As a relatively young campus, UC Riverside has lagged even further, with an advancement operation that has experienced most of its growth in the past 20 years. As with many of its public peers, the roots of UC Riverside's advancement activities began in alumni relations, with inaugural student body president Charles E. Young serving as the Alumni Association's first volunteer leader. In the ensuing decades, the Alumni Association built a portfolio of efforts to encourage advocacy, promote engagement, support students, and create networking opportunities.

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[5] Marx and Brooks Carter, 2008.

In the 1990s, the fundraising and marketing areas came into their own, complementing the Association's programs, building a campus brand, and generating interest among donors to invest in UC Riverside's future. Based on extensive market research conducted in 2004, a campus-wide brand platform was developed providing the foundation for a national advertising campaign, creation of a graphic identity system, adoption of a standardized logo for non-athletic use, and increased visibility across the country for UC Riverside research and scholars. To reinforce and extend the main campus brand, the campus has worked to put in place distinctive communications plans (including key messages, web and print materials, strategies, identity lines and design components) for each of the colleges and professional schools.

These communication efforts have laid an essential framework for the work that remains to be done. UC Riverside will begin a graphic identity study for its athletic program, continue to increase pitches and placements (earned and paid) in national media, develop a campus-wide social media strategy, and build out the campus web presence beneath the top layers of the external gateway.

UC Riverside embarks on this journey with challenges, outlined later in this document, but also with notable advantages. During the mid-2000s, institutions like Harvard, Yale, and Stanford began experiencing resistance from alumni who were approached for donations. Their response was that institutions with endowments in the tens of billions of dollars could not possibly need their help. Donors want to feel that their philanthropy creates impact. As a university on the rise, UCR will provide exactly that opportunity. Further, changing demographics offer UCR a relative advantage in an increasingly diverse nation. By 2050, Hispanic Americans will account for fully one-quarter of the United States population[6]. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, this trend presents UCR with both rare opportunities and important obligations.

Attributes of Excellence

Excellence in advancement revolves around the depth, quality, and durability of relationships with external constituents. The consequences of excellent advancement programs are engaged alumni; loyal and generous donors; vocal advocates; and a general public that understands, supports, and endorses the value of research universities. Measured internally, best-in-class operations achieve a high level of integration and trust, both within the advancement staff and with campus partners. Sharp focus is on the interests, passions, and goals of external stakeholders, while adhering to the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and collaboration.

Specifically, hallmarks of the nation's finest advancement programs include:

i) Excellence in opportunity identification that is integrated with and connected to the academic programs and departments;

ii) Excellence in assessing and managing opportunities in a way that takes full advantage of all advancement functions and its hybrid structure and that is collaborative with the academic units;

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[6] United States Census Bureau, 2004.

iii)    Excellence in the allocation of resources to achieve right-sizing and optimal allocation of effort to specific individual targets of opportunity, development of a culture of involvement and support for the campus; and

iv)    Developing the attributes of a learning organization, whereby efforts are associated with clearly stated hypotheses as to what is likely to be achievable and clearly stated abandonment criteria as to results that would warrant abandonment or refocusing of effort and resources, and whereby attainment of objectives is routinely assessed and used to refine the courses of action that are being pursued.

## Subcommittee Planning Process

The subcommittee reviewed internal trends (e.g., historical performance) and comparative data from other peer and aspirational institutions to quantify and delineate the gap between current state and desired state (AAU-like performance). The group also learned about the component parts of advancement – alumni relations, development, and strategic communications – and explored the ways in which each is distinctive but complementary with the others. Integration across these functions was assessed to identify opportunities for greater collaboration against a backdrop of what currently works and doesn't work in the context of UCR's advancement operation.

The subcommittee discussed a range of issues that inform structure and resource allocation, including central/unit roles, gift-level emphasis, pipeline development, brand management, alumni membership and value delivery, and approaches to advocacy development.

## UC Riverside Advancement in A National Context

By many national benchmarks, UC Riverside has a rich field of opportunities. Some metrics that inform the discussion are:

1. Membership penetration is approximately 10%, versus 20%-35% for leading public universities with dues-based membership across the country. This is not a symptom of weakness in UC Riverside's membership program; indeed there are institutions that have eliminated dues-based membership altogether and there is no universal agreement on whether such efforts justify their attendant costs. In addition, there will always be questions of how best to coordinate messages between alumni membership and annual fund development. In fact, alumni association members tend to be exponentially more likely to become donors and have self-selected to receive institutional messages, making them valuable ambassadors. The role of membership and its contributions to broad advancement goals should be revisited on a regular basis.

2. The number of alumni donors is fewer than 4,000 – representing about 6% of addressable degreeholders. Nationally, there is a trend toward using "alumni participation" as the benchmark in this area, calculated by dividing the number of alumni donors by contactable alumni. This is largely driven by the U.S. News & World Reports rankings, which allocate 5% of an institution's score to this factor, using it as a proxy for alumni satisfaction. One can argue whether this approach is sound, but it

does serve as one indicator of the health of a school's relationship with its graduates. Among public research universities, most achieve levels in the teens and twenties, with the University of Virginia as one of the acknowledged leaders at 24%. Private universities and liberal arts colleges enjoy much higher levels of participation for a variety of factors. There are some natural constraints on UC Riverside's potential improvement along this spectrum, but it seems clear that an elevation of performance is both possible and desirable.

3. UC Riverside's development program has hit a plateau in the low $20 million range for the past decade. With the exception of two gifts that were unusually large and skewed annual totals, the campus has not created momentum to raise the bar on private support. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee identified 11 comparison universities, all members of the Association of American Universities, against which to measure its current and future performance. Using cash totals for fundraising as defined by the Council for Aid to Education, UC Riverside lags the group, as shown below:

**Comparative Giving over Five Years of 12 Institutions with UCR
Using Council for Aid to Education (Cash) Standard**

| Institution | 5-Year Average |
|---|---|
| Texas A&M University (College Station, TX) | 166,381,545 |
| University of Arizona (Tucson, AZ) | 136,275,983 |
| University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS) | 107,734,087 |
| University of Missouri-Columbia (Columbia, MO) | 94,377,948 |
| Univ of California, Davis (Davis, CA) | 92,915,517 |
| University of Oregon (Eugene, OR) | 84,105,251 |
| Univ of California, Irvine (Irvine, CA) | 76,290,176 |
| Iowa State University (Ames, IA) | 62,739,925 |
| Univ of California, Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara, CA) | 57,497,818 |
| SUNY-Stony Brook (Stony Brook, NY) | 29,543,597 |
| SUNY-Buffalo (Buffalo, NY) | 28,282,553 |
| **Univ of California, Riverside** | **22,240,727** |

Similarly, even within the UC System, UC Riverside trails virtually all of its sister campuses over the same time period:

| Campus | CAE 5-Year Avg |
|---|---|
| University of California, Los Angeles | 336,943,136 |
| University of California, San Francisco | 265,229,777 |
| University of California, Berkeley | 230,156,673 |
| University of California, San Diego | 133,559,192 |
| University of California, Davis | 90,882,846 |
| University of California, Irvine | 71,393,714 |
| University of California, Santa Barbara | 63,977,255 |
| University of California, Santa Cruz | 24,286,602 |
| **University of California, Riverside** | 21,397,448 |
| University of California, Merced | 7,776,756 |

In addition, the cost to raise a dollar at UC Riverside hovers at approximately 18-20%. Nationally, research universities strive to attain efficiency in the range of 13-15%. These data suggest opportunities for improvement on many fronts, although there is growing disagreement across the advancement field on the value of this *cost of fundraising* (CoF) as

a meaningful metric. In any given year, a single large gift can skew this percentage and make it appear that an organization is more efficient than it actually is.

Further, while all would agree that every organization should strive to be both effective and efficient, there are unanticipated consequences and opportunity costs of becoming too lean. An alternate perspective that some institutions have adopted involves evaluating investments in terms of net new dollars to the campus. Thus, in the cost-benefit analysis of two potential activities with varying cost ratios, there is not a blind assumption that the lower CoF is preferable if the other project would, in fact, raise more funds.

Recommendations

Subcommittee members recognize the need to stay very high-level in recommendations to the campus, both to ensure that tactical and implementation issues remain in the purview of University Advancement and to maximize agility and flexibility in the delivery of service to the campus in response to content-driven priorities. Specifically, the subcommittee posed the question, "where will we need to be by 2020?" to define major issues. In response, the following broad recommendations emerged:

1. Build a sustainable culture of philanthropy
   In order to raise the bar on private support, UCR must adopt the posture, language, and practices of the nation's most successful fundraising institutions. Private universities like Stanford, Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Pennsylvania, along with public peers that include Berkeley, Michigan, Virginia, North Carolina, Penn State, and Illinois, understand the critical need to ask early and often.

   "Asking" is not literally asking for money; the concept speaks to building an ecosystem of mutual respect, trust, and communication that cements the ties between the University and those it touches. A culture of philanthropy creates a warm and inviting environment for prospective students; treats current students like valued members of the family; works to keep alumni engaged, involved, and committed to the institution; treats donors and prospects with respect and demonstrating value and impact in stewardship of their gifts; and constantly conveys to the general public the profound and distinctive value to society promised by a world-class research enterprise.

   Among alumni, early philanthropic behavior in the first five to ten years post-graduation is a key predictive measure for long-term involvement as donors, members, and volunteers. But work must begin long before graduation. From the moment a prospective student inquires about attending UCR, the messages must be crisp and clear: UCR represents a special opportunity that is only available because others who came before them invested in the future. Educating students about the importance of giving back and the legacy they create with their involvement and commitment will fundamentally change the prospects of philanthropic success in the future.

   Much of what's required in this area doesn't require significant resources. Indeed, a campus with UCR's sense of community already has many of the critical prerequisites of success. The challenge is in defining the specific, high-impact, leveraging changes

that will produce loyalty, commitment, and engagement among internal and external stakeholders. In the absence of this foundational work, any fundraising efforts will generate modest short-term returns and negligible long-term growth.

2. <u>Grow the national profile of UC Riverside and increase awareness and pride among stakeholders</u>
Developing a national profile for UC Riverside is essential for a range of reasons. Whether the goal is increasing Federal and grant-making foundation support, securing membership in the Association of American Universities, or simply ensuring that UC Riverside is recognized as a national leader in the delivery of research, teaching, and service, education is key to raising the campus to preeminence.

UC Riverside has invested substantial resources in recent years to define its brand/institutional reputation. The current brand platform will be updated to reflect the new 2020 campus strategic plan priorities, emphasizing those strengths and distinctions that set us apart from our benchmark/comparison institutions. To successfully build UCR's reputation among academic opinion leaders, prospective students, faculty recruits, alumni, funders, legislators and industry affiliates, UCR must sustain a strategic, disciplined, campus-wide, multi-year effort to reinforce consistent key elements of our brand in a coordinated way across campus.

UCR must strive to increase media visibility measured both qualitatively and quantitatively on a national and international level and expand understanding of the UCR brand among all constituencies. Working in tandem with academic leadership, UCOP, Student Affairs Communications and other key partners, University Advancement must proactively drive key messages and ensure that innovation in any corner of the campus is identified, translated, prioritized, and made relevant to consumers of information in a highly competitive, increasingly global marketplace of ideas.

The role of the UCR Alumni Association as messenger, champion, and facilitator in alumni engagement must be considered carefully. This organization benefits from thoughtful, passionate, and committed leadership and provides invaluable outside voice to decisions about how best to create positive connections between graduates and UC Riverside.

3. <u>Strengthen agility, flexibility, efficiency, and responsiveness in the advancement organization to support UCR's aspirations</u>
University Advancement must commit itself to becoming a learning organization. A commitment to benchmarking with aspirational peer institutions and adapting industry best practices to the UC Riverside context is a paramount objective in the coming decade. Because the advancement effort on campus is relatively young, there is an ongoing professionalization that will form the foundation for a higher performing team as time passes.

UCR cannot stop short at benchmarking against best practices and attempting to mimic the outcomes of peers; it must carefully investigate <u>how</u> others have evolved into high-performing organizations and what lessons can be applied to the unique set

of circumstances and characteristics at UC Riverside. This will require diligent process analysis, self-reflection, and rigorous devotion to incremental improvement across all functions in systematic and lasting ways.

Just as the infrastructure of the broader campus has strained under unprecedented growth, so too has advancement expanded organically without a long-term understanding of the balance between front-line advancement officers and so-called "back office" functions of gift administration, database management, financial accounting, human resources, and event planning/implementation. As a result, there are opportunities to plan proactively for the kind of growth that will best meet UC Riverside's future needs such that campus partners and external constituents alike maintain their trust, respect, and confidence in the advancement team and its efforts on their behalf.

Strategic planning conversations can drive innovation in important ways. The advancement organization must know its constituents in deep, meaningful, and comprehensive ways in order to build effective long-term relationships. This will require unprecedented sharing of data between the offices of student affairs, university advancement, research, and advocacy.

There is a critical need for advancement to be responsive to opportunities without being reactive (e.g., "chasing money" without regard to institutional priorities or unintended financial consequences). Sound, effective major-gift fundraising is driven by the long-term development of deep, trusting, respectful relationships. Bringing a donor from engagement to legacy gift can take many years, but the formula has been proven effective at organizations of all sizes and types across the nation. In light of this reality, the campus must invest resources for several years before fully realizing a return on its investment. This is a tall order in the current budget environment, but there are no institutions that have realized material gains in performance without prospective investment in human capital and programmatic resources.

The "cost of fundraising" should be considered in a broader context of need to increase prospective donor pipeline. Ultimately it is net new dollars drawn to the campus that will fuel growth of UC Riverside's programs and reputation.

The Challenge

In rising to the next level, UCR must think globally but measure locally; that is, each unit is distinctive and must establish objectives that are tailored to its needs as well as its potential. One size does not fit all, and success rests on UC Riverside's ability to be realistic but ambitious. Also requisite for success in this area is the need to provide a seamless donor experience that is driven by benefactors' desires, needs, and objectives (so-called "donor-centricity") vis-à-vis all of UC Riverside rather than the individual fundraising goals of individual units.

Finally, once content goals are established by the strategic plan, unit-based objectives should be formulated that will provide balance among scholarship, fellowship, endowment, capital, and other needs to deploy fundraising resources in appropriate proportion. This prioritization

process is essential, as private philanthropy is a distinctive funding source with its own characteristics. In undergraduate education, the State of California provides resources that underwrite the academic core of the university's instructional mission, while professional school degree programs often rely on market-driven differential fees. Across the University, government funds research through such agencies as the National Institutes of Health and the National Endowment for the Arts. Private gift dollars, more than 95% of which are restricted to a particular purpose, provide a margin of excellence that drive an institution from good to great, from prominence to preeminence.

Some of the specific opportunities for improvement identified in development are productivity and consistency in annual giving; prospect pipeline breadth, depth, and quality; and effective, strategic prospect development and moves management. Definition of campus-wide priorities and themes will be essential to success in expanding private gift support across the campus, and a comprehensive campaign may be required to organize myriad initiatives under unifying headings that make the UCR story understandable, compelling, and provocative. These efforts will fuel ambitious increases in annual production across campus, requiring a dramatic expansion of the prospect pipeline to grow funding streams for existing programs. Further, committee members called out the launch of the School of Medicine as a key initiative that must receive thoughtful consideration and disciplined focus if it is to develop its own base of support and maximize research collaborations with current units.

From a marketing and branding perspective, UC Riverside will need to continue to think creatively about how to build bridges between campus and major media markets. The rise and continual evolution of social media presents both challenges and unprecedented opportunities, while the near-collapse of traditional media, increasing demand for high quality video and multi-media content, and the increased need for media response in a 24/7 news cycle will strain existing resources. As with all such institutional efforts, there must be broad buy-in and full participation from across campus if the brand is to build equity, change opinions, and ultimately result in increased external investment in UCR. Individual expression, a cherished value in academe, will undermine the strength of a unified UCR brand.

Campus-wide alumni relations activities will need to be more smoothly coordinated with the operating plans of the units and built to add value and positive impact relationship building efforts across affinities. The total number of alumni donors should increase dramatically. Strategies to increase overall number of individual alumni who are involved and giving will likely vary significantly among colleges and units.

Conclusion

The strategies and goals outlined in this document are ambitious and aggressive, in keeping with UCR's bold aspirations and potential. Achieving objectives around undergraduate and graduate education, research, and academic excellence will require careful planning, strategic investment, and the courage to make difficult choices.

Because the return on advancement is exponential, investment in that enterprise must be seen as an essential component of any long-term effort to raise the profile of the campus. The current financial crisis provides temptation to scale back, but the time lag between cost and benefit in changing opinions of external stakeholders and the consistency and discipline

required to gain momentum suggest that any surrender in funding advancement will trigger a concomitant lag in performance for years to come.

The distance between investment and return in advancement demands that the campus think carefully about what metrics are set, how the advancement organization is held accountable for results, and how its activities are sequenced vis-à-vis campus planning. Indeed, on a larger scale, it is likely true that the strategies that emerge from this process will not be viewable in isolation, but will require careful assembly of timelines so that activities designed to advance the campus happen in an efficient and logical order.

The committee is united in its desire to better leverage UCR's strengths in generating external support. Now is the time to build a more sophisticated, best-in-class advancement program with the resources, talent, and focus to make sustained, profound progress in building the UCR brand. A strong, vibrant, responsive advancement organization will accelerate excellence, raise stature, and invigorate an institution that is ready to assume its leadership among the world's great research universities.

Respectfully Submitted,


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