

The 2008-2009 academic year promises to provide interesting challenges to the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley. The impact of the state's budgetary crisis will be felt full force in our teaching and research programs this year. Reliable sources indicate that this year is the first austere year of a series to follow. Maintaining Berkeley's excellence in the face of declining support will require difficult choices and decisions. As these decisions are made, thoughtful input from the academy is critically important. A major goal for the Academic Senate this year is to provide avenues for this input; we are initiating a variety of opportunities for dialog between faculty and campus administration.

Declining state support for the University brings to the fore the need to find and enhance additional outside sources of support. It is appropriate and timely that in September 2008, the University publicly launches "The Campaign for Berkeley". This five-year initiative is designed to strengthen the University's mission to serve societal good by expanding opportunities for our students, supporting the creative collaborations needed to solve pressing global issues, and attracting and retaining distinguished faculty.

There are now few corners in our hallowed academic halls where the need to access new private funding sources is not recognized. It is incumbent on the faculty to ensure that the sources tapped, the agreements made, and the academic impact of the new resources are consistent with the mission and the values of the University of California, Berkeley. Over the past several years, the Senate has worked closely with the campus administration to clearly articulate appropriate procedures and criteria for responsibly increasing our resource base.

It is generally considered inevitable that employee contributions to our retirement programs will restart this year. The campus and systemwide Senate are emphatic in their positions that these contributions not reduce faculty salaries. The University of California system is in a period of major restructuring. As the role of systemwide evolves, the strengths of the Berkeley campus must be advanced through responsible and collegial means.

Mary Firestone
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Professor of Environmental Science, Policy & Management

Messages can be sent to Chair Firestone at aschair@berkeley.edu.