From Chancellor Robert M. Berdahl, Library Advisory Board Chair

Excerpts from the Chancellor’s Annual Letter to the Campus and Community (Summer, 2003)

When you are new to the Berkeley campus, you first experience the Campanile as a majestic landmark. Later, you find that you hear it as much as see it, subconsciously tallying the strike of the bells or delighting in an unexpected, but sublime concert as you hurry across campus. Finally, after a time here, you simply feel its presence and you know, then, that Cal has become a permanent part of your life.

I realized this the other day when I looked up and the hands were missing from the west face of the tower. One takes for granted that the clock will be there. The hands had been removed because we are fixing the Campanile’s clocks, and new parts were being hand-forged. All four clocks will soon be back in operation, ready for decades of service.

Still, the Campanile reminded me that the things—and the ideas and the promises—that we prize so dearly, could be forever lost if we fail to attend to them. I do worry about the fragile future of public higher education. The once-inspired vision of public higher education as a vital public good appears lost, buried in budget wrangling and politics. In California, where the Master Plan guarantees a college education to any student who is prepared and a UC education to all who excel, the stakes are so much higher because what we have to lose is so much greater. California’s great promise to succeeding generations—the envy of every state in this nation and of countries around the world—faces its most serious test ever as state funding deficits drive fees higher and jeopardize enrollment growth. This is one test, I believe, we can not afford to fail; a promise we should not allow to be broken.

In good times, or in challenging ones, the University must move forward. In this summer letter, I hope you will see how our unequalled faculty, our impressive students, and our talented and dedicated staff are working harder and more diligently than ever to sustain the promise and the excellence that distinguish this great university.

Engaging new areas of inquiry
This spring we took an important and ultimately far-reaching step by setting the course for the campus’s academic future. Building upon the foundation established by the UC Berkeley Strategic Academic Plan, we challenged our faculty to define the most critical new areas of teaching and inquiry to undertake as we move into the 21st century.

Five “New Idea Initiatives” were selected as the most important new areas of inquiry to pursue. They are Computational Biology, Nanosciences and Nanoengineering, Regional and Metropolitan Studies, New Media (exploring technology to communicate truth and beauty and how to best incorporate new media into modern life), and The Future of the Planet (studying the Earth’s environment, the changes wrought by human intervention, and how we can manage or mitigate those changes). These initiatives are compelling on their own, but what makes them especially exciting is that they are all interdisciplinary, involving a large number of departments and disciplines across campus. They are the first to come from what we hope will be an ongoing process of bringing new ideas forward.

**Milestones reached and projects completed**

As we embark on developing these academic themes, we continue to make major progress on completing our ongoing initiatives, including the Health Sciences Initiative (HSI) and the renewal of the campus infrastructure. HSI reached a milestone in May when, with Governor Gray Davis and UC President Richard Atkinson on hand to distinguish the occasion, we broke ground for the Stanley Biosciences and Bioengineering Facility. When the $162-million building is completed on the site of old Stanley Hall in 2006, the work done in the new facility will lead to major new advances in life-saving medicines and cutting-edge technology. New generations of students will be trained and inspired by their experiences there.

We have completed the award-winning restoration of the Hearst Memorial Mining Building and reopened the historical gem this year for teaching and research. Across campus, the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library is well underway and is due to open late this fall. And I am especially pleased to report that, with the reopening of Wurster Hall (including its expanded new library space), we have now completed the most critical aspect of our monumental seismic retrofitting program. All of the large classroom buildings that six years ago were rated very poor—those that posed the greatest threat to life safety—have been strengthened and upgraded.

**The world comes to Berkeley**

Once again, this was a year when we engaged with the world. And while we did not always reach answers, understanding blossomed and revealed the unique value of a public research university. We worked hard with enormously committed faculty in international studies, journalism, law, and public policy and with student leaders and community organizations to provide opportunities to share expertise, feed curiosity, and display passions. This engagement produced an amazingly fruitful energy.

**Improving the student experience**

This summer one Berkeley undergraduate is learning foreign affairs firsthand, interning at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Across the globe, a team of four Haas
School MBA students are in Borneo trying to help a farmers’ consortium turn rattan cultivation into a profitable and sustainable business. Because we know experiences like these are what make a Berkeley education so special, we are constantly working to improve research opportunities for graduate and undergraduates alike. Soon, we will be expanding upon our hugely popular freshman seminars, offering undergraduates an opportunity to work closely with senior faculty in their sophomore year as well.

Investing in the future

Given the downturn in the economy, it is not surprising that Berkeley’s overall fundraising totals were not on par with our recent string of record-breaking years. And yet, in raising $164 million, we received more gifts from individuals this last year than ever before. In all, 75,406 gifts were made to the campus, a seven-percent increase, showing that our alumni, parents, and friends continue to support the campus, even in difficult financial times.

Clearly, this is a time when we, and all of public higher education, need support—financial and political support. As you certainly know, the state’s budget crisis is hitting higher education hard. At Berkeley, we are taking a number of steps to cope with budget cuts, working to avoid eliminating classes or delaying in any way our students’ progress toward graduation. All non-instructional programs are taking significant cuts; employee layoffs are expected; and faculty and staff will see no across-the-board salary increases.

And still, students will face substantial fee increases. For many families—those who meet federal guidelines for need—the fee increase will be covered entirely or in part through financial aid. Yet, with the cost of a year at Berkeley, including campus housing, books, and living expenses, exceeding $20,000, investing in a student’s education is more difficult than ever. For those who are scrimping and borrowing to meet this challenge, I assure you there is no greater investment in your children’s future, or in our own, than a university education.

No one felt this more deeply or invested more of himself in Cal’s future than Chang-Lin Tien, one of the most beloved members of the Berkeley family. When Chang-Lin passed away in October at the age of 67, this campus and all of higher education mourned. We lost a great teacher, a remarkable scholar, and an unforgettable chancellor. We bid him farewell at a memorial service in Zellerbach Hall, but just like the Campanile itself, his presence on this campus will always be felt.

A final word

There is no way around it, the coming year is going to be difficult for everyone on the Berkeley campus. But as I hope this letter underscores, there is so much excellence, so much accomplishment, and so much love and support to celebrate here, I am certain that, working together, we are up to the challenge.