Overview of the New Speaker Series

The current economic climate presents formidable challenges to public universities. Students face continuing tuition hikes (resulting in heavy loan debt for many), faculty salaries and new hiring suffer, staff members are asked to do more with less, and research and teaching programs are pared or cut altogether. Many students and their families are scared off by “sticker shock” and don’t even discover what financial aid exists that might help them. These and other challenges have sparked passionate dialogue about the idea of the public university in the 21st century.

In response to these challenges—and inspired by discussions with faculty, students, staff, and members of the public—Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Ralph Hexter is announcing a new speaker series entitled The Provost’s Forums on the Public University and the Social Good. This series is aimed at furthering awareness and dialogue on this important topic within and beyond the university community, and also at exploring the potential to make UC Davis a center for the study of the role of the public university in contemporary society.

For the 2012–13 academic year, there will be approximately nine public presentations by expert speakers, plus associated events. The series will be overseen by the Office of the Provost in cooperation with the university’s Center for Regional Change.

All lectures and associated events will be advertised, and videos and/or presentation materials will be archived, on the webpage “The Future of the Public University” residing on the Provost’s website (http://provost.ucdavis.edu/initiatives-and-activities/activities/future/index.html).

Content of the Public Forums

The public university’s role in society is multiple and only partially understood. Fundamental questions include the following:

- What is the role of the public university (including its character, purposes, tasks, etc.) today?
- What will the role of the public university be in the future?
- Are current organizational arrangements in public universities suited for its present and future functions and responsibilities?
- Are the financial challenges faced by public universities, domestically and globally, more than just an issue of budget allocation? Are they also a symptom of a larger crisis facing public higher education?

The central aim of the Provost’s Forums will be to engage questions such as these in a series of public lectures plus related events, including workshops and classroom visits. Specific subjects addressed by a speaker may include, but need not be limited to, any of the following:

- **Evolution:**
  - Contested evolutions of the U.S. public and/or land-grant university
  - Transformations of public universities around the world

- **Knowledge:**
  - Scientific discovery
- Technological innovation
- The role of teaching and research in the social sciences, humanities, and/or arts
- Critical knowledge and social transformation

- **Social engagement:**
  - Public universities, social mobility, and social hierarchies
  - Universities and movements for social change
  - Engaged Scholarship
  - Creative tensions between engaged scholarship, academic independence, and the politics of knowledge

- **Organization and accountability:**
  - Models of/alternatives to organizing faculty work by “research and instruction”
  - Storage, processing/distribution, and access to knowledge in a digital world
  - The role of metrics in the evaluation, assessment, and monitoring of public universities
  - Governance and administration of a public research university—models and alternatives
  - The public university in the public arena

- **Sustainability:**
  - Financing public universities
  - The role of private and alumni donors, philanthropic organizations, foundations, and industrial and commercial corporations in funding the public university, and their effects on the social good

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**Program Details**

The Provost envisions that each forum will extend across an entire day, of which the public lecture will be the most prominent event. Each forum can have a different format, but among envisioned possibilities:

1. There will be a main presentation by 1) an invited guest speaker with high distinction in a relevant field; 2) a speaker from the UC Davis community, comparably qualified; or 3) a team comprising one guest speaker and one or two speakers from the UC Davis community, comparably qualified. When the main presentation is made by one speaker, it is expected that one or two UC Davis community members will also participate as discussants. The expectation is that such speakers will draw an audience of 50 to 100 persons for the main presentation.

2. The speaker/s making the main presentation will also participate in a two-hour seminar/workshop for a smaller group (e.g., 20) of highly interested participants.

3. The campus unit that invites a speaker or speakers, or that agrees to serve as the host department, will undertake to maximize a forum’s benefit to the entire university by arranging related events such as class presentations, meetings with faculty, lunches, etc.

The Office of the Provost will cover the cost of an appropriate honorarium for each main speaker, plus the costs of travel, lodging, and a public reception. Additional expenses for related campus events (such as a lunch or workshop) will be covered by the host department and/or the Office of the Provost, as determined in subsequent discussions.

**How to Suggest a Speaker or Speakers for a Provost’s Forum**

The Office of the Provost strongly encourages suggestions for one or more speakers to be invited to make a main presentation in a Provost’s Forum, as well as participate in related events. Any interested department, group, or member of the extended UC Davis community may suggest one or more candidates, and is urged to do so.
With the 2012–13 academic year right around the corner, the critical task at this moment is to “get the ball rolling”—that is, to collect suggested names accompanied by no more than a few paragraphs including the following:

1) The likely theme/s of the main presentation
2) The reasons that the suggested individual/s should be invited to speak (Please address the individual’s or individuals’ qualifications, professional stature, and impact or promise of relevant work; a curriculum vitae may be sent with your suggestion, or later during the selection process)
3) If a campus unit or UC Davis–affiliated group is making the suggestion: An indication as to whether the unit/group is likely to be able to contribute to a forum’s financial costs, and if so, approximately how much

The Office of the Provost, working with the Center for Regional Change and consulting others as appropriate, will review the submitted suggestions, giving most weight to those that promise, individually and in combination with others, the greatest benefit to the UC Davis community. A diversity of focus and perspective among the nine forums will be key criteria in determining which suggested candidates will be invited to participate.

After the initial review of speaker candidates, the Office of the Provost will pursue, as appropriate, further dialogue with the units or individuals who have submitted suggestions in order to collect more information or materials, discuss logistical or financial arrangements, and ultimately, to invite speakers for the 2012–13 Provost’s Forums.

Please send speaker suggestions (addressing the three items listed above) plus any additional supporting materials to Katrina Stanley, kstanley@ucdavis.edu. Review of suggestions will begin July 16, 2012, but applications may be submitted throughout the summer.