

Robert Suzuki, Track 2

Tape 1, Side B

RS: I think we have to begin to define our own role as an institution. And I think we have to begin to believe in ourselves to a much greater extent, and the importance of our role, rather than always thinking of ourselves as poorer second cousins to the UC system. I sincerely believe that we have the more important, the more significant role in public higher education than the UC system, because of our mission, because of the students that we serve, because, I think, even our research and scholarship ultimately can be more relevant to meeting the needs of this state than the UC system. We need to stop comparing ourselves constantly with the UC system and begin to do our own thing, so to speak, and carve out the very significant role that we have to play in the state of California. I think when we start doing that, we will begin to make our own breaks, if you want, and be in a better position to go after enhanced funding and support for the CSU system. I think that's the attitude we need to take if we're ever going to get around this problem that we perceive as underfunding and understaffing.

JB: Do you think that the self-doubt that you encounter is particularly a self-doubt among the faculty?

RS: Yes. I think it's particularly true of the faculty.

JB: I wonder, now as you're speaking, whether this isn't awfully closely tied to the hallowed role that traditional research plays in the pecking order of higher education, and the growing role that it plays in the pecking order of higher education. "This grass is greener" is not a matter of taking satisfaction in the educational role and serving the people of California, to paraphrase you, but rather professional frustration engendered by a lack of career advancement based upon research criteria. Am I being fair or accurate, you think, in this?

RS: I think the extent to which it is been carried in the research institutions, that would be true. I think that research has become the ultimate basis for advancement in the research institutions. I think that it would be terrible for us to emulate the research institutions in that regard. At the same time, I think the other attitude that we ought to simply discard, disregard research entirely, and focus only on teaching is not the right attitude, either. I think there's a reasonable balance between research and teaching. I think research, the right kind of research, can, in fact, enhance teaching, and I think can be very important for the state of California as well. So, I think it's a question of balance, it's a question of what kind of research we pursue. I think that we ought to be engaged to a greater degree in applied research rather than basic research. Applied in the sense that, we do research that has much more immediate relevance to the, meeting the needs and challenges of a society than the basic research that's done in many research institutions.

JB: I hadn't planned to move to research from the point of which we've done it, but let's continue. This is very fruitful. Let's proceed with it. We are in a comprehensive

university, as the jargon now has it. Under your leadership, for last five years, the role of research has expanded dramatically on this campus. That was one of your first priorities, as you pointed out. And I think you suggested to what end this research is to take place. Would you like to expand upon that? The applied dimension, or perhaps, a further statement of the appropriate dimensions of research in a CSU campus, and specifically on this campus. For example, is there a place for basic research on this campus?

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RS: I think there's room for both, John. I think that—I'm not arguing against some of the faculty engaging in basic research. I think they're good at it. They ought to do it. At the same time, I think we need to encourage more applied research. I'm thinking of things like research, the kind of research that goes on in the field of education. It's interesting to contrast the kind of research in education that goes on at the UC campuses, and that which I think should be going on in the CSU campuses. At the UC campuses like UCLA, the research that goes on in education is highly theoretical research. In fact, a lot of the faculty in education at UCLA are not educators. That is, they have not had really that much experience in working with public schools. They're economists, they're sociologists, they're historians, political scientists. And they do fairly esoteric research in education. And they probably wouldn't recognize a real urban inner city school if they ran into one. I think that the kind of research we ought to be doing in that field should be field based research in the public schools, in real situations, and research that would produce information and results that will be very practical, that will be very useful to the practitioners in the field. In the same way, if you look at some other fields such as geography, we have some top notch researchers in our geography department. And the kind of research they're doing is very applied. I'm thinking of people like Jim Allen and Gene Turner. The research they've done on the ethnic geography of the United States and of various regions of the country, I think, is very useful and directly relevant research. And it's every bit as important and significant as more basic research in that field. I think there are many other fields in which that kind of research could be conducted. So that's the sort of thing I'm talking about. Also, I have, as you know, been encouraging more research and evaluation on the whole field of teaching and learning at the college level. We profess to be primarily a teaching institution, and that teaching is our top priority. And we like to say that, because we place such emphasis on teaching, we do a better job at teaching than, let's say, the research institutions like the UC campuses. However, I think that could be strongly challenged, primarily because we really have not accumulated any empirical evidence that we do, indeed, do a better job of teaching. We take pride in our smaller classes and the fact that our faculty spend most of their time teaching, but those factors in themselves do not guarantee that we do a better job of teaching. This is why I think we need to do more research on the teaching and learning process, to begin to establish an empirical base for demonstrating that, in fact, we know what we're talking about when we say that we understand the teaching process, we do a better job of teaching than other institutions, because of the fact that we have studied the teaching and learning process. We have learned what are the effective approaches to teaching and learning, and we have implemented those. But

we really have not done that in the past. And, so, I would like to encourage, to a much greater degree, the involvement of faculty in all disciplines in studying the teaching and learning process. For the faculty themselves becoming students of the teaching and learning process. They can become scholars on teaching and learning just as they can become scholars in their disciplines. And so, I think that's another form of applied research that we need to emphasize to a greater degree.

JB: Have faculty welcomed this opportunity?

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RS: I think it's taken time, but I think we have to overcome a lot of negative attitudes toward the study of pedagogy. But I've been very encouraged over the past two years by the increasing participation of faculty from all the disciplines in our efforts to promote the study of teaching and learning. And increasingly, we are seeing faculty becoming involved, interested and even excited about this effort. So, I think that we are turning that corner and we will see significant numbers of our faculty involved in this process.

JB: Let me ask you. We don't have the empirical base now to demonstrate that we do a better job of teaching. What's your hunch about our teaching caliber, vis-à-vis say, the UC? What do you guess that research would show, if we had it?

RS: I'm really not sure, John. I've pondered that question myself. I've asked students about that. I recall one conversation that I had with a student at San Francisco State when I was there as part of an external review team for their general education program. This student had attended UC Berkeley for two years, and then had transferred over to San Francisco. And I asked her that very question, I said, how would you compare the quality of teaching at UC Berkeley as compared to San Francisco State? Do you find the smaller classes at San Francisco an advantage? I fully expected her to tell me that, oh, of course, it's much nicer at San Francisco, and I found the teaching much better and the faculty much more committed. But in fact, that is not the answer she gave me. Her response was, "Well, certainly they had much large classes at UC Berkeley." But she said, "Even those very large lecture classes are broken down into much smaller discussion sessions. Those discussion sessions are usually conducted by doctoral students. Teaching assistants." She said, "Some of the best teachers I've had were those teaching assistants, those doctoral students." And she says, "At San Francisco, the classes are smaller. They may have fifty or sixty students in it, but the faculty member teaching it, but those classes are larger than the discussion sessions of fifteen, twenty students" that she had at UC Berkeley, so that she really wasn't sure whether the teaching at San Francisco was better than at UC Berkeley. So, I don't think there's an easy answer to that, and it would be interesting to see a more systematic study of that. I really don't know the answer to that question.

JB: To return just momentarily to research, you've very nicely gone over all the realms of questions I had on research. Budgets have risen for research since you arrived. Can you

give me a sense of the order of magnitude as to how much more we're putting into research now, as against five years ago?

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RS: Well, when I arrived here, John, we were probably spending maybe \$30,000 a year for research, primarily out of the Research Endowment Fund in the Foundation. As you know, we have subsequently taken money off the top of the Academic Affairs budget for research, about \$150,000 a year. Additionally, the state has started funding research, and we receive about \$188,000 a year from the state to directly fund research. We have increased our indirect cost recovery from external contracts and grants, and that is providing, maybe, another \$100,000 a year for research. And a number of the deans provide additional support for research. I would estimate that to be another \$100,000 a year. And the Research Endowment Fund in the Foundation has grown somewhat. I think it's now capped at \$1,000,000. We can use six percent of that per year, in terms of the revenue generated, so that's another \$60,000 a year. When you put that all together—and I haven't added all those figures up, but as I recall, it amounts to about \$500,000 to \$600,000 a year in direct support for research now. So, it's a substantial increase from the \$30,000 or so we were providing five years ago. And I might also add that, as a result of our efforts to manage our (??) level patterns on this campus, we've had a substantial increase in the faculty positions allocated to the campus. We've received around a hundred additional faculty positions over the past three years as a result of managing our (??) level patterns that represents somewhere in the neighborhood of \$3,000,000 or \$4,000,000 per year in additional funding that we're receiving from the state. That has increased the flexibility of our resources, and has allowed many of our deans to provide reduced teaching loads to faculty by giving them reassigned time. I should also mention that we have established a policy at the recommendation of our Research and Grants Committee, to provide three units of reassigned time at the replacement rate to any faculty member who receives a grant of \$30,000 or more paying full indirect cost. So, a faculty member who receives a grant of that size automatically receives three units of reassigned time. In addition, if a faculty member receives an external grant in which three units of reassigned time is written into the budget for that faculty member, then a number of deans will match that three units of reassigned time so that that faculty member with that grant will get six units of reassigned time, or half a teaching load. And so that has helped a lot, and that was also intended to provide much greater incentives for faculty to go after external grants, and it has helped. But I'm still not satisfied with the volume of external grants and contracts we are receiving. I think that we ought to be at least two or three times higher than we are. We're currently at about \$5,000,000 or \$6,000,000 a year. I think we ought to be around \$15,000,000 a year in external grants. Once we reach that level of contracts and grants, we will increase our indirect cost recovery substantially. Perhaps have as much as \$500,000 a year to reinvest back into the research of our faculty. So, I think that we can increase the support for research substantially more.

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JB: What's holding us back?

RS: I think what seems to be holding us back are at least two major factors. One is the instability we've had in the Research and Sponsored Programs office. We've had a number of changes in the director of that office. We are concluding the second national search for that position. We hope to have someone in there on a longer term basis this time around. I think that's been one factor, the turnover in that office. Another factor, I think, has simply been the past tradition of this campus. There has not been a great deal of emphasis on research, or a great deal of emphasis on seeking external funding. It takes time to turn that value system around, if you want, on any campus. There has not been a tradition and a practice of going after external grants. You've got to change, turn around attitudes, develop the necessary support systems to encourage faculty to engage in this kind of activity, and that takes time. Trying to change the culture of a university is a process that takes several years and I think we're well into that process, and perhaps we will reach the potential I think we're capable of reaching in another four to five years.

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JB: Do you expect that substantially this will be based upon the efforts of younger faculty, or do you expect that older faculty will, in fact, retool and retrain?

RS: I think it would depend, to a great deal, to a great degree, on the newer faculty; faculty that have been hired in the past three years and the faculty to be hired over the next ten years. That doesn't mean I've written off the older faculty. I think, in fact, we have seen a number of the older faculty who have not engaged in this kind of activity for years reactivating themselves and going after external grants, reengaging in research. So, while that is never going to be a large percentage of the old faculty, there are a number who, I think, will renew themselves, revitalize themselves. I think we also have to keep in mind that faculty who are active in research constitute a fairly small proportion of the total faculty, even in research institutions. Studies have indicated that even in institutions that are placing a great deal of emphasis on research, publish or perish kind of institutions, only about one third of the faculty are truly active researchers. I would be very happy within the CSU and on our campus in particular if, say, twenty percent of our faculty become active researchers, and actively go after external grants. I should clarify one point. When we talk about going after external grants, most of those grants are not for research. They're for service programs, training programs, programs that are directly related to—actually, our teaching programs. They usually constitute the bulk of the external grants that we receive. That's the kind of activity that I would encourage. Not just the research, but the research training and service programs.

JB: Some of the programs we have on our campus, um, such as communicative disorders, or music—and there are many others, geography—are genuinely distinguished. How've they done it? How have they done it?

RS: I think that, in almost every case, it's been due to strong leadership by the department, within the department. And also, strong support by the school dean. Without that, I don't think you develop excellence. You've got to focus the resources. You cannot spread them evenly because that's going to guarantee mediocrity for everybody. I think you have to pick and choose the programs that you want to develop excellence in, and you have to pick those programs, those departments, that really are motivated to reach that level of excellence. They have to have the necessary leadership within the department, and the willingness and the aspirations of the faculty to reach that level of excellence. And that has to be combined with strong support from the administration. I think that's the only way excellence is really developed at any institution.

JB: I'm reminded a bit of GM, which has now discovered they can make world class cars in ones and twos, and is talking about upgrading its entire product line to the level of a certain Buick model right now. And perhaps there's an analogy here with us. Do you think we have the potential—and this really to go back to an earlier question—do you think we have the potential of ever being a genuinely great university, as you would define a great university?

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RS: I think... I think we have the potential of doing that, John, but I think it's going to take a number of things in order for us to achieve that lofty goal. Number one, I think that we have to use every bit of creativity we have in optimizing the resources that come to us from the state. And as you know, we have been working hard at that, not only through our (??) level management, but also through our efforts at becoming far more sophisticated in our capital outlay budget request. That's a very complex process in itself. We were not doing it very well in the past, but we have become far more sophisticated in our space planning efforts. And that has resulted in a major increase in our capital outlay budgets for this campus, so that we're not only getting the monetary resources; we're getting the physical facilities as well. It's very difficult to deal with that area because it is such a long term process, and faculty get very impatient with it. They would like to see changes within a period of two or three years. These changes take more like five to ten years, but we have been making very steady progress in that area, and I think the payoff is still another three to five years away. But in another three to five years, I think that the faculty are going to see some very clear indications that we have succeeded at these efforts. And so, that's one requirement. Another major requirement is that we stop thinking of ourselves as a tax supported institution, because we are not. We are tax assisted institution. We do not get sufficient funding to reach the kind of excellence that we're talking about. If we start thinking of ourselves as a tax assisted institution, then I think, we will begin to realize that we cannot rely on state funding alone. That will never enable us to reach the levels of excellence we aspire to. Just as the private institutions certainly cannot depend on state funding alone—they do get state funding, by the way. The private institutions receive substantial tax subsidies from the various state funded and federally funded scholarships and loans that are granted to their students from the tax breaks they get from being a nonprofit

corporation, various other things, I'm sort of digressing here. But the point I'm making is that, like the private institutions, we have to begin to go after monies from the private sector much more aggressively than we have in the past. As you may know, many public institutions have already done this. Places like the University of Wisconsin, UCLA, are raising literally millions, hundreds of millions of dollars from the private sector. And they see it as critical to establishing or developing the excellence that they aspire to. In the same way, I think we have to do this to a much greater degree. We have initiated some efforts in this area, and each of the school deans now are expected to engage in development efforts, because I think it's absolutely critical to developing the excellence that we are talking about right now. We cannot depend only on state funding. And thirdly, I think that what I was talking about earlier, about carving out our own role within the CSU, and developing the importance and significance of our institutions, is going to play a very important role over the long haul. We have to demonstrate the importance of our role. We have to demonstrate the significance of our role. And I think as we begin to do that, we will get the attention of the citizens of this state. We will get the attention of the legislature and the governor. And I think we will then be in a good position to make our case for enhanced funding, to put ourselves on a more comparable basis of funding with respect to the UC system. And so, I think at least those three factors are involved in order to reach the levels of excellence that you're talking about. But I think all of these are feasible. They're within the realm of possibility. It's not simply dreaming, but it's going to take a lot of effort. It's going to take a lot of vision and strong leadership, but I think it can be done.

JB: Let's stop just for a moment.

[END OF TRACK 2]