

How They Did It: The University of California's Turn Toward Social Justice

By Steven Brint

Let's say you want to alter the direction of a mammoth institution. If you want tips about how to do it, I recommend studying the work of Susan Carlson, a chief architect of the University of California's incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as a "core mission," rivalling the old-fashioned idea that research universities should be about the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Carlson has helpfully [published a memoir](#) of her time in office that shows how she and others at UC did it. The memoir is difficult to find; it is stored away in an "e-scholarship" document repository. Yet Carlson's chronicle provides an unsurpassed view of the turn taken by the ten-campus UC system, and for that reason deserves to be brought out of the shadows and into the public sphere. It shines a light on UC's embrace of social justice priorities and serves as a cautionary tale about where overzealous commitments to DEI can take universities.

At the time Carlson took office the under-representation of minorities and women were already high level concerns at the UC Office of the President. The University had been committed to affirmative action but it was banned from using race or gender in admissions or hiring by California voters in a 1996 referendum. Representation on the faculty remained stubbornly low: In 2010 when Carlson took office, women accounted for slightly under 30 percent of professors and Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans just under 10 percent. The representation of students of color was not much better. In 2012, a [revolting bias incident](#) occurred at the UCLA

medical school where the sole Black member of a clinical department was the object of an obscene cartoon. That led to [a scathing report](#) about the continuing challenges of bigotry written by a committee chaired by a former chief justice of the California Supreme Court. Campus climate surveys confirmed that Black students were more likely than others to be the target of hurtful comments.

As a UC administrator faced with these circumstances, you could make clear to campus constituencies that bias incidents would not be tolerated and you could treat those that arose on a case by case basis. You could rely on the existing recruitment, support, and mentoring methods to address issues of representation with the expectation that these tools would help year by year to expand the pipeline to faculty positions. You could add tools to this repertoire incrementally after successful testing with costs and benefits in mind.

Or you could go big.

If you were Susan Carlson – a person with organizational ability and, it seems, missionary zeal – you would go big.

Carlson served as Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Programs at the UC Office of the President from 2010 through 2022 -- during the time the University's commitment to expand DEI initiatives fully unfolded. Her chronicle of her time in office, *The Art of Diversity*, documents her role as a leading figure in the campaign. Contrary to its title, the memoir displays little of the creative imagination of an artist, but it does capture the narrative and organizational drive of a successful political operative.

It is a bit disconcerting to write these words, because when I worked with Carlson on a UC recruitment committee a decade ago she seemed to me a friendly and rather

unassuming colleague. As her book makes clear, the mind of a political pro was astutely hidden underneath that conventionally cheerful exterior. It now makes sense to me that, as chair of the committee, she was able to shape the conversation so that the rest of us ultimately agreed to the candidate she preferred -- a candidate fully committed to the new direction, by the way. As faculty members, the rest of us on the committee had other primary obligations, less certain preferences among the candidates, and not much time for comparing notes. After patiently hearing us out over several months, she called a final meeting and told us a working consensus had emerged. I did not see myself as part of that consensus, but I believed her. As I recall, we held no vote.

Change was already in the air by the time Carlson came on board at the UC Office of the President. Dismayed by the voters' ban on affirmative action, the University had committed to workarounds and had identified [diversity as a principal lever](#). The University's Academic Personnel Manual was revised in 2005 to indicate that "teaching, research, and service that promote diversity and equal opportunity are to be encouraged and given recognition in the evaluation of candidates' qualifications." A [Regents policy statement](#) followed two years later reiterating this position.

But most of the policies and practices required for institutional transformation remained to be discovered. These rolled out one by one over the next decade. Cumulatively, they have had the effect of placing representational goals roughly on a par with knowledge discovery – in some departments, arguably higher.

Some stops along the way:

* In 2011, shortly after assuming office, Carlson co-chaired a working group that recommended steps that would be required to increase faculty diversity.

*In 2012-14, Carlson organized [roundtables](#) to generate enthusiasm for change initiatives focusing on such matters as implicit bias, chilly climates, micro-aggressions, and white supremacy.

* In 2014, UC President Janet Napolitano instructed each of the campus chancellors to [implement immediate changes](#) to improve campus climates for racial-ethnic minorities, including new offices, continuing advocacy for DEI policies, and regular reporting of discrimination complaints by women and minorities.

*In 2014, Carlson organized “Fostering Inclusive Excellence” seminars to “develop training materials and facilitators to lead training on implicit biases, sub-cultural differences, and the role of departmental practices and cultures in academic success.”

*In 2014, UCLA became the first campus to commit to mandatory training for faculty and staff on DEI issues. A year later, UCLA was also the first to appoint a [vice chancellor for DEI](#). The other campuses followed suit in short order.

*In 2015, the UC Academic Personnel Manual [was revised](#) to state: “contributions in all areas of faculty achievement that promote equal opportunity and diversity should be ... evaluated and credited in the same way as other faculty achievements.”

*In 2016, efforts to improve faculty minority representation were formalized at UC under the rubric of [“Advancing Faculty Diversity”](#) and experimental searches were launched. Some of these searches used diversity statements to make initial cuts in faculty applicant pools.

*In 2019, the UC Academic Council, composed of the faculty senate leaders from all 10 campuses, endorsed [a new policy](#) requiring all applicants for faculty positions to submit a statement detailing their “contributions to diversity.”

*In 2019, the University [added “equity advisors”](#) to every department and program on eight of its campuses. These people were expected to monitor actions that could be construed as having a negative impact on women or minorities.

Consider the shift from the non-specific language of “encouraging and giving recognition” to diversity and equality of opportunity in 2005 to the specific requirement that diversity be evaluated and credited “in the same way as other faculty achievements” in 2015. The chairs of the responsible faculty committees intended the 2015 revision simply to clarify that faculty contributions related to diversity should not be marginalized in the personnel process, as they had been on some campuses. The faculty committees did not want these contributions to be treated as meriting rewards in their own right.

This is not the way Carlson interpreted it. In Carlson’s view, the 2015 revision assured that “superior intellectual attainment” and contributions to “equal opportunity and diversity” would be inextricably linked.

Thus ‘superior intellectual attainment and contributions to ‘equal opportunity and diversity’ are two over-riding expectations for faculty, linked together by their proximity in (the academic personnel manual). These two expectations are ever-present in (the policy review process) beginning in 2012.

Carlson complains of the “fundamental resistance” of those who saw DEI as “peripheral rather than integral to the research mission.”

What was clear to me in the careful, passionate policy reviews during these years was that the greatest opposition to the revisions was rooted in fears that the university’s foundational focus on research might be diluted through additional recognition of C2DEI (contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion) In sum, respondents worried that we were undermining the quality of UC research as well as the priority of the UC research mission.

She was able to disseminate her interpretation because she had tenure in office and stick-to-itiveness, while faculty committees turned over year by year. She represented DEI as a “core mission” of the University and others came to believe it. In fact, the UC Board of Regents had stated nothing of the sort. In their [2007 statement](#) on equality of opportunity and diversity, the Regents wrote that the core mission of the University was “to serve the interests of the State of California,” and indicated that achieving greater diversity among students and employees was consistent with that mission. They did not write that diversity was coterminous with serving the interests of the State.

Appeals to constitutional documents have a way of ending debate. From 2015 on, Carlson laid claim to the “foundational” principle that DEI is “an essential part of the UC’s mission of teaching, research, and service.”

(T)his work on faculty diversity, equity and inclusion IS the intellectual work of the university...Diversity and inclusion should not be seen as a moral issue separate from quality and excellence. In addition, ... we should not make diversity a branding issue only. When administrators are perceived to be ‘performing diversity,’ skepticism about programs and commitments grows.

She had assumed and acted as if it was true from early in her tenure, but now she was able to leverage a motivated reading of the 2015 revision to advance the cause.

“I was surprised reading Susan’s book,” UC Berkeley professor Jeffrey Knapp, one of those closely involved at the time, told me. “She has the issues backward.” He explained that some had favored treating diversity work as a “fourth leg” of evaluation, together with research, teaching, and service, a position the faculty committees rejected. “We didn’t want it to be valued more highly.... or for a file to be weakened by its absence.”

Incentives helped to grease the wheels of faculty acceptance of the mission. In 2011, Carlson wrote, “to make progress in the diversity of the faculty, UC must...deal with faculty performance expectations.” Carlson was keen to see these credits as equal to what most people expect professors to do.

Taking on commitments to build a more equitable and inclusive academic community should not be seen as a sidestep in a faculty career. Rather it should be a way to advance, just as in the case with effective teaching or ground-breaking research.

Many departments gave lip service to this idea; many others took it seriously.

Carlson also had ideas about how campuses could provide rewards that went beyond credit in personnel actions.

Rewards can be as straightforward as ensuring that individuals are compensated for their work. That may mean a course release to free up time, an administrative stipend, or summer compensation...With relatively small investments in those faculty committed to the work of building productive and inclusive workplace, the campus avoids the high cost of managing toxic departments or replacing departing faculty.

Another UC incentive program, [the Presidential Post-Doctoral Fellows](#) (PPF), gained force during Carlson’s time in office. Here’s how the program works: A system-wide committee selects two to three dozen candidates annually to put forward to departments as opportunities for faculty hires. Hiring from this list is sweetened with the guarantee that the University will pay the first five years of salary of every Fellow hired. Then departments will decide whether they want to offer the Fellow a tenured post. It is clear from the criteria listed that committee members are expected to select candidates for ideological alignment with contemporary progressivism as well as for their preferred racial and gender categories. They are closely vetted for their past and future contributions to diversity. As the program’s website states:

The contributions to diversity may include public service towards increasing equitable access in fields where women and minorities are under-represented...research focusing on underserved populations or understanding inequalities related to race, gender, disability or LGBT issues.... (supported by) the perspective that comes from...non-traditional educational background(s) or understanding...the experiences of members of groups historically underrepresented.

The names of the selectors are not easy to determine. Consequently, few know the qualifications of those who are choosing among the applicants for the fellowships. Every UC department is encouraged to look carefully at this list and, if at all interested, to invite fellows to campus. In extreme cases, some cash-strapped deans have promoted these system-chosen candidates as the only way to add new faculty.

In 2016, the State of California chipped in \$1.6 million to incentivize other “innovative” ways of hiring faculty, including the use of diversity statements to make the first cut in applicant pools. I recall sitting at a meeting in which the campus vice provost for academic personnel told us that we should not only focus on diversity statements in reviewing candidates for faculty positions but also overlook the prestige of candidates’ graduate programs. This could be a potentially biasing element in a file, she said. For those who credited selective programs as generally reliable indicators of quality, it was hard to escape the message: attending a mediocre graduate program should be considered to provide the right kind of training for the new UC! UC President Janet Napolitano, subsequently added millions in support for the “Advancing Faculty Diversity” program.

New requirements were also introduced where incentives alone were insufficient to produce change. First, there were requirements for offices to promote DEI; subsequently requirements for candidate statements about their “contributions to DEI”; later [rubrics were adopted](#) by some campuses to grade these diversity statements using

ideologically loaded criteria. For example, candidates who said they sought to treat all students equally were given low scores, while high scores were given to those who said they gave special attention to under-represented students. Again, many departments paid scant attention to these requirements; others showed devotion to them. These policies were followed by requirements for equity advisors to monitor practices in the departments. The equity advisors teach less as a compensation for this service and at some campuses receive stipends. Faculty members have also reported to me instances in which deans have halted searches when women or minorities were not among the candidates invited to campus for interviews.

The point for Carlson was to get beyond the questioning of trade-offs between research excellence and social goals and to “get to a place where valuing diversity is not simply incentivized but rather a matter of core daily business.” In a summary of one of her 2013 roundtable discussions with diversity researchers, faculty, and administrators, she reports on “three main priorities” required to move forward:

1) The need to focus on contributions to diversity as more than an individual issue, but as a community issue; 2) the need to change questions and narratives around faculty diversity and to frame the conversation around compatible needs for excellence and diversity; and 3) the need to get to a place where valuing diversity is not simply incentivized but rather a matter of core daily business.

People who study organizational transformations have long known that changes in framing can help to promote changes in behavior. “Diversity and Excellence” became the motto at UC, later “Inclusive Excellence,” still later “Excellence through Diversity,” and eventually I even heard ‘Diversity *is* Excellence.’ Orwell himself could not have laid out a neater progression.

Occasionally, departments whose members had not internalized the message were put on a tighter leash. Carlson recounts how the system-wide provost Michael T. Brown required UC math departments to use the University's recruitment platform rather than the national platform so they could understand why "they remained below national averages in the diversity of their faculty." All departments protested, she writes, except one. UC Riverside (my own campus!) "saw the opportunity to use (the new platform) to its advantage in serving its students and the mathematics department mission." One wonders whether mathematics students or the department's mission at UC Riverside were in fact better served after the change. Maybe they were, maybe they weren't. Of course, no one tried to find out. The assumption is all that counted.

Carlson proved adept at raising funds to promote the new "core mission." The [National Science Foundation granted](#) her more than \$300,000 between 2012 and 2014. These funds were used for a series of roundtables, altogether involving some 1,000 UC administrators and faculty members. Along with best practices for recruitment and mentoring of under-represented faculty, the obstacle of "white privilege" came up for discussion. According to one of the keynote speakers, Yale professor Meg Urry,

It does not occur to those in the historical majority to reflect on the privileges they have; they are less than reflective, fail to self-examine, and are thus unable to see their behavior in a pattern.

Urry characterized this as "the 25 brain" problem, meaning that the same assumptions tended to be held by all of those in departmental majorities. Not addressed: the much larger collective consciousness formed and activated in sessions like these.

The roundtables also examined other problems identified as obstacles to implementation of the new regime, including "implicit bias...chilly climates...micro-aggressions," and "low levels of encouragement and support" for the diversity mission.

It might have occurred to some of the presenters that the designated villains – anyone who opposed, but especially high-achieving white males -- could be expected to react with something less than full enthusiasm. Instead, the participants seemed to be puzzled by the foot dragging. Still, the results of the consensus-building meetings were pleasing to Carlson. In a 2014 letter to Napolitano reflecting on the roundtables, she wrote,

The (NSF) program has played a key role in building networks and tools to meet the core UC diversity mission and its achievements provide a powerful springboard for the next phase of institutional transformation.

In 2014, Napolitano provided \$200,000 for another series of seminars entitled “Fostering Inclusive Excellence.” Carlson described the goal as developing “training materials and facilitators to lead training on implicit biases, sub-cultural differences, and the role of departmental practices and cultures in academic success.” By this time the transformation engine was hitting full throttle. The entire basket of tools for confronting the old regime was in full display – implicit bias, micro-aggressions, diversity trainings, new approaches to hiring, and all the rest.

The source for Carlson’s idea that diversity is “an art” may have come from the [theatrical performance](#) she commissioned at this time. The play takes place in a department meeting where discussion of a possible new hire is occurring. The senior white guy is, naturally, belligerent and obnoxious. He interrupts and puts down the somewhat insecure junior faculty women and minorities who are trying in a polite way to describe the virtues of the candidate under consideration. Surely there must be some instances in which conversations like the one depicted have occurred. But how many? In hiring meetings that I have attended colleagues who cared about the outcome put

forward their preferences with conviction but in generally civil ways, whether they were senior white males or junior women of color.

I sat through this production when it appeared on my campus. It had all the subtlety of a blacksmith's hammer. Nevertheless, Carlson reports that most of the roundtable attendees who previewed it described it as “the highlight” of the seminar they attended. She notes, however, that not all were entranced, and dutifully quotes one participant who commented on the “clod-like portrayals.”

The “Fostering Inclusive Excellence” seminars also resulted in an embarrassing [bump along the road](#) to institutional transformation. *The Los Angeles Times* opined against a list of micro-aggressions circulated for one of the seminars and posted on the UC website. The paper's editorial board commented, “Surely a professor ought to be able to say that America is a melting pot, or that affirmative action is a bad policy...Since when are universities afraid of clashing or provocative beliefs?” Napolitano reacted as politicians often do in the face of negative press: she backtracked. She had her staff inform Carlson that the seminars would not continue.

Carlson was miffed. The journalists had failed, she writes, to recognize “that the micro-aggressions under scrutiny were seriously impeding UC's attempt to address an all too real problem in the academic community.” She was unrepentant.

I continue to think that the better course would have been for all of us in the (UC) leadership to publicly stand behind the...seminars, including the focus on micro-aggressions...The seminars were about awareness of speech and not restrictions of speech. The seminars advanced rather than stifled speech.

I wish I could believe this optimistic assessment, but I have heard too many stories of colleagues being hauled in to talk to UC administrators because someone of progressive mindset objected to something they said.

I once thought that UC administrators provided indirect support and legitimacy for social-justice activists but nothing more than that. Campus activists seemed to me to be highly critical of the outcomes of administrative reforms and to desire a much more fundamental transformation of the University into an instrument of progressive politics. I thought the two movements were intertwined but ran along separate tracks. And I worried more about the designs of activists than those of administrators.

I revised my thinking after reading Carlson's chronicle. It is true that many activists would like to see more far-reaching efforts to transform the university and that they have put forward many proposals to weaken its scholarly aims. But I now realize that administrators like Carlson have immensely greater power to realize their intentions and that their beliefs are not so different. Like many progressive activists at UC, Carlson assumed white supremacy, rallied against micro-aggressions, was convinced of the pervasiveness of implicit bias, wanted to redirect hiring to privilege under-represented groups, and discounted concerns about the integrity of the research enterprise. When Carlson looked for allies on the campuses to bring to her seminars, who did she tap? Many inevitably come from the ranks of the campus activists.

In 2019, Carlson and two Office of the President colleagues held campus conversations with more than 300 administrators, faculty senate leaders, and diversity-committed faculty members. The results of these conversations provide a window onto the world views of administrators and activists at a time when commitment to institutional transformation was at full strength. Carlson's experience of an elevated mood among participants -- what sociologists call "collective effervescence" -- is evident during this peak period of institutional change.

A highlight of the conversations was the creative and reflective thinking that was generated by group discussion...They participants were eager to engage in conversations about what was best funded and managed systemwide and what their urgent needs are. The visits were truly inspiring...Faculty and administrators see (their) joint efforts as a strong example of UC leading the way in the nation.

Carlson reports widespread support among both faculty and administrators for “epistemological inclusion” of DEI work as essential rather than for seeing diversity work as an “add-on.” She notes the broad support for OP programs that prioritize contributions to diversity in order to “re-shape” the process of department level recruitments. Many members of both groups argued that minority faculty have higher service burdens and should therefore be given course credit for their service activities. Some recommended creating metrics for regular review of departmental progress on DEI so that competition with other departments could be encouraged. Others argued for collecting data on the types of search practices that correlated with preferred hiring outcomes so that these practices could be circulated throughout the system. Some participants suggested using cluster hiring to bring in faculty from under-represented groups. Many spoke approvingly of “a concierge approach” to recruitment of minority faculty to aid in their relocation, onboarding, and engagement in campus life.

Her summary of these conversations suggests that little daylight existed between the world views of activists and administrators. Indeed, in some ways campus administrators appear to have outpaced the faculty in their enthusiasms for the new orientation. One dean told her, “We should only be hiring faculty with a career commitment” to DEI. Another suggested, “Anti-bias training is ‘the Trojan Horse’ to get change.” Carlson reports comments about incentives as questioning whether change can be more effectively motivated “through shame or greed.”

Here then are lessons for people who aspire to remake institutions: Change begins with the construction of new “core values” and the re-framing of traditional organizational purposes so that the new values are essential to the old. It requires the capacity to politely indulge and eventually outlast dissenters; the accumulation of funds and sponsorships to fuel projects; the recruitment of loyal advocates, often from among those at the discontented margins of campus life; the capacity to elevate the status of these recruits; the construction of incentives and requirements for change in a palatable enough mix; the adoption of slogans to encapsulate the desired direction of change; frequent face-to-face meetings with advocates to reinforce commitments, build networks, and discuss remaining obstacles; and efforts to marginalize dissenters. (One of Carlson’s keynoters used the term “toxic” to describe those who opposed the new regime.) All of this occurs in successful right-wing campaigns as well.

It is of course a conceit that any one person can produce an institutional transformation as far-reaching as the one that occurred at UC over the last two decades. It takes a cast of hundreds and years of toil to alter the course of a mammoth organization like the University of California. Carlson had plenty of help. The National Science Foundation, the California state legislature, private foundations, and UC President Napolitano showered funds on the project. The campus administrations got behind it. Pliable faculty committees endorsed it. Buoyed by these allies, activists on the campuses rose up to demand that more be done.

The institutional transformation Carlson oversaw may have yielded some tangible benefits. She reports that some progress has been made in the representation of women (up by 8 percent since 2010) and of under-represented minorities (up 4

percent). Some outstanding faculty members have been hired thanks to the incentive programs. New scholarship has added to our knowledge of the histories and cultures of previously submerged populations. Hateful incidents like the one at UCLA in 2012 have not been repeated so far as I know (though UC administrators seem incapable of dealing with harassment of Jews in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war). The proportion of [students who feel disrespected](#) for their racial identities – always a small number – has continued to inch downward. Bias incidents appear no longer to affect Blacks disproportionately.

These changes *might* have occurred without any interventions on the part of UC DEI simply due to changes in the pipeline and public opinion in the state. But let's assume that the new policies played a role. The question is whether the costs of institutional transformation have outweighed the benefits.

I will note that I am not among those who are on a quest for color blindness in academe. In its centuries-long mistreatment of Black people and Native Americans, the United States has an ugly history to reckon with. That reckoning must, however, take into account that faculty and administrators have an obligation to reward talent and effective labor wherever it is found, independent of immutable identity characteristics.

Although Carlson's framing and UC's official positions deny it, conflicts can and do exist between policies to redress social injustices and the obligation of scholars to maintain foundational professional values such as academic freedom, rationalist inquiry, and merit-based selection. Many people from under-represented groups are of course fully competitive – including a good share of outstanding scholars and leaders in their fields. Others from under-represented populations can benefit from higher levels of attention and support. The fairest approach under the circumstances is to recruit

actively among members of under-represented groups and to provide scholarships and mentorships to prepare less advantaged people from those groups to compete on an equal footing.

This is the path UC began to regard as insufficient two decades ago. In its pursuit of social justice since that time and in its adoption of the language and assumptions of progressive activists, the University has institutionalized mechanisms that are counter-productive in important ways.

Intellectual debate and intellectual non-conformity are the obvious casualties of any campaign to elevate ideological considerations in university hiring and promotion. As a larger portion of the faculty is chosen for values conformity or adjusts to the prevailing sentiments, dissenting views can be progressively crowded out or silenced. The conformist atmosphere that results from these processes represents a fundamental problem for universities because dissenting views are necessary to subject ideas to the tests of opposition that reveal their weaknesses and make them stronger.

No comprehensive studies exist to determine the extent to which speech norms have been compromised at UC by the ascent of DEI. Given that UC has styled itself as the national leader in DEI efforts, the national data raises concern about what can happen when academic freedom protections are downplayed in relation to representational and ideological goals. These data show that as many as many as [80 percent of students](#) and [one-third of faculty](#) self-censor to avoid risking ostracism. They show a heightened willingness to discriminate in proposal reviews and hiring decisions against those regarded as political opponents, and they show [a worrying spike](#) in administrative disciplinary actions taken against those who have expressed unwelcome but protected views.

The campus locations of respondents were not collected in these studies and it is therefore not possible to determine the extent to which University of California faculty do or do not fit the national patterns. [Two small-scale studies](#) suggest the climate for speech may not be that different on UC campuses. More than one fifth of the 100 faculty interview subjects in these studies raised concerns about the climate for speech, including instances in which they held their tongues to avoid being labeled or ostracized; where terms like “white supremacist” were used to silence dissent; and where colleagues left the campus because of perceptions that the campus was more interested in diversity than scholarly accomplishments. Some also cited instances in which they had been summoned to administrative hearings based on unsubstantiated claims of bias for expressions of protected speech.

A few other suggestive pieces of evidence can be added to the mix. The former chair of the Academic Freedom Committee at UCLA reported to me that complaints brought to her committee were routinely ignored by the faculty leadership on her campus. We also have [nearly a dozen examples](#) of cases of suppressed speech that have been dramatic enough to make it into the press. It is clearly an empirical matter to determine how often these kinds of incidents have occurred and with what effect.

At the same time, incidents do not need to occur with great frequency for the message to get across that faculty can be punished at UC for protected speech that offends DEI-related sensibilities. What we have seen happen on some UC campuses is a classic [“spiral of silence”](#) in which faculty members and students tend to hide their opinions when they think these opinions would expose themselves to isolation by majorities. People who feel public support, by contrast, tend to express their opinions loudly and clearly. Loud opinions expressed on the one side and silence on the other

side sets the spiral into motion. The actual number of partisans of an opinion is not necessarily decisive for their weight in the spiral of silence. Instead, the opinion of a numerical minority may be perceived as a majority if their partisans act assertively enough and defend their opinions with enough emphasis in public.

Professional norms have also been compromised as a result of UC's institutional transformation. The "advancing faculty diversity" searches have accounted for [17% of faculty hires](#) since 2016. Those committed to the social justice agenda are unlikely to think this a large proportion. As far as I am concerned, any search restricted to candidates hand-picked by a non-specialist UC committee should be regarded with skepticism. Are these truly the best candidates available? And how can we know without national searches? In the subset of these searches using contributions to DEI to winnow applicant pools, hiring committees have been told, in effect, to substitute the extra-academic criteria for research and teaching qualifications. How can this be justifiable in an academic organization? When contributions to DEI are weighted in personnel actions, by definition they permit faculty members to reduce their commitments to scholarship and teaching outside the domain of DEI. Again, it is important to ask: Is this desirable in an academic organization?

Once punctured, it is easier for more of the air to go out of academic standards. We should not be surprised that a host of other proposed and enacted revisions in faculty evaluations have followed in the wake of the DEI ascendance. These have included new criteria to allow for everything from amicus briefs to podcasts as research contributions. Even instructor's courses, once sacrosanct, have not entirely escaped the reach of DEI. In recent years, ideas have been floated to require the [representation of women and minority](#) writers on course syllabi and to [adjust grading](#) to account

“equitably” for students’ backgrounds. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, students in California’s public education system rank [no better than average](#) for the 50 states in spite of the state’s wealth, and they rank below average in mathematics and science. At one time, UC asked admitted students to adjust to meet its standards. Now many faculty members would like UC to adjust its standards to meet the level of California students.

Affirmative action was, I believe, a better policy platform than diversity has proven to be. When I helped to lead the charge in the 1990s against affirmative action bans in California universities, I never considered the possibility that affirmative action would be associated with prescriptions about how students and faculty should think or speak. Instead, I viewed affirmative action as justified by the terrible history of American racism, and I assumed it would bring in many more talented people who would express a wide range of views and who would pursue scholarly and scientific attainments in the typical way. I am grateful for the extent to which that has been true. But UC workarounds have led me to believe that ideological conformity is now typically required among candidates in searches organized under the “Advancing Faculty Diversity” rubric and that this expectation has, in some cases, also seeped into other searches through the medium of diversity statements.

The financial costs of the DEI initiatives and staffing are another factor to consider. It is safe to say that the numbers of DEI personnel at UC are [at least several hundred](#) and the costs for running the offices somewhere in the tens of millions. This would normally be considered a drop in the bucket for an organization that employs 200,000 people and runs a budget of nearly \$50 billion. It is only when we consider the

other harder to calculate costs that we begin to wonder how much good is being done on balance for these expenditures.

I tried to find out. I imagined that someone in the vast UC bureaucracy would have at least tried to demonstrate that the changes in policy and practice over the last two decades have had a measurable impact on outcomes worth measuring -- and that these impacts would not have occurred without the interventions. DEI offices might be interested, for example, in whether minority student and faculty satisfaction with the campus climate could be attributed to DEI efforts as opposed to other possible causes. They might be interested in whether minority student success improved after new DEI policies were enacted. Or whether minority faculty retention improved. It would have been relatively easy for an evaluation expert to find out the answers.

I asked Carlson and two other UC officials whether they could direct me to such studies. They came up empty. Carlson humbly claimed that she did not know because her job had been to provide support for the campuses. The UC Vice President for Institutional Research wrote that studies like these were not in her bailiwick. The UC Vice President for DEI said she would ask her research staff -- and then never got back to me.

Not that I was surprised. For the true believer, it is not a matter of costs and benefits or measurable outcomes. It is how much more needs to be done. In spite of progress, "we have a long way to go," Carlson writes near the end of her chronicle. "The challenge remains pressing." Here then is a final lesson from Susan Carlson's memoir for those who aspire to transform institutions: The future demands that your best efforts go into the never ending struggle. There's always much more that can be done.

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