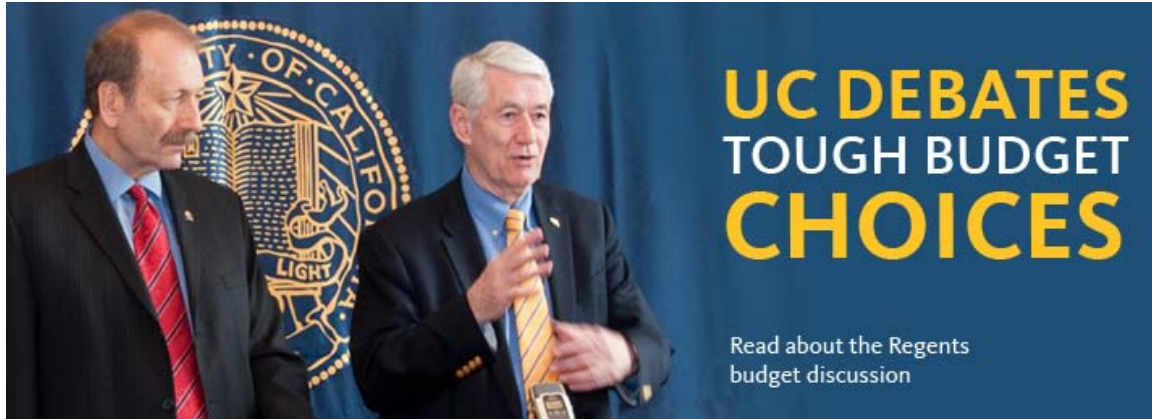


# Our University

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT FOR THE UC COMMUNITY



March 2011



## **Regents scrutinize fiscal crisis**

***By Carolyn McMillan***

The University of California Board of Regents took the unusual step March 16 of devoting its entire public session to analyzing UC's budget crisis and discussing the tradeoffs inherent in various scenarios for coping.

The university faces a stark gap between diminishing state support and rising operational costs — a gap that will grow larger in coming years unless UC finds a stable source of revenue growth.

"This is not a blip. This is 20 years of reduced funding for the university," President Mark G. Yudof told the board. "We need a long-term plan. Our collective job is to figure out how to do it."

Yudof noted that UC already has made substantial budget cuts in the last few years, and that there currently are 8,000 faculty and staff positions unfilled. As the regents and UC administrators evaluate how best to go forward, preserving UC's world-class research and education must be a priority, he said.

"In all the variables you hear today, there is one constraint and a guiding star we must follow and that is quality. Quality is non-negotiable." Regents Chairman Russell Gould proposed the daylong workshop to give the regents the fullest picture possible of the fiscal dilemma facing the university and the difficult choices that lie ahead.

## **Chancellors: greater budget flexibility**

The chancellors of UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine and UC Berkeley briefed the board on how their campuses are being affected by UC's ongoing financial struggles. They said that greater budget flexibility would help them handle their fiscal challenges with the least harm possible.

"We've protected our academic programs at the expense of our support units," UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal said, noting that the budget for core functions at his campus will be 21 percent smaller than it was four years ago if pending cuts are enacted. Given the size of the deficit, narrowly targeted cuts will not be possible.

"We will not be able to make the cuts strategically. We will have to cut everywhere," Blumenthal. "These cuts will go right to the heart of our research and academic missions."

Yudof will return to the board with a firmer budget plan in May, and will be looking for guidance from the regents on both short- and long-term fiscal questions.

UC expects to have a budget shortfall in fiscal 2011-12 of nearly \$900 million. That figure includes a proposed \$500 million cut in state support as well as rising costs for mandatory expenses such as utilities, retirement plan contributions and health insurance.

Gov. Jerry Brown proposed cutting UC's funding as part of an overall strategy for closing a \$26 billion state deficit. The proposed reduction follows years of unpredictable and diminishing levels of state support. If Brown's budget is enacted, UC's state funding in fiscal 2011-12 will be at the same level as 1998-99, when there were 73,000 fewer students. And for the first time in university history, student tuition would contribute more to UC's core budget than state funds do.

#### **Fiscal situation in flux**

Gould noted that the fiscal situation is very fluid. Current budget projections could change in the coming months. The biggest unknown is whether Brown's plan to extend taxes through a special election in June will go forward. UC could be looking at an even bigger hit in state funding if there is no tax extension.

All 10 campuses and UC's Office of the President are working to spare academic programs from the brunt of pending budget cuts by allocating most of the reduction to administrative functions.

Campuses in the UC system are working aggressively to enact administrative efficiencies, implement shared services and look for new sources of revenue. But even with those measures, they anticipate staff layoffs, deferring faculty hiring, enrolling more out-of-state students and consolidating or cutting some programs.

UC Irvine Chancellor Michael Drake said his campus had even turned off hot water in bathrooms as part of an effort to "save every nickel and dime." The bottom line is that UC needs to find a way to continue its tradition of academic excellence, he said.

"We need to maintain that A-plus we've worked a century and a half to earn," Drake said.

In an effort to soften the impact on campuses, UC's Office of the President will absorb a \$50 million cut. That amounts to about 17 percent of its budget and comes on top of \$55 million in cuts since 2007-08.

In addition, the Office of the President is reviewing, in consultation with campus

leadership, all centrally-supported programs and services with an eye toward reducing costs further while still providing central services, achieving economies of scale and providing common goods.

"We should not be doing anything centrally unless we can save money or provide a common good," Yudof said. "We're doing many things only because historically we've done it. We need to make it as easy as we can for the campuses to make their cuts."

### **Long-term stability sought**

The short-term fixes for the coming fiscal year may solve the immediate budget predicament, but a bigger, long-term challenge remains unless UC finds a steady and predictable source of revenue, said Nathan Brostrom, executive vice president for operations.

Costs for pension, capital renewal and other mandatory expenses will keep rising. Unless UC finds a reliable revenue source to cover those costs, it could have a \$1.5 billion budget gap by fiscal year 2015-16. Those projections assume that UC moves aggressively to enact administrative efficiencies that are in the pipeline.

Regents, reacting to that long-term prognosis, agreed that UC is at a crossroads and needs to answer fundamental questions that could affect student enrollment, tuition and fees, and the size and scope of campuses.

"All bets are off. No longer can we say the Master Plan even exists," said regent Sherry Lansing, in reference to California's 50-year-old blueprint for ensuring that all Californians had access to higher education. "We have a core value system we have to protect. I'm asking every one of us to be really entrepreneurial."

Regent Norman Pattiz suggested that one place for UC to start was by capitalizing on all it does for California.

"This is an institution that is very important to the economy of California. Maybe we should look at ways to exploit our value to the economy of California, the economy of the world."

***Carolyn McMillan is the managing editor for Internal Communications in the UC Office of the President.***

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## **Systemwide News**

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### **Regents approve options for making additional contributions to pension plan**

The University of California Board of Regents on March 17 authorized the university to use a combination of low-cost borrowing options to transfer \$2.1 billion to the UC Retirement Plan in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

The \$2.1 billion is in addition to previously approved employer and employee contributions and enables UC to pay the unfunded portion of pension costs for those two fiscal years.

Chief Financial Officer Peter Taylor explains how this action will reduce UC's overall pension costs in the coming years and improve the current financial status of the retirement plan:

By virtue of the actions the Regents took at the March meeting, the Regents basically have authorized in the current fiscal year and next fiscal year, fully paying the pension obligations that employees are accruing.

By doing that, we are actually relieving the system of \$5 billion worth of expenses over the next 30 years. So, there is a tremendous benefit to paying me now, as opposed to paying me later.

The Regents basically authorized that we continue to explore three possible approaches to get cash into the pension system sooner, rather than later.

But let's be clear: all of them are about borrowing. The only question is, is it internal borrowing versus external borrowing? And they've charged us with the responsibility to figure out the borrowing combinations that will result in the lowest possible costs.

That's essentially what we're doing. So, we're borrowing from one source or another, to make sure we can get cash into the system sooner rather than later, stabilize the fund and eventually see the funded status improve slowly but surely over time to give employees confidence that the cash will be there when they retire.

Complete details of the Regents action are available at:  
[www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/mar11/f12.pdf](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/regents/regmeet/mar11/f12.pdf)

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## **Nomination process for UC Retirement System Advisory Board election begins March 25**

UC staff interested in running for one of two open seats on the UC Retirement System (UCRS) Advisory Board may submit nomination applications beginning Friday, March 25.

The application period runs through May 6, 2011.

The advisory board meets three times a year to discuss issues of interest to UCRS members, retirees and beneficiaries, and shares its opinions on these issues with UC President Mark G. Yudof.

To qualify for the ballot, staff must be active members of the University of California Retirement Plan (UCRP) who are not members of the Academic Senate. Office of the President employees involved in making UCRS policy or providing legal advice about UCRS and employees in Internal Audit are not eligible to run.

Candidates must also submit a signed background information sheet that includes a candidate statement; a nomination petition with at least 50 valid signatures from active UCRP members and a signed rules of campaign conduct form.

Nomination materials in both English and Spanish may be downloaded from a special UCRS Advisory Board election website that is accessible through At Your Service: [atyourservice.ucop.edu/ucrs\\_election](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/ucrs_election). They are also available at local Benefits offices.

In mid-May, a list of qualified candidates and their statements will be posted at the

UCRS Advisory Board election website.

All active, eligible UCRP members who are not part of the Academic Senate will then elect two candidates to sit on the board for a four-year term. The online election will be conducted by VR Election Services (VRES), from May 23 through June 17.

VRES has more than 25 years experience conducting retirement board elections, including elections for many of the largest public retirement systems in the country.

Final election results will be posted at the website by the end of June.

### **About the UCRS Advisory Board**

The 11-member UCRS Advisory Board is comprised of a cross-section of the university community. In addition to the two seats held by elected staff representatives, the board includes members of the President's executive cabinet; faculty appointed by the UC Academic Senate; and representatives of the Council of UC Emeriti Associations and Council of UC Retiree Associations.

The Advisory Board discusses issues relating to all members, retirees and their beneficiaries for the following plans:

- University of California Retirement Plan (UCRP)
- Tax-Deferred 403(b) Plan
- 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan
- Defined Contribution Plan
- The 415(m) Restoration Plan

More information about the UCRS Advisory Board and the election process will be available beginning March 25 at: [atyourservice.ucop.edu/ucrs\\_election](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/ucrs_election)

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### **Robert Samuels appointed to UC investment advisory group**

The University of California Board of Regents on March 17 appointed Robert Samuels to its investment advisory group, for a term to begin April 1, 2011, and end March 31, 2012.

Paul Wachter, chair of the Regents' committee on investments, recommended the appointment to the Regents' governance committee, which in turn advanced the recommendation to the full board.

The investment advisory group consists of four to seven advisors to provide general advice to the Regents' committee on investments. Membership is limited to investment professionals, faculty, UC Foundation members not currently serving as Regents and a union-represented UC employee with expertise in investments.

Samuels is a lecturer in the Writing Programs at UC Los Angeles, where he has taught since 2002. He also currently serves as the president of the University Council, American Federation of Teachers, one of the labor unions representing UC employees. He was nominated for the appointment by the UC-AFT, as well as the University Professional & Technical Employees - Communications Workers of America Local 919; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3299; the California Nurses Association; the United Automobile Workers Local 2865 and the UAW International Representative for Local 5810.

In addition to serving as president of the UC-AFT, he is the associate director and treasurer of the Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society and a contributing editor to the Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society. He graduated from Cornell University and has a Ph.D. in English from Kent State University.

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## **Electronic health records rolling out across UC**

***By Alec Rosenberg***

A digital revolution is sweeping across University of California medical centers, as they switch to electronic health records. The new systems will help deliver care that is better, safer and smarter. Doctors will have instant access to lab tests. Patients will know they are getting the right medication. Providers will extend care coordination throughout the community.

The technology is not just a competitive edge; it's part of a national imperative to transform health care.

Electronic health records are a key piece of federal health reform and a strategic priority for UC Health. All five UC medical centers are moving toward qualifying for federal incentives, which the government is offering those who go digital in a way that improves patient care and safety. Indeed, UC San Diego and UC Davis are considered among the top 3 percent of hospitals in adopting electronic health records, while UC Irvine is close behind and UCLA and UC San Francisco are busy implementing their systems.

"UC has world-class medical centers," said Dr. John Stobo, UC senior vice president for health sciences and services. "We're already beginning to see the benefits of electronic health records. Adopting electronic health records systemwide will help UC meet the goals of federal health reform, to increase quality, improve patient care, enhance collaborations and drive innovation."

The transformation is complex, involving lots of coordination and training, not to mention financial commitment. UC's medical center chief information officers have spearheaded the effort, collaborating to share best practices and learn lessons from each other.

At UC San Diego Health System, patients can go online to a secure site, look up their clinical information, make an appointment and request a prescription refill. Doctors can get instant access to CT scans, eliminating wait times, increasing efficiency and improving outcomes. The emergency department uses an Internet-based referral system to schedule follow-up appointments at community clinics, improving patient care while reducing return ER visits.

UC San Diego began work to automate clinical information about 10 years ago.

"The notion has always been to leverage technology to improve quality of care, patient safety and efficiency," UC San Diego Health System CIO Ed Babakanian said. "Now they are a national focus."

For UC San Diego hospital patients, all medications are bar-coded. A scanner checks to see that the bar code matches the identification on a patient's wristband before medication is administered.

"You get the right medication to the right patient," Babakanian said. "It improves safety because it eliminates potential errors and it reduces costs because the order goes directly to the pharmacist."

UC San Diego Health System has been named one of the nation's "Most Wired" for five straight years and, for the fourth time, one of the "Most Wireless" by the American Hospital Association. Its advanced status helped it receive a \$15 million federal Beacon grant that will use information technology to enhance coordination among San Diego hospitals and clinics and improve community health.

UC San Diego expects to qualify to receive federal incentive funds for electronic health records and will apply for them, Babakanian said.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides \$19.2 billion in Medicare and Medicaid health information technology incentives over five years. Beginning this year, Medicare and Medicaid will provide financial incentives over multiple years of up to \$11 million per hospital and \$63,750 per eligible physician for "meaningful" use of health IT, such as improving quality, safety, care coordination and public health. Beginning in 2015, hospitals and physicians face financial penalties for not meeting meaningful use guidelines.

"It's the right thing to do," Babakanian said. "Those who hadn't, now they have an incentive to do so."

### **The value of being digital**

Electronic health records are a hot topic in health care. In February, a record 31,225 people attended the annual conference of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), a nonprofit organization whose analytics arm assesses hospitals' adoptions of electronic health records. UC Davis was honored for achieving the organization's second-highest designation for electronic health record systems, joining an elite group of 3 percent of U.S. hospitals that includes UC San Diego.

"Our clinical data is now fully digital," UC Davis Health System CIO Michael Minear said. "Now we don't use paper or film, have EHR software that really works, and we are exchanging patient data with other clinicians in our community." UC Davis began deploying its electronic health records in 2002 and had all types of clinical encounters (inpatient, ambulatory, emergency department and home care) fully supported by the EHR by late 2009.

Since December, UC Davis has been able to share electronic health records with Sutter Health, as both organizations use the same platform. In the first 13 weeks of use, the two health providers shared 924 patient records.

UC Davis plans to share electronic health records with additional providers, including Catholic Healthcare West. Also, more than 1,700 community physicians can access their patients' records and digital images in the UC Davis system. In addition, more than 32,000 UC Davis patients are using the Web-based MyChart (a tethered personal health record), where they can access their clinical information and send and receive secure messages with their physician and care teams.

"I believe our modern technology is helping clinicians every day, but I think the real

winners are the patients," Minear said. "If you're treating an emergency patient, having access to the patient's clinical history can save time and the cost of extra tests, but at other times it may literally be the difference between life and death."

UC Davis, which expects to start qualifying this year for federal EHR incentives, continues to add advanced applications. By later this year, all its hospital patients will receive bar-coded medication administration.

"Our physicians, nurses, pharmacists and therapists have been amazing partners in deploying modern clinical software," Minear said. "Our success is based on teamwork and ensuring clinical goals and requirements drive our use of technology."

### **A better system**

UC Irvine is in the middle of its EHR implementation. Its first phase went live in September 2009 and second phase in October 2010, which mostly focused on the hospital. Now doctors can enter orders online such as tests, drugs and medications. Electronic medication management helps ensure that patients take the right medications at the right doses.

"If our clinicians can get to a computer, they can get access to a chart," UC Irvine Healthcare CIO Jim Murry said. "They have information at their fingertips they might not have ever had. They're going to have access to every image, every X-ray, every report."

Since October, Murry has received more than 250 requests for enhancements. "Our clinicians are beginning to see the power in such technology," he said.

The third phase, scheduled to go live by year end, will focus on the clinics' mobile devices — allowing UC Irvine doctors to check results on an iPhone and connecting with community outreach tools such as patient and community physician portals and health information exchanges. The fourth phase, targeted for summer 2012, will integrate medical devices and extend electronic clinical documentation. UC Irvine is positioned for federal EHR incentives, which it plans to seek next year, Murry said.

"I'm very happy with our roadmap," Murry said. "It's going to make us a better system."

Implementing electronic health records is UC Irvine Medical Center's top strategic initiative, Murry said. It will help improve quality and service and keep the university competitive in the marketplace, he said. It also will enhance collaboration: UC Irvine is working with other Orange County providers to connect their EHRs, starting with a pilot project this summer involving emergency room patients.

### **Safety is guiding force**

UCSF Medical Center is on a fast track to implement its new EHR system, which it calls APEX (Advancing Patient-centered Excellence). In April, APEX will roll out to the first of four waves of ambulatory clinics. The hospital rollout is scheduled in October. UCSF expects to deploy the full system by spring 2012. It eventually will extend to its Mission Bay hospital complex, slated to open in 2014.

"It's going really well given the size of the task," said UCSF Medical Center CIO Larry Lotenero. "We are moving as fast as we safely can, but safety is really the guiding force. Patient safety is paramount."

By summer, UCSF patients will be able to schedule appointments electronically, Lotenero said. Also, UCSF will install kiosks so patients can check in for appointments, similar to ones that let passengers check in for a flight at the airport.

By October, UCSF will add bar-coded medication administration, which will complement its new automated hospital pharmacy (<http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2011/03/9510/new-ucsf-robotic-pharmacy-aims-improve-patient-safety>) that uses robotic technology and electronics to prepare and track medications — not a single error has occurred in the 350,000 doses of medication prepared during the system's recent phase-in. "This will really help our care providers a lot," Lotenero said.

What UCSF is doing is in line with what President Barack Obama is trying to do with health care reform, such as increasing collaboration and transparency, Lotenero said. For example, UCSF plans to share its electronic health records with organizations such as Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, Stanford, Catholic Healthcare West and Hill Physicians Medical Group. Lotenero also sees potential for UC medical centers to collaborate in areas such as best practices for physician order sets, patient care plans and warehousing data.

### **Building collaborations**

Collaborations across the system already are paying off. UCSF's advice is helping UCLA reduce its EHR implementation time by up to six months, said UCLA Health System CIO Virginia McFerran. Furthermore, the CIOs at the five UC medical centers regularly discuss ways in which patients, researchers and students can benefit from easier information exchange across the system as well as opportunities to reduce costs.

UCLA signed its EHR vendor contract in November and is expected to begin deployment in 2012.

Federal incentives played a part in catalyzing UCLA's decision to choose an integrated system. "The incentives were one of several reasons UCLA determined the time was right to implement an electronic health record solution," McFerran said.

UCLA calls its program CareConnect and its first guiding principle is to make implementation decisions based upon the best interests of the patients. In addition to enabling increased quality of care, CareConnect will ultimately provide patients with conveniences including a Web portal to schedule appointments, online access to test results and communication options with their providers.

"I'm excited. This will be transformative for our organization and tremendously beneficial to our patients," McFerran said. "It's going to provide a better experience and better quality of care for our patients."

***Alec Rosenberg is the health communications coordinator in the UC Office of the President's Integrated Communications group.***

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## **More Systemwide News**

### **Riverside opens first med school building**

[http://newsroom.ucr.edu/news\\_item.html?action=page&id=2582](http://newsroom.ucr.edu/news_item.html?action=page&id=2582)

### **Second consecutive year for waitlists**

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/25137>

### **UC nursing faculty build skills at first-ever event**

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/25139>

### **California's latest 'Boom' hits newsstand**

[http://news.ucdavis.edu/search/news\\_detail.lasso?id=9802](http://news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=9802)

### **UC Health Innovation center issues RFP**

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/25075>

### **UC Merced to host global leadership conference for park leaders**

[http://www.ucmerced.edu/news\\_articles/03092011\\_national\\_parks\\_reserved\\_lands.asp](http://www.ucmerced.edu/news_articles/03092011_national_parks_reserved_lands.asp)

### **Thousands of UCSD students to attend President Clinton's global initiative**

[http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/thisweek/2011/03/07\\_Clinton.asp](http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/thisweek/2011/03/07_Clinton.asp)

### **UCSD Academic Senate OKs campuswide diversity requirement**

[http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/thisweek/2011/03/07\\_Diversity.asp](http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/thisweek/2011/03/07_Diversity.asp)

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## **People Who Make a Difference**

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### **UC shares Peace Corps public service commitment**

#### ***By Donna Hemmila***

Lisa Flynn lives in a two-room dwelling without electricity, refrigeration or running water. The borehole where she pumps water is a kilometer away. Although she has lived for three months in Magada, the Uganda village where she works as a Peace Corps community health volunteer, the children still chant her nickname, Naigaga, when they see her on her daily treks to fetch water or buy bananas and tomatoes at the market. For many, she is the first "muzungo," or white person, they have ever seen.

"I won the lottery when it comes to countries and families to be born in," said Flynn in an e-mail from Uganda. "The majority of people in this world will never see the same privileges and opportunities that I have taken for granted most of my life. It was my study abroad experience in India that deeply impressed this notion on me. I joined the Peace Corps to do anything I can to improve the quality of life for my brothers and sisters of the world."

Working with a nonprofit called Aim for Restoration of Hope, the 2009 UC Santa Barbara graduate is starting tailoring and adult literacy classes to improve the economic independence and self-esteem of the village women.

## **UC shares 50 years of Peace Corps history**

Flynn is one of 459 University of California alumni currently serving in the Peace Corps, carrying on a 50-year UC tradition. Since President John F. Kennedy created the organization in 1961, UC has seen more of its alumni join the Peace Corps than any other U.S. university. More than 10,375 have served, or 5 percent of the 200,000 who have heeded Kennedy's challenge to achieve a higher purpose by living and working in developing countries.

UC's shared commitment to this grand public service mission runs deep. In the early days of the program, volunteers trained in the United States before shipping out to their assigned countries. UCLA was one of the first training centers; between 1961 and 1969, it trained about 2,000 volunteers from all over the United States.

UC Berkeley holds the record for producing the most volunteers with more than 3,400. In the Peace Corps rankings of large colleges and universities that produced the most volunteers in 2010, UC Berkeley and UCLA tied at No. 6 with UC San Diego ranking 14th, UC Davis 16th and UC Santa Barbara 22nd. In the medium colleges and universities rankings, UC Santa Cruz placed 6th. In addition, there are hundreds of UC employees and current students who made their way to the university after their Peace Corps service ended, holding onto the idea of continuing a life of public service.

## **Sharing skills and culture**

Some were driven to join the Peace Corps by the desire to travel to exotic places; others by adventure; others still by the passion to be of service. Whatever their initial motivations, all leave their Peace Corps service with a profoundly changed view of the world and themselves.

"As a result of my service in the Peace Corps, I do believe that I've lived its original goals of contributing skills and expertise, learning about another people and culture, and bringing that learning back home," says Jeff Mitchell, an agriculture extension plant specialist at UC Davis who served in Botswana from 1978 to 1982.

"I have a better understanding and sense about the lives of folks in that region of the world and also a greater respect for the challenges they face," Mitchell said. "In my own small way perhaps, I might have contributed to the educational development of this country at a time in its history when it needed such help."

Mitchell taught in a government secondary school that took in boarders from all parts of the country. He had planned on going to law school after his term was up. Instead, he earned master's and doctoral degrees in agricultural science at UC Davis with the idea of working in international development.

"As things have turned out, I've pretty much dedicated myself to research, teaching and extension education work right here in California," he said. "But I have also had opportunities to contribute indirectly to international development goals."

## **Give a man a fish pond**

Kristen Bole, a media relations specialist at UC San Francisco, served in the Central African Republic from 1986 to 1988 as an inland fisheries volunteer, teaching farmers how to raise fish. "Not just giving them a fish," she said. "Or teaching them to fish, but actually teaching them how to build a pond and raise fish."

Like most Peace Corps volunteers, she found herself getting involved in projects outside her actual assignment, like helping women build fuel-efficient woodstoves and working in the local clinic.

"I think Peace Corps volunteers get far more out of their experience than they actually give to the host country," Bole said. "We all go over with the sense that we're going to 'help' and have an impact, but you realize once you're there that the problems you thought you could solve are immense and incredibly complex, and that your greatest contribution is entirely personal and has nothing to do with your initial assignment."

About a week before Bole left Africa, she went to visit a friend who was a prostitute. As she was leaving the visit, the woman asked if Bole would do her a favor.

"After two years of being asked daily for money or candy or my hand in marriage, I groaned inside at one more request, but tried to smile and ask what she wanted. She said, 'Could you teach me to read before you go?' "

### **Learning to listen**

Just about the time Bole was finishing her Peace Corps service, Catherine Thomsen, now a public health project leader with the UC-managed California Breast Cancer Research Program, was heading for Costa Rica where she served from 1988 to '92, half of that time in an isolated village near the Nicaraguan border. She learned everything from making tamales to playing the guitar so she could teach songs to the children in the kindergarten she created. But she learned a lot more than cooking and musical skills.

"There were moments of challenge and frustration," she said. "It took time and effort. That was an important lesson I learned, to sit back and listen more."

When she asked the people what they wanted to learn, they told her they wanted information about nutrition and how to keep their children from catching colds and flu. She helped organize a government speaker series to bring that educational material to the village. Thomsen then worked as a Peace Corps volunteer with the USAID traveling around Costa Rica working with other volunteers. One of her projects was the opening of a brick schoolhouse in a town where children had been sitting on logs in a lean-to.

### **Lifelong connections**

UC Davis alumnus Robert Griffiths taught English in a community school in Kenya, 20 kilometers north of Lake Victoria. The school received no government support, so the headmaster would kick students out of class until their families could pay the fees.

Griffiths had eight students who were particularly bright but also poor enough to be regularly kicked out of school. Griffiths' mother worked at an office at Stanford where he had had a summer job. He asked the people in the office for small donations of \$10 to help pay the fees, which they were able to do for a year until the students completed secondary school.

"About 10 years later, I went back to visit my school and tracked down many of these eight students," Griffiths said. "Seven of them had completed at least a bachelor's degree at the university."

One got a master's degree and published poetry in Swahili. His youngest sister is named

Patricia, after Griffiths mother. Another was teaching math and physics at a government high school.

"He proudly introduced me to the rest of the staff in the teachers' room, telling them that I had helped him get an education and succeed in his life," said Griffiths, who teaches English as a second language and job skills to adults at the downtown campus of the City College of San Francisco.

### **Big challenges and small changes**

Ariana Metchik, a 2005 UCLA graduate, spent two years as a community health educator in Mauritania, a West African Islamic country bordered by Senegal, Malawi and Algeria. She worked on AIDS education and polio immunization programs, organized traditional midwife training and started a health club for elementary students. But living in a patriarchal community where women had few rights was bit of a culture shock, she said - one that inspired her to start a literacy program for the women in her village, most of whom had never seen a written word. By the time she left her post in 2007, they hadn't exactly learned to read and write, she said, "but there was a whole group of women who thought there were possibilities for themselves. I think they loved learning, and I think it instilled in them the idea of a world where their daughters could learn."

Metchik, who is now working in a UCLA substance abuse research program while applying to medical schools, met her boyfriend in the Peace Corps. Fellow Mauritania volunteer Keith Gaddis, now a UCLA doctoral student in ecology and evolution, lived in the regional capital of Atar and worked with the mayor's office on setting up a trash disposal plan for the town. He later moved to the national capital and worked on after school mentoring programs for high school girls. He doubled the number of mentoring centers to 16 and started 10 more for elementary school students.

"It humbled me," Gaddis said. "At the same time it gave me a lot more confidence. It made me feel like I was resourceful."

### **Changes that last a lifetime**

Bryant Wieneke, a UC Riverside alumnus, served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger teaching, in French, at an agricultural school from 1974 to 1976. The fact that he knew nothing about farming and didn't speak French gave him the confidence, he said, to think nothing is impossible.

"Another lasting effect of the Peace Corps for me was that it was the beginning of a rich life of service, which is the most rewarding way to make a living in my opinion," said Wieneke, now an assistant dean for policy in the UC Santa Barbara College of Letters and Science. "I have never been on the front lines, saving lives as a doctor or nurse or even teaching in a classroom, but I have a role at the university that makes me feel as if I'm making a contribution to young people and our society. ... My life in public service emanated from my Peace Corps experience, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

**Share your Peace Corps experiences:** [ucpeacecorps@ucop.edu](mailto:ucpeacecorps@ucop.edu) to be included on the UC Peace Corps Facebook page.

**Follow UCLA's anniversary events on Twitter** with the hashtag [#uclapc50](https://twitter.com/uclapc50).

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## **Physician, staffer honored for advancement of women**

A UC San Francisco physician devoted to women's health and a staff member dedicated to improving childcare and lactation programs at UC San Francisco will be honored for their work to advance the health of women. Read about them at:

<http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2011/03/9529/two-receive-chancellors-award-advancement-women>

## **Surgeon gives smiles to Guatemalan children**

UCLA craniofacial surgeon Reza Jarrahy, M.D., operated on about 30 Guatemalan children with cleft lips and palates in one week—as many as he typically does in a year at UCLA. Read about his experience at:

[http://townhall.mednet.ucla.edu/hs\\_news/mar2011/1103p5.html](http://townhall.mednet.ucla.edu/hs_news/mar2011/1103p5.html)

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## **HR Briefs**

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### **April 15 deadline for filing Health, DepCare FSA claims**

If you were enrolled in UC's Flexible Spending Accounts (Health and/or Dependent Care) in 2010, you have until April 15, 2011 to submit your reimbursement claim forms for eligible expenses incurred during the period of January 1, 2010 through March 15, 2011.

You must submit documentation when you file your claims. This includes any receipts or evidence of benefits statements that might be required to validate purchases made using your CONEXIS benefit card. All claims and paperwork must be sent to CONEXIS for processing and be postmarked by April 15, 2011.

It's important to review your previous 2010 claims to confirm that they were approved by CONEXIS and that no additional documentation is needed. Log into your account at CONEXIS ([www.conexis.com/myfsa](http://www.conexis.com/myfsa)) and select "view my prior plans" to review your 2010 account activity. Or you can call the CONEXIS at 1-800-482-4120. Internal Revenue Service rules require you to forfeit any balance remaining after the filing deadline of April 15, 2011.

If you have any questions about your claims, be sure to contact CONEXIS directly at 1-800-482-4120.

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### **Health Net notifies members of security breach**

The health and financial information of nearly two million Health Net members is missing from its data center, including information from about 54,000 former and current UC Health Net members.

Health Net began mailing letters, notifying affected members of the security breach on March 14.

Health Net has offered affected members two years of identity protection at no cost to effected members.

More information about the security breach is available on the Health Net website: <https://www.healthnet.com/uc>