When I became dean, my senior staff informed me that I would be asked to speak at an upcoming colloquium about my vision. Although I still find this task daunting, at that point I would have found it impossible. Coming in as dean of the undergraduate division, I had some ideas about specific programs that I wanted to develop, and certain policies that I believed needed mending. But I didn't connect these rather disparate ideas with any sort of a vision, since a vision implies for me a more or less coherent direction with a set goal.

Perhaps the chief factor that kept me from attaining anything I would dignify with the label of "vision" was the diversity of tasks inside the division of which I had suddenly become dean. As most of you know, the division was welded together out of two parts only four years ago: one part consists of advising, and it, combined with some individuals in other parts of the College, has since spawned a small group dedicated to undergraduate policy and analysis for the College. The other part is itself somewhat less than coherent, consisting of a handful of interdisciplinary undergraduate programs (the UGIS part) and a number of programs that are grouped together under the heading of enrichment. Included under enrichment are programs such as the freshman and sophomore seminar programs, undergraduate research, external undergraduate scholarships, and L&S College Courses. Adding to the complications of this structure is the location of these various programs. The UGIS majors are located within the division (except in one case where we share a program with the College of Natural Resources); advising, policy analysis, and many programs in enrichment are located in the College of Letters & Science; some programs, however, such as the freshman and now sophomore seminar programs and the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program are campus-wide initiatives, and their location in the Undergraduate Division of the College is the result of a sometimes complex history.

I must admit that I was fairly overwhelmed by the diversity of responsibilities I had. I suppose that I found it difficult to develop a vision, because there were so many diverse programs I was supposed to oversee.

After six months, however, as I began to consider and to reconsider what sorts of things I wanted to accomplish as dean, I found that I could fit most of my concerns under the category of obligations. The kinds of obligations I mean are mutual on the part of the institution and on the part of the undergraduates who are enrolled in the institution. As a College, and as a campus, we incur an obligation to provide an education for students attending Berkeley; and students, as voluntary members of the Berkeley community, also implicitly agree to definite obligations toward the College and the institution. Perhaps this notion of mutual obligations is very obvious. I found, however, that it does provide a good framework for my vision for the next few years, and I therefore adopted it as the foundation of my message to you here today.

First a necessary and perhaps obvious caveat. The obligations of which I am going to speak do not exhaust those of the institution or of the student. The campus, for example, has the obligation to hire a first-rate faculty and to make certain that all instructors are performing at high levels. These obligations are important, but they are met through a combination of efforts on the part of the individual departments, colleges, and schools, the Budget Committee, the Academic Personnel Office, the Committee on Teaching, the GSI Training and Resource Center, the Office of Educational Development, and several other programs on campus. Increasingly in the past few decades the campus has felt a responsibility toward other aspects of students' lives: in the area of housing and dining, in health care, in recreation, in assistance in the form of tutoring and extra help, in entertainment. These
are areas that may be important, but they lie outside of my charge or are only tangentially related to what we do in the undergraduate division, and I leave it to others to discuss and to fulfill these obligations.

Students, for their part, are called upon to do certain things as students: for example, to obey certain rules and regulations pertaining to conduct, or to paying their bills and fees in a timely fashion. But once again, these sorts of obligations are attended to by other offices on campus.

College Obligations Toward Students.

Let me begin then with the obligations towards students that are related to my activities in the Undergraduate Division. I believe all of our obligations can be grouped under the general rubric of access. This access can be divided into several kinds: we need to maintain student access to majors, access to the courses they need to progress through these programs, access to faculty, and access to the kinds of courses required for excellence in a liberal arts education.

Access to Majors. The College faces challenges in access to certain majors. Since, in contrast to other colleges, both on campus and on other campuses, we do not accept students into a major when they are admitted, the process of choosing a major is left up to the student. We find now that a certain small number of majors have too many students for the faculty of that unit to accommodate. For this reason these programs have applied to the Letters and Science Executive Committee for caps, and in six cases this committee has granted caps or numerical restrictions on the number of majors.

As part of its recent expansion, the campus has made additional resources available to departments and programs with capped majors. In exchange for resources the units are supposed to increase the number of majors they admit. This procedure is not an exact science, and I find that it is often difficult to ascertain what the cap is or was, how the cap is maintained, and by how much it should be increased. One of the tasks I am undertaking is to get a handle on the capped majors, to make certain that the caps are administered in an equitable fashion, and to see to it that departments uphold their obligation to increase the cap once they have received new resources.

I am also trying other avenues to relieve the pressure of the capped majors. There are departments or schools among the professional schools and colleges that would like to have an undergraduate student population, or at least the student credit hours and headcount that go along with an undergraduate program, but do not or cannot admit their own students. I am encouraging these units to come forward with majors that can be made available to students in Letters and Science, especially in those cases where the new majors offer the potential to siphon students away from a capped major. Public Health is a new major that may accomplish this goal; the L&S Executive Committee just recently approved a major in IEOR that may relieve pressure in economics; and CNR has proposed two new majors that could provide relief for departments in the College.

Access to Courses. The Undergraduate Division currently monitors impacted courses and is particularly concerned about gateway courses, that is, courses that are required for two or more majors. Monitoring these courses gives us an indication of where the College must place additional resources so that students can obtain the courses they need. We have been keeping data on impacted courses at the lower and upper division for the past few years, so that we are able to see whether there are any trends, and whether resources have contributed to a reduction in excess demand. Securing student access to the courses they need, when they need them, is an important dimension of our obligation to make the educational process successful and efficient.
We also deal with special issues surrounding Reading and Composition. In the College Writing Program, administered by the Undergraduate Division, we teach approximately one-third of the first-semester requirement in reading and composition. Along with the Dean of Arts and Humanities, we have been thinking of ways to offer the appropriate number of reading and composition sections each term, and to secure appropriate funding from the campus for these courses, which are populated by students from across the campus. One of my hopes for the next few years is to come up with a method of managing the reading and composition courses that is more rational than the current system. Indeed, to call it a "system" is perhaps to exaggerate the planning that goes into these courses. Currently R&C courses are offered through departments based on internal needs and the internal availability of GSIs to teach. The number of courses taught, and the type of courses taught, whether they are 1A or 1B courses, will not necessarily match the needs of the campus, since there is no active oversight of the R&C requirement. Clearly we in the College can do better, and I will be working with the Dean of Arts and Humanities to try to established a more centralized, but still flexible and responsive solution to this problem.

Access to faculty. One of the most daunting challenges on the Berkeley campus is how to bring faculty and students together in productive and meaningful relationships. Obviously faculty teach courses, and students are in attendance at these courses. But because of Berkeley's size, students often lament B or used to lament B that they do not have direct contact with faculty. Faculty, for their part, are frequently discontent that their only exposure to undergraduates comes in a large, impersonal lecture-hall setting.

Several programs currently in the division, which we have every intention of continuing and expanding, are designed to enhance faculty-student interaction. Most of you know about our efforts in this area. Chief among these is the freshman seminar program. It began in 1992 and was immediately a resounding success, largely because the campus issued quotas that units had to fulfill. When the program foundered a bit in the mid 1990s, it was reinvigorated by offering faculty modest research grants for their voluntary participation. Since 1999 the campus has offered on average more than 200 seminars per year with student enrollment in those years averaging over 3000 students. More than 60 departments across the campus regularly participate in the program. Our goal is to maintain this degree of participation, or perhaps increase it marginally so that we can be certain that every freshman entering Berkeley can participate in a low-enrollment seminar in the first year of studies.

Our other marquee program designed to bring faculty and students together is the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP). As most of you know, students enrolled in this program conduct research on a project selected by a member of the Berkeley faculty; the student receives academic credit; the faculty member receives a small research stipend to support the research in addition to, of course, assistance on his or her research. This program has been in existence at Berkeley for a little over a decade and continues to expand: from 214 student participants under 84 faculty members in its first year to over 1000 student participants and close to 200 faculty sponsors last year.

As part of our continuing obligation to students to foster contact with ladder faculty on the campus, we will, of course, actively promote freshman seminars and URAP. But we are also endeavoring his year to encourage interest in a relatively new program: sophomore seminars. We had a pilot program with sophomore seminars the past two years, and we have now concluded that they should be conceived as a low-enrollment seminar in the second year of study. In this sense they will extend the tradition of freshman seminars. Faculty will receive a modest research grant as a token of appreciation for their overload teaching, as they do in the Freshman Seminar Program. But in the sophomore seminars faculty
members may insist on prerequisites. We also expect that faculty members will encounter more experienced and more mature students in these courses, and that in many cases the topic will give some insight into the research and intellectual activity contained in the program. We have recently sent out letters to chairs and faculty announcing this campus program, and we are hoping with the sophomore seminars to provide an additional opportunity for students to interact in a pocket of intimacy with faculty.

Access to the kinds of courses required for excellence in a liberal arts education. As a liberal arts college, perhaps our greatest obligation to our students is to provide courses for them that will constitute a well-rounded and broad education. We do this through our breadth requirement. We recognize that one facet of a student's education is to gain detailed knowledge in a single field of endeavor, but that acquaintance with the various ways in which human beings have examined the world around them and their own history is essential for future leaders of our communities, our state, and our nation.

The current seven-course breadth requirement was formulated in the early 1990s, and immediately thereafter departments were asked which of their courses could be used to satisfy individual requirements. We now have lists of courses from departments that may be used to fulfill the requirement, but since the early 1990s the College has neither encouraged development of new courses to satisfy the requirement, nor sought to distinguish especially worthy courses that would fulfill the spirit of the requirement. As a result, students have satisfied the individual requirements by enrolling in courses developed within a discipline and designed usually as an introduction to that discipline.

Although there is nothing wrong with these lists of courses, I do not believe that we are fulfilling our obligation towards students when we institute a requirement and do not undertake any curriculum development for courses that will satisfy the requirement. I am not entirely opposed to the lists of courses that satisfy breadth. These courses, offered by departments within the context of disciplinary majors, are adequate for satisfying the breadth requirement, even if they were developed with other goals in mind. We should recognize, however, that most students currently treat the breadth requirement as a nuisance or a hurdle, not as an opportunity for learning, and certainly not as the essence of their liberal arts education. There is clearly something wrong when the essence of a liberal arts education is regarded as something on a check-off list.

We can and should do better. I believe we should attract the best teachers in the College, and the best teachers across the campus, to contribute to courses that will be dedicated to providing students with breadth courses that truly merit that designation. I would like to develop a program of Teaching Excellence in the Liberal Arts that would be designed to provide the foundation of a liberal arts education. The courses I envision are broader, more encompassing, richer, and more interesting; they take topics that don't necessarily fit in a departmental structure, topics that allow students an exposure, not just to a field of study, but to a type of knowledge.

Let me give a few examples of what I mean: It is surely possible to satisfy the Biological Sciences requirement with an introductory course in Biology. But might it not be more useful to a greater number of students to have the chance to take a course on environmental literacy, in which the scientific issues relating to current discussions on the environment are examined, discussed, and debated? A course on Aristotle or David Hume is fine for the philosophy and values requirement (I'm less certain about symbolic logic), but couldn’t we also offer a course that would thematize the ethical dilemmas that we face in the contemporary world, in business, government, politics, and even at the university? Political Science 1 or Sociology 1 may be fine introductions to their respective disciplines, but wouldn’t a
comparative course in the many ways in which we acquire knowledge of our societies be more meaningful to students seeking a broad overview of this breadth area?

I believe this conception of the Letters and Science breadth courses constitutes the core values of a Berkeley education. The essence of a liberal arts education is to promote thinking about important problems and to enable rethinking of stale solutions. The breadth courses I would like to have our campus offer to undergraduates will provide faculty members the freedom to explore topics beyond their own narrow disciplines. And they will provide students with the kind of thought-provoking, broad, and exciting discussions that we owe to them as Berkeley graduates.

Before turning to the obligations students have toward the institution, I would like to mention one other area of obligation we have toward undergraduates: access to advising at the time at which this advice is most needed. Currently I believe our advising office spends too much time dealing with a small number of students who have difficulties of one sort or another. We do not do a good job of assisting students in their two most important tasks in their initial years of college: the transition to the large and sometimes impersonal campus at Berkeley from high school, and the selection of a major. Once we have a new director of advising in place, I would like to explore how the Division can address these areas and perhaps rethink some of the priorities in advising.

**Students' Obligations Toward the College.**

My remarks on students’ obligations are framed by two considerations:
1. Berkeley is able to accept for admission only about one of every four freshman applicants. Most of these applicants are UC eligible, which means the students are in the top eighth of high school graduates in the state. A Berkeley education is therefore a scarce resource. In some sense the campus has a responsibility not only to the students who are accepted and eventually enroll, but also to the state to use this scarce resource efficiently.
2. Students are adults and should be treated accordingly. Grades and medical records of students are appropriately regarded as private and cannot be sent without permission to students' parents. The undergraduate division does not respond to inquiries from parents who want the campus to treat students as minors, except to inform them that their children are now grown up. We recognize that students have the rights and privileges of an adult. Sometimes, however, our practices belie our conviction that we are dealing with an adult population.

I became dean in July of 2003. Since that time, I have been surprised at the climate that we create for students with our policies and regulations. This climate is implicit in our rules and practices, but it is nonetheless discernible. Once a student has been admitted and has chosen to enroll, we create the impression that graduation is almost guaranteed. We make it difficult for students to fail, and only those who are the most refractory will be dismissed without the possibility of readmission. Perhaps more disturbing is that the criteria for readmission fall far below the criteria for admission. While it may be true on occasion that a student fails because the campus has not provided the appropriate assistance and support, we rarely seem to accept that some students, for one reason or another, simply do not belong at Berkeley, at least at this particular point in their lives. With regard to grade points for these students we approve with some regularity retroactive actions that wipe clean failures. We act, in short, like guilty parents who, having neglected their children, give them candy and ice cream as compensation for our
Most students, of course, never need confront the regulations and policies regarding retroactive actions, probation and dismissal, and readmission, since the vast majority of students perform well and graduate with high GPAs. But not infrequently good students are also affected by the atmosphere we create, the sense that obligations are one-sided, and that gaming the system is acceptable practice.

Let me provide a few illustrations of obligations students have toward the College and the campus, and how our rules and regulations tend to encourage something less than the fulfillment of these obligations.

**Timely Progress Toward a Degree.** The time-to-degree has decreased for Berkeley students over the past decade; we are doing a better job of having students graduate more expeditiously than we have in the recent past. We still find too many instances, however, of students taking longer than four years to achieve a degree. I recognize that four years is not a magic number, that it is somewhat arbitrary as a term of study. But it is something of a national norm, and certainly our major competitors, most of which are private schools, have much greater success in graduating students in four years than we do. Our four-year graduate rate is somewhere between 50% and 55%, and ranks below several public institutions, as well as far below the privates who are our peers. Our five-year graduate rate shoots up to around 80%, and our six-year rate is over 80%. Many students are taking longer than four years to graduate, despite the regularized summer sessions we have offered the past three years, and despite the large number of Advanced Placement credits an increasingly large number of students bring with them.

I believe that most students should be obliged to graduate in four years. They incur this obligation so that the university can provide education for the maximum number of students. The institution, of course, has the obligation to make four-year graduation possible by providing the type of access I have just described. But students in accepting admission to Berkeley should be informed upon enrollment of the expectation of the campus that they proceed toward the degree in a timely fashion, and policies should be developed and implemented that would make a four-year graduation the norm for the vast majority of our students. One of my goals as dean is to make the four-year degree possible, and to see to it that students graduate in four years in greater numbers than they currently do.

**Study lists and the drop date.** Regulation 801 of the Berkeley Division, which pertains to the College of Letters and Science, states that "withdrawal from, or neglect of, any course entered on the study-list, or a change in program without formal permission of the Dean of the College renders the student liable to enforced withdrawal from the University, or other appropriate disciplinary action." As far as I know, no dean in recent memory has every acted in a punitive fashion on the basis of this regulation.

But there is good reason for it to exist since it appears to address a problem I detect in the current practices with regard to dropping courses late in the term. As you probably know, the history of the drop date has been a rather strange affair. Under the quarter system the drop deadline was in the third week; it moved to the fifth week in 1973, and when we converted to the semester system in 1983, it stayed there. It went to the eighth week in 1991 and then to the last day of classes in 1996. Since 2002 the drop date has returned to the eighth week. Students at the time were very much against the new drop date, and they are bound to oppose pushing it to earlier in the semester.

But students have an obligation to the campus, and to their fellow students, to establish study lists as early as possible and to maintain enrollment in the courses for which they have registered. The late drop date leads to several phenomena that are deleterious to Berkeley. In the first place, it wastes resources; in the first half of a course student occupy seats in lecture halls and sections, use facilities, and have
assignments graded. When they then drop the course, this instructional effort has been squandered. Students also rob fellow students of places in impacted courses: I checked a course from last term that was oversubscribed on the first day, but by the eighth week had over 75 seats available. This means that 75 students who could have taken the course, and who wanted to take the course, perhaps who needed the course for their prospective major, were denied access because of students who did not drop their names from the rolls in time for students to add the course. Since students cannot drop through Tele-BEARS after the third week, the late drop date also incurs costs to advisors in the College and in departments who have to process these drops themselves. We also have students who game the system: since students on financial aid must be taking a full load of courses at week 5, some students choose to drop between the fifth and the eighth week in order to collect financial aid. Students, of course, embrace the late drop deadline because it gives them the opportunity to see the grades on their midterm examinations; they can then decide whether to remain in the course or abandon it, perhaps enrolling in it in another term. But from the College's perspective this popular modus operandi amounts to little more than gaming the system to produce the highest possible GPA.

For all these reasons I believe the drop deadline should be pushed back to a date earlier in the term. I am currently consulting with various offices on what that date should be, and how we can establish a date that will enable us to use university resources efficiently while providing students the flexibility to gain access to courses they need.

**Treat the University with Respect.** Students do not like being disrespected; I don't blame them for that. But the campus also merits respect from students. I have come into contact with several dozen cases over the past seven months where students fail to report that they have dropped a course, withdrawn from school for the term, or taken some other action that is crucial to their career as a student. At a later date the student then requests of the College that this neglect be ignored and that the slate be wiped clean. In my view students have an obligation to take care of matters pertaining to their studies in the same fashion that people with jobs have an obligation to inform employers. If one of my advising staff does not come to work, and a year later finally shows up and inquires about reemployment, the university does not simply wipe the record clean and welcome that employee back. Yet students are regularly treated in that fashion.

The fact that some students (fortunately they are in the great minority) believe they can ignore their obligations to the university with impunity, and that policies and regulations of the College and the campus enable or even encourage students to behave in this fashion tells me that we are doing something wrong. Perhaps we should lay out clearly for all students what we consider to be their obligations with regard to policies and regulations. And certainly we should revise our policies and regulations so that they encourage responsible behavior.

The institution has many obligations to students, and in these times of budgetary distress it is often difficult to fulfill them. We owe it to the students, the campus, and the public that we continue to work on issues of access to majors, to courses, to regular faculty members, to a substantive liberal arts education, and to appropriate advising. But by the same token students owe us behavior that aids us in using our resources efficiently, that is considerate of fellow students, and that allows as many potential and qualified students as possible to enjoy an education at the finest public university anywhere in the world.

My vision as dean is thus one of mutual obligations. Over the next few years I will work hard to fulfill the obligations I believe we have toward the fine students who come to campus, and I will also endeavor to clarify for them by direct communication and by changes to our rules and policies, what
their obligations are toward the institution. Obligations of the type I have discussed are ongoing, while the tenure of deans is finite. I hope, however, that by the time I step down from the deanship I will have contributed to a more effective use of university and College resources, but also to an improvement in the educational process, to creative courses and programs, and to increased faculty-student interaction. I also hope that I can count on you to assist me in my efforts.

Thank you for your kind attention.

This presentation was followed by a discussion. A webcast of the complete event is available at the web address below.