

# Beyond Baldrige: Extending the Political Model of Higher Education Organization and Governance

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*This article presents a case study of organizational decision making in higher education through an analysis of the contest over affirmative action at the University of California. It presents an overview of the development of the prevailing model of the politics of higher education, J. Victor Baldrige's interest-articulation framework, and discusses the evolution of the study of the politics of higher education organizations. The findings from this case suggest that contemporary models for understanding the political dynamics of postsecondary governance and decision making will be more effective if they extend the interest-articulation framework to include positive theories of institutions and State theoretical perspectives.*

**Keywords:** *politics; decision making; affirmative action*

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING case of organizational decision making for a public university system of nine campuses: A proposal is put before the system's governing board to end a long-standing policy. Accept for the moment that the policy is widely considered to be mandated by the state constitution, that it is seen as a key component of organizational culture throughout the university system, central to the system's mission, and an important symbol of institutional progress. The policy is publicly supported by the system president, each of the nine campus chancellors, each of the nine campus academic

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senates, each of the nine campus student associations, the systemwide alumni association, and all of the system's major staff and labor organizations. Given the prevailing understandings of organizational decision making in higher education, what are the prospects for terminating this policy at the governing board level?

The answer is, quite good. The policy contest was the struggle over affirmative action; the system is the University of California (UC); and affirmative action was eliminated in admissions, contracting, and hiring by vote of the Regents of the UC in July 1995. Given the context, it is not surprising that the decision came as a shock to many participants and observers.<sup>1</sup> One of the more enduring challenges in higher education research has been the effort to understand the politics of postsecondary organizational behavior. Although research on other types of organizations has benefited for nearly three decades from emerging models of institutional behavior based in political science (Weingast & Marshall, 1988; Wilson, 1973) and economics (Arrow, 1974; Stigler, 1971; Williamson, 1985), until quite recently, efforts to understand university organization and governance have relied on multidimensional models (MDMs) that have little grounding in political or economic theory (Berger & Milem, 2000; Pusser, 2001).

This gap in the research agenda can be traced to a number of causes. Foremost, universities are complex systems with myriad interests that do not lend themselves to the rational modeling found in the new economics of organizations. Furthermore, given collegial traditions favoring shared governance and consensus, it has been difficult to establish the individual preferences fundamental to modeling in political science.

However, just as Graham Allison's landmark case study of the Cuban missile crisis led to new understandings of organizational decision making under crisis, the bitter and divisive contests over public university policy that marked the end of the 20th century present an opportunity to revise our existing models for understanding these issues in higher education (Pusser, 2001). This research reconsiders the utility of the political frame of MDMs of organizational behavior in higher education on the basis of a longitudinal case study of one of the more prolonged and contentious policy disputes in higher education in the United States, the struggle over affirmative action at the UC.

The findings from this case suggest that the political frame of MDMs is insufficient to explain contested decision-making processes. The political frame is lacking on five basic grounds: (a) Decision making and organizational processes are seen as fundamentally endogenous processes, (b) there is little attention to the role of public institutions as both sites of contest and instruments in broader political economic struggles, (c) there is little attention to the dynamics of external interest articulation or the structural politics

of higher education governance and decision making, (d) there is little attention to the role of the administrative hierarchy as an interest group in its own right, and (e) the political frame assumes an essentially pluralist<sup>2</sup> decision-making context.

#### THE PREVAILING MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The MDM of organizational behavior is one of the fundamental analytical frameworks in higher education research (Bensimon, 1989; Berger & Milem, 2000). The model varies somewhat in the number of dimensions incorporated, ranging from Baldrige's (1971) original three dimensions (bureaucratic, collegial, and political) through Bolman and Deal's (1984, 1997) four-cornered frame (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) to Birnbaum's (1988) five dimensions (bureaucratic, collegial, political, anarchical, and cybernetic). What these models have in common is that each iteration has incorporated the political dimension developed by J. Victor Baldrige. The political dimension has been cited as both the most useful element of MDMs for contemporary research (Berger & Milem, 2000) and as the framework most in need of revision (Pusser & Ordorika, 2001). To understand the influence of the political dimension, it is useful to briefly review the other prominent elements of the models.

#### THE BUREAUCRATIC DIMENSION

The bureaucratic dimension is essentially the rational, goal-driven model developed in the work of Max Weber (1947). The central elements of the Weberian bureaucratic frame are an efficient organizational process; formal, hierarchical administrative structures; well-delineated institutional rules; and a similarly well-defined division of labor. The bureaucratic frame relies on a clear distinction between personal and institutional property rights, the centrality of credentials and expertise in determining institutional hierarchies, and a focus on merit as a source of organizational legitimacy (Bush, 1995; Weber, 1947). Organizational decision making is characterized as a process of top-down, rational deliberation that leads to stability and legitimate administrative control (Mintzberg, 1991; Scott, 1992).

#### THE COLLEGIAL DIMENSION

Within the collegial dimension, organizations are viewed as entities based on collective action and widely shared values. Decision making is seen as a

participatory, pluralist, and democratic process within a collegium or community of scholars (Bush, 1995; Millet, 1962). Here goals are shaped by collective deliberation, action is guided by consensus, and power and decision making are shared throughout the organization (Bensimon, 1989). In the collegial frame, conflict is a form of collegial dysfunction, and Baldrige (1971) incorporated a number of elements of the collegial dimension in his depiction of interest articulation in higher education.

### THE SYMBOLIC DIMENSION

The symbolic dimension stresses informal authority, with shared networks of norms, beliefs, meanings, and cultural understandings key to shaping organizational structures and processes (Clark, 1972; Cohen & March, 1974; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Here organizational decisions emerge in response to social and cultural demands for conformity to prevailing values and sources of legitimacy, as under conditions of considerable uncertainty, organizational actors rely on symbolic action to increase institutional confidence and stability (Bensimon, 1989). What people believe is legitimate organizational behavior binds the institution, in this perspective, as surely as any rational decisions handed down through a hierarchical structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

### THE POLITICAL FRAME

The political dimension of the MDMs has its origin in the work of the sociologist J. Victor Baldrige (1971; see also Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, & Riley, 1978). In *Power and Conflict in the University*, a case study of organizational conflict at New York University in the late 1960s, he suggested that complex organizations could be considered political systems. His interest-articulation model, drawing on the work of the sociologist Talcott Parsons (1960), was based in conflict theory (Dahrendorf, 1959) and community action studies (Dahl, 1966). Baldrige depicted the organizational decision-making process as one driven by "authorities" who make decisions for the whole, and "partisans" within the organization who are affected by the decisions (p. 136).

Although Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) would later suggest that organizational decisions emerged from organizational structure, Baldrige (1971) emphasized organizational process, the activities of institutional subgroups, internal interests, coalition building, and bargaining. These activities take place in a pluralistic decision-making context, where administrative leaders serve as *boundary spanners*, key actors who mediate, or articulate, between internal and external constituencies.

In subsequent work (Baldrige et al., 1978; Riley & Baldrige, 1977), Baldrige presented what he termed a “revised political model: an environmental and structuralist approach” (Baldrige et al., 1978, p. 41). The revised model turned more attention to external context, internal agenda control, interest groups, and legitimate authority in the higher education decision-making process. In this subsequent work, higher education organizational decision making under the political frame was still seen as a largely endogenous process. That is, although environmental factors shape decision context, and interest groups weigh in, the articulation and mediation of demands remains an internal, administrative process (Baldrige, 1971; Baldrige et al., 1978; Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Bolman and Deal (1984, 1997) further revised the political aspect of their MDM over time to more fully incorporate exogenous actors and conflicts. Although limited considerations of power and resource dependence (Hardy, 1990; Millet, 1984; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) have been added to the political dimension over time, it retains Baldrige’s (1971) original conceptualization of interest articulation, mediation, and internal interest group action as the essential variables in political behavior in postsecondary organizations. As a result, there is little that a contemporary political theorist would recognize in the political model for research on higher education organizations. This paradox can be traced to the evolution of the study of organizations.

#### THE DIVISION OF POLITICAL THEORY AND THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONS

For nearly half a century, organizations and politics have been separate arenas in the study of public institutions. Research on administration, organization, and leadership emerged as the central concern of public administration, whereas political scientists focused on electoral politics and bureaucracy (Moe, 1991).

During the past two decades, work in political science and economics has led to the development of positive theories of institutions (PTI) that have been widely used to study public organizations as sites of contest in the wider political economy (Dixit, 1996; McCubbins, Noll, & Weingast, 1987; Moe, 1991, 1996). From initial research on legislatures, regulatory agencies, and the nature of the bureaucracy, this work has been applied to elementary-secondary education (Chubb & Moe, 1990) and, more recently, to postsecondary institutions (Masten, 1995; McLendon, in press; Pusser, 2001; Youn & Arnold, 1997).

Unlike Baldrige’s (1971) early work and the subsequent application of the political dimension of MDMs in higher education research, PTI moves

beyond the analysis of organizational decision making as an endogenous process, as it suggests that external influences and interests benefit from, and endeavor to influence, organizational structures and policies. The central elements of efforts to gain influence over political institutions include efforts to control the agenda for organizational activity (Kingdon, 1984), *ex ante* design of institutional governance structures (Hammond & Hill, 1993; Weingast & Marshall, 1988), personal and formal relationships between institutional governors and external interests (M. D. Parsons, 1997), and efforts to control the allocation of institutional costs and benefits (Wilson, 1989).

Initial applications of PTI to postsecondary organization and governance have relied primarily on aspects of PTI drawn from economics, including the role of contracting and transactions costs in shaping organizational structures. This research has focused on efforts to build institutional structures, such as the tenure system, that help privilege gains and enforce bargains (Masten, 1995; McCormick & Meiners, 1988; Toma, 1986). Efforts to extend the political model in higher education will rely more directly on political theoretical elements of PTI, and other political theories, to conceptualize postsecondary organizations as political institutions and as sites of broader political economic contest (Pusser & Ordorika, 2001).

#### PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Political institutions are those entities that control significant public resources; that have the authority to allocate public costs and benefits; that implement policies with significant political salience, such as conditions of labor or standards of credentialing; and that stand as particularly visible sites of public contest. A number of researchers have argued that these conditions describe public higher education institutions in the United States (Pusser, 2000; Rhoades, 1992; Slaughter, 1990). Ordorika (in press) has argued that higher education is a fundamental public good and that the structuring of institutions and the institutional policy-formation process should be seen as part of a larger contest for the utility of that good. A primary goal of this research is to evaluate the degree to which contemporary public universities can be seen as political institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Another significant attribute of PTI models is that positive theories are grounded in pluralist perspectives on the governance of public institutions (Moe, 1991; Weingast & Marshall, 1988). A pluralist political framework assumes that a political system enables legitimate, representative expression of minority and majority preferences. PTI and interest-articulation models

both depend on pluralist decision processes, and it is a significant limitation on their ultimate utility. There are many constituencies in higher education and other public institutions that do not necessarily have what they perceive as meaningful access to a given decision process. How their interests are expressed and how they influence policy contests cannot be entirely understood within a positive theoretical or interest-articulation framework. Contest and resistance beyond the pluralist decision-making process has been the subject of considerable research on the state and education, although little of that work has addressed higher education.

#### THEORIES OF THE STATE AND HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

A significant challenge to understanding the politics of higher education organization and governance is that the state is virtually absent from research on postsecondary institutions. Wirt and Kirst (1972) pointed three decades ago to the separation of the study of the state and the study of education, and little has changed since then. Research in higher education has generally conceptualized the university as distinct from the state and the state as a set of forces operating independent of higher education institutions (Rhoades, 1992). This view of the role of higher education in a state context has traditionally limited the range of understandings available to researchers in higher education.

More recently, Sheila Slaughter (1988) has examined the interdependence of higher education and the state during the past five decades. Slaughter built on Carnoy and Levin's (1985) contention that the educational system is a complex and contradictory site of contest, capable of reducing inequality or of increasing social stratification.

The analysis of this case brings to bear state theoretical perspectives, with its attention to the ways in which actions and interests beyond the institution and outside of the pluralist framework shape the organization and governance of universities, in an effort to extend the reach of MDMs and the PTI perspective on public institutions.

#### THE CONTEST OVER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

In July 1995, after a year of intensely public organizational contest, the Regents of the UC voted 14 to 10 to end the use of "race, religion, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin as a criterion for admission to the University"<sup>4</sup> and 15 to 10 to eliminate those criteria for university hiring and contracting. Their

votes were cast at the conclusion of a 14-hour meeting attended by more than 1,000 people, after being twice interrupted by bomb threats.

The regents' votes constituted an unprecedented repudiation of three decades of affirmative action policy at the UC and created a new historical legacy for the UC, as the first prominent public university to eliminate the use of affirmative action in admission and employment practices. The decision was given extra symbolic force as it dramatically reshaped a UC legacy that had been defined by its role as a defender of affirmative action in the 1978 United States Supreme Court ruling in *U.C. Regents v. Bakke*. It was also a decision with political dynamics that could not easily be explained using an interest-articulation framework.

The UC's struggle over affirmative action policy provides a particularly useful case for research on contemporary organizational decision making for three primary reasons: (a) In the contemporary era, the UC has been one of the nation's most visible and contested arenas of public higher education policy; (b) the national debate on race, in which affirmative action policies play a central role, has become increasingly critical in national electoral and interest group contests (Tolbert & Hero, 1996); and (c) the bitter divide between factions contesting this policy led to a public declaration of individual regents' preferences rarely seen in postsecondary education.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

Two fundamental strands of data collection were used in this research. The first consisted of building a historical record of the contest over affirmative action at the UC, using more than 2,000 pages of documents from individual campuses, the UC Office of the President and the UC Office of the Secretary of the Regents. These documents included minutes of regents meetings; public correspondence; personal letters, notes, and memoranda obtained from individual regents; and UC Office of the President briefing materials. These data were supplemented by historical documents including public records, analyses, and policy papers addressing the development of access and affirmative action policies at the university since its founding and such state-level data as budget documents and gubernatorial reports and legislative committee transcripts.

The second phase of data collection centered on semistructured interviews with actors central to the contest. These included regents, UC system and campus leaders, state political leaders, student and staff representatives, alumni representatives to the Board of Regents, faculty senate representatives, community activists, and state coordinating board authorities.<sup>5</sup>



## RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

A series of propositions was constructed prior to data collection to examine the utility of a broader political framework for understanding this case. Three are presented here as particularly useful for reconsidering the political model of higher education organization and governance.

*Proposition 1: The instrumental political value of the university.* Efforts at interest articulation by the administrative leadership will have limited effectiveness if the policy contest has utility in broader state and national political contests. If there is an instrumental political value in the outcome of the policy contest, external political actors, interest groups, and coalitions will resist administrative efforts to mediate the contest.

*Proposition 2: Exogenous efforts to structure the university decision process.* Where there is instrumental political value in contests over public university policy, the outcome of the policy contest will be significantly shaped by the long-term exogenous political dynamic of structuring the decision-making board.

*Proposition 3: The limits of pluralism and the role of the state.* The efforts of interest groups and actors, who do not perceive that they have direct or significant representation in the governance process, or who feel their representation is not legitimate, will shape the policy contest. If the university is situated as a political institution in a broader contest over state efforts to redress inequality, the issue of higher education as a site of contest over the appropriate redress for inequity will emerge as central to the decision process.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data collected for this case were coded for a number of key elements from Baldrige's (1971) interest-articulation framework, positive theoretical approaches to institutional structure and process, and state theoretical propositions. Documents and interview data were examined for evidence of the efficacy of institutional efforts to articulate and mediate disparate interests, the perception of the use of the university as an instrument in a broader political struggle, and for signs of sustained partisan efforts to structure the decision-making board. Data were further analyzed for evidence of a contest between internal and external interests for control of the decision-making agenda, indications of limits on the efficacy of bureaucratic expertise, efforts by actors or interests who did not see themselves as represented in a pluralist process, and for the perception of the university as a site for the redress of

historical inequality. The analysis of these data point to a number of key factors that shaped the regents' decision and that offer insights into the original propositions.

*Proposition 1: The Instrumental Political Value of the University*

In its earliest stages, the contest unfolded in ways that were in keeping with an interest-articulation model. The process began with a request by Regent Ward Connerly for the university to reevaluate its admissions and hiring procedures. UC President Jack Peltason responded by committing the Office of the President to a major review of existing policy and to preparing recommendations for policy revisions, where appropriate.

As the institutional deliberation proceeded, the dynamic shifted from an internal review to a far more extensive and public challenge. It was the belief of many of those interviewed for this research that some of the regents calling for a review of affirmative action had a broader agenda. In that view, the challenge to affirmative action at the institutional level was part of an effort to use the university as an instrument in a broader state and national political effort. The broader effort was intended to help place an initiative to end affirmative action in California on the state ballot (the eventual Proposition 209) and to assist in efforts to secure the Republican presidential nomination in 1996 for Governor Wilson.<sup>6</sup> That broader struggle would ultimately overwhelm the Office of the President's efforts at interest articulation. The following two quotes from UC regents, both members of the state Republican leadership, point to the broader contest in which the University was enmeshed.<sup>7</sup>

Had Pete [Wilson] not been involved, had the governor not been involved, we would have never passed the resolution. The governor got involved because he was running for president. The governor used my university as a forum to run for president. (William T. Bagley, personal communication, June 1, 1998)

Regent Ward Connerly presented a different rationale for the governor's role, as he acknowledged the governor's larger goals:

You know, so, it helped his presidential campaign, but Pete Wilson is the kind who says, "The reason I'm running for office is to lay my values on the line and if you agree with them, fine. If you don't agree with them, well, that's okay, too, but the role of my running for president is to put my positions to the test." That's how you make public policy. So he never had any apology for getting involved and using this to further his own presidential ambitions and when people say, "Oh, you made it a political issue," he says, "What the hell is politics? It's the art of shaping public policy." (Connerly, personal communication, March 27, 1998)

Karl Pister, the Chancellor of UC Santa Cruz at the time of the contest, expressed his belief that the use of the university in broader political contests was increasingly difficult to resist:

My first reaction would be that it's a consequence of a much broader societal phenomenon because if I look beyond higher education and just look at the public education in California, K-12, the degree of political intervention in K through 12 is just astounding today. Witness the State Board of Education's behavior on the math standards, and God knows what's going to happen on the science standards when they come up before the state board. Education, indeed, is part of the larger issue. Our society is often being driven by political design, by which issues make people identify either with left or right, or whatever camps you want to use to explain it. (Pister, personal communication, June 10, 1998)

These and other data from the case demonstrate the difficulty in presuming that an administrative cohort has the authority to effectively mediate a conflict that includes powerful external actors. Nor is it clear that the institutional leadership is even aware of some external challenges to the university. Documents released recently under court order revealed efforts in the early 1960s by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the assistance of then-California Governor Ronald Reagan, to influence UC regents' deliberations over the presidency of Clark Kerr. President Kerr himself was unaware of the extent of external political efforts in that case until the full documentation of the episode was released (Rosenfeld, 2002).

*Proposition 2: Exogenous Efforts to Structure the University Decision Process*

The long-term structuring of the membership of the decision-making board, through gubernatorial appointment and legislative confirmation, emerges as a key element of the policy outcome.<sup>8</sup> At the time of the regents' votes, all but 1 of the 18 appointed members of the board were Republicans, appointed by Republican governors.<sup>9</sup> These regents generally had close ties to the state and national Republican parties and were significant contributors to the governor.<sup>10</sup>

In light of prevailing models of confirmation dynamics (Hammond & Hill, 1993; Pusser, 2001), the unwillingness of Democrats on the Senate Rules Committee to contest gubernatorial appointments to the Board of Regents in the period between 1974 and 1994 raises questions about our understanding of the political constituency of selective public higher education. Despite holding the senate majority for all but a few months of the period from 1972 to 1994, the Democrats neither rejected, nor even

particularly contested, the appointments made by Republican governors. Shortly after the regents' votes, the Democrats began a concerted effort to intervene in the composition of the Regents by opposing nominations put forward by Governor Wilson (see Table 1).

Then-Senate Rules Committee Chair Bill Lockyer described the Democrats' stance this way in explaining Democratic opposition to the reappointment of Regent Tirso del Junco, a leading opponent of UC's affirmative action policies:

Dr. del Junco was a Regent when he chose to be Chair of the California Republican Party, when he chose to sign a lot of questionable attack mail pieces sent against my colleagues. Now, that wasn't somebody who had much regard for the non-political role of Regents. You know, I've had colleagues say to me in the Senate, "I've never met this guy. I don't know him. The only thing I know about him is that when I was running for the Senate, mail landed in my district, attacking me personally that was inaccurate, and it was signed by him as Chair of the Republican Party." (Senate Rules Committee, State of California, 1997, p. 85)<sup>11</sup>

Given the election in 1998 of Governor Gray Davis, a Democrat, both the appointment and confirmation of regents is now controlled by the governor's party. However, given the heightened awareness of the political utility of board votes, it is likely that gubernatorial appointments to the board will again be contested if the state returns to divided governance.

*Proposition 3: The Limits of Pluralism and the Role of the State*

The analysis of the data from this case also supports the contention that significant contest takes place outside of the pluralist frame. As student coalitions organized to preserve affirmative action, they expressed an increasing disenfranchisement from the board and the administration. Students also questioned their own lack of direct representation under a decision-making structure that gave students 1 of the 26 votes on the board. UC staff organizations, although prominent in public demonstrations and institutional forums, had no voting representative on the Board of Regents.

The Reverend Jesse Jackson's speech to the regents on the day of their votes and his association with the civil rights and voting rights movements of the 1960s raised significant challenges to the legitimacy of the regents' decision-making process. In his remarks, Jackson directly challenged the composition of the board, at one point reading from a list of campaign contributions made by individual regents to Governor Wilson. He likened the process to earlier eras of African American disenfranchisement from predominantly White institutions.

Table 1  
*Confirmation Dynamics for University of California Regents (1972-2002)*

<i>Governor</i>	<i>Governor's Party</i>	<i>Senate Majority</i>	<i>Nominees</i>	<i>Party of Nominees</i>		<i>Confirmation Outcome</i>		
				<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Pending</i>
R. Reagan (1967-1974) <sup>a</sup>	Republican	Democrat	2	0	2	2	0	0
J. Brown (1975-1982)	Democrat	Democrat	13	13	0	13	0	0
G. Deukmejian (1983-1990)	Republican	Democrat	18	1	17	18	0	0
P. Wilson (1991-1998)	Republican	Democrat	15	0	15	9	6	0
G. Davis (1999 to present)	Democrat	Democrat	9	9	0	7	0	2
Total			57	23	34	49	6	2

*Source.* Senate Rules Committee, State of California, 1997.

*Note.* Nominees include nominations and renominations.

a. Only Reagan nominations made after passage of Measure 5 are tabulated.

We now can vote, but we couldn't always vote. And now, know that you can have the right to vote, but if the lines are drawn funny, gerrymandering, annexation, your vote can be diminished. (University of California Office of the Secretary of the Regents, 1995b)

Although student protest over the legitimacy of the decision-making process was seen as a significant force by many actors in the contest, it is not clear that it produced votes to preserve affirmative action. Resistance efforts attributed to student demonstrators, such as disrupting meetings and, in particular, a protest outside of Regent Connerly's home, solidified support for Regent Connerly and Governor Wilson with some conservative regents. Furthermore, Student Regent Ed Gomez argued that it was students' perception of their lack of representation and support that compelled them to invite Reverend Jackson to come before the board to speak on the students' behalf. According to UC Academic Council Co-Chair Daniel Simmons, that invitation proved to be a turning point in the contest.

I felt during the year, all during the year, that we had enough votes on the Board to put it off. And we did, I think, until the day Jesse Jackson announced he was coming to California. It was Jesse Jackson who lost the issue! Because his announcement put the thing at a much higher level in terms of national politics. Now you had the opportunity for debate over the issue between two people ostensibly running for president of the United States. (Simmons, personal communication, April 21, 1998)

There was agreement from a number of students that protest and resistance did increase student linkages and connections across campuses. Increased student activism was further seen as an important factor in resistance to gubernatorial appointments in the months after the regents' votes on affirmative action (Pusser, 2001).

The data from this case also support the utility of a state theoretical standpoint that conceptualizes public higher education institutions as sites of contest over the redress of historical inequities. The issue of redress was raised throughout the contest by supporters and opponents of affirmative action. The feeling of many of those in support of affirmative action was forcefully stated by a UC Irvine student, Nancy Barreda, in testimony before the Board on the day of the votes:

We don't want to pick your fruit, to be your maids, to be your busboys, to do your laundry and tend your gardens. Unfortunately, some of our parents have taken those jobs to give us a better chance. We too are Americans, and it is a shame that we have to fight constantly to remind those in power who seem to ignore that fact. Affirmative action was the first time we were provided access into these institutions. We will not forget

those who sacrificed in the past so that we could have a chance today. We will not stand by while you take away affirmative action, we will not stand by and watch you destroy our right to access. (University of California Office of the Secretary of the Regents, 1995b)

Cheryl Hagen, the chair of the university's largest labor organization, also pointed to the need to address historical inequality in her remarks to the board:

The reasons for racism and sexism are rooted in issues of economics, political power, social order and psychological factors. The question has never been whether or not minorities and women should be accepted and treated as equals; it has been a question of whether or not power is to be shared, and on what basis. The issue of power seeps through and permeates all thought when it comes to any movement within our society. There is nothing inherently wrong in the good-old-boy methodology. It works. It is only problematic because for faculty positions and senior staff positions within the University of California, women and minorities have not had the same access. (University of California Office of the Secretary of the Regents, 1995b)

#### EXTENDING THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The contest over affirmative action at the UC offers a significant opportunity to extend our frameworks for understanding the politics of university decision making. The case affirms the utility of aspects of MDMs for understanding postsecondary organizational behavior. The efforts of the bureaucratic hierarchy in the unfolding contest, the collegial approach taken by the university faculty, and the symbolic power of the UC's historical commitment to affirmative action all shaped the outcome to some degree. Yet in this most political of contests, the interest-articulation model at the center of the political dimension of MDMs does little to increase our understanding of the outcome in this case.

The contest over affirmative action at the UC also brought to the fore a paradox in the university's mission: The university faces demands to be both an elite institution and a public institution. Understanding the role of public higher education in broader state efforts to promote equity, and the political dynamics that shape the role of the state, will be central to understanding the future allocation of access, costs, and benefits of higher education.

In Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, the character Mike Campbell is asked how he went bankrupt. He explains that there are two ways one goes bankrupt: slowly, and then all of a sudden. It is a useful construct for thinking about contested decision making in higher education and for extending the

political model of higher education governance. The contest over affirmative action at the UC was decided slowly, through nearly 20 years of political action on gubernatorial appointments to the Board of Regents and legislative confirmation of those appointments and, all of a sudden, by votes of the regents. It was also decided near at hand by the unsuccessful efforts of the UC administration to articulate the various interests weighing in on the contest and at some distance by the efforts of a powerful governor in the state capitol and his political allies across the country.

To the extent that Baldrige's (1971) "authorities" and "partisans" contended over UC policy, the definition of both groups needs to be revisited. The set of authorities that shape binding decisions for public institutions should be expanded beyond the borders of the institution to include a broad array of leaders and interest groups in the democratic political system. It also needs to include community leaders and public figures like Reverend Jackson, who can mobilize individuals and bring resources to bear on a public policy contest. The definition of partisans—those who are bound by decisions shaping the institution—also needs to be extended beyond the institution itself to include the state and national constituency for higher education.

As one example, for nearly 20 years, the Democratic majority in the state senate did not contest the appointments of Republican nominees to the Board of Regents, a group of nominees that included political contributors, activists, and party leaders. Those regents were subsequently positioned to vote on policies with significant consequences for a number of traditionally Democratic constituencies such as the labor unions at the UC and on contested issues such as the nature of university medical research. Further research is needed on legislators' perceptions of the constituency for higher education and on legislative deference in appointments to postsecondary governing boards to more fully understand institutional organization and governance.

Policy transformation in higher education also seems to happen slowly and all of a sudden. Although there are a number of revelations that emerge from case studies of decision making under crisis, crisis offers a unique window into organizational process. It may be a window that best reveals how policies change all of a sudden. A continuing challenge for researchers in higher education is to address the slow change process, the long-term political economic dynamics that structure public institutions and their decision-making procedures.

The findings from this case support the contention that a public university can be seen as a political institution and that public university policies have great salience, visibility, and political value. The political dimension of MDMs of university behavior can be significantly advanced with propositions developed from positive theories of institutions and state theoretical



standpoints. Taken together, these theoretical approaches offer a pathway beyond Baldrige's (1971) interest-articulation model to a more complete understanding of the political dynamics of contemporary higher education.

## NOTES

1. The director of admissions of one of the system's largest campuses expressed the view of many observers when he commented on the day after the votes, "I never thought it would pass" (William J. Villa in *Santa Barbara News Press*, July 22, 1995).

2. *Pluralist* here refers to a system of interest representation in which many groups have access to authority and rights to access and participation in the decision-making process (Carnoy & Levin, 1985).

3. A case can be made that private universities are political institutions as well (Pusser, in press), although here the discussion is confined to public universities.

4. From the text of Regents proposal SP-1, July 20, 1995 (University of California Office of the Secretary of the Regents, 1995a).

5. All interview responses were analyzed and coded according to an index linked to the core analytical categories in the research framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

6. Efforts to place Proposition 209 on the California ballot are detailed in Chavez (1998).

7. These interviews are presented in greater detail in Pusser (2001, in press).

8. The importance of the confirmation dynamic is demonstrated by the voting record in this case. On SP-1, the motion to end affirmative action in University of California admissions, regents appointed by Republican governors voted 13 to 5 to eliminate affirmative action; ex-officio regents voted 5 to 1 in favor of preserving affirmative action (Pusser, 2001).

9. Although trustee political affiliation has not generally been seen as a predictor of trustee voting behavior (cf. Kerr & Gade, 1989), in this case it appears that such variables as political ties, party affiliation, and financial contributions to political causes were good predictors of trustee voting patterns (Pusser, 2001).

10. The appointed regents who voted to end affirmative action included a former state chair of the Republican party, a national fund-raising chair of the Republican party, two former Republican state legislators, a former Republican congressman, and one of the governor's college roommates.

11. This confirmation hearing is related in greater detail in Pusser (2001, and also in press).

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