The all-day UCSD Annual Management Retreat was held in the Hotel del Coronado February 16. The theme for the retreat was Where Are We Going: Vision, Strategic Goals and Purpose.

The keynote speakers were Sandra Smith, Assistant Vice President – Planning and Analysis, Office of the President, UC, and Peter Morrison, Resident Consultant, RAND Corporation. Other speakers spoke about the opportunities that the greatly increased numbers of UC students would provide the university in terms of new academic programs, more student services and greater staff, faculty and student diversity.

UCSD Chancellor Robert Dynes and Vice Chancellor James Langley made closing statements.

Robert Dynes, chancellor of UCSD, concluded the retreat with a talk on the necessity of dealing with change by facing it together in an atmosphere that respects the value of diversity.

"Let me start off by thanking all of the presenters and all the people who organized this retreat. I have sat here and listened pretty carefully and I've heard some things that are of great value to me. And I will digest them, and integrate them, and when you least expect it you will see the effect of them. I found this retreat enormously valuable today and, as I said at the beginning of the day, getting away for the day to think about these things is extremely, extremely helpful to us. I hope you have all learned something. I hope you have all heard something you didn't know. I hope things have been said which have stimulated thoughts – constructive, creative thoughts – in your own minds.

Everlasting change

"Change. As you probably now know, I kind of like change. Change is exciting, change is stimulating. Not change for change's self, but change to make things better. Change for improvement. Change to address issues that are wrong, and to try to correct them. So UCSD is an agent of change; has been an agent of change from its beginning; and will continue to be an agent of change. I know that when I look around the room I see a lot of agents of change.

Lessons from MP3.com

"Let me tell you a story which just came to mind. It's one of my favorite stories these days, and some of you have probably heard it already, but Jim triggered it when he mentioned the day that he and I went over to MP3.com to visit. It was Friday at noon, it was rap-with-the-CEO time, and the 200 or so employees of MP3.com sat on the floor -- this tells you their age -- sat on the floor, and there was a band up at the front of the room that was playing, and Michael Robertson was talking to the employees. Jim and I
were the only ones wearing ties in the room, we were the only ones over 35, I think. And probably a quarter of those employees were UCSD graduates. Probably 10 percent of them were UCSD dropouts who, I sort of sensed, were fully expecting to come back to UCSD after this rush was over with MP3.com.

"But let me tell you about Michael Robertson. Michael is a UCSD graduate, a cognitive science major, class of '91. His major was cognitive science, his minor was theater arts, and he spent the summers and the year after he graduated, and every moment he could, getting over to the San Diego Supercomputer Center. Now think about this: cognitive science, theatre arts, Supercomputer Center. You've heard a lot today about interdisciplinary research, interdisciplinary education. If that's not interdisciplinary, I don't know what is, and MP3.com came out of that.

*Unique education*

"If you think about that history you can almost see where MP3.com came from. The fact that he's getting sued right now is irrelevant. He is changing. He, and these young kids who are mostly UCSD graduates, are changing one aspect of the world. Parenthetically he said at one point, he said 'I used to be shy,' which I find difficult to believe. 'I used to be shy,' he said, 'but after my theatre courses, after having sung falsetto in front of the class, I have never been shy again.'

"Now that is the kind of education that we cannot compromise on. Here's a young man who is educated, and he knows he was educated at UCSD. He knows that he got a unique education; he wasn't educated at Berkley; he wasn't educated at Harvard; he wasn't educated at Stanford; he couldn't have got that there. He knows he was educated at UCSD and it was because we are agents of change. I am convinced.

*New issues addressed*

"There once was a famous physicist by the name of Einstein, Albert was his first name, and he was teaching a graduate course in physics at Princeton, and he gave a mid-term, take-home exam to his students. And one of the brighter students in the class came up to him and said 'Professor Einstein, these are exactly the same questions that you asked last year.'

And Einstein turned to him with a little glint in his eye and he said, 'same questions but the answers are different.'

"There's a point to this story and it's this: This is the 24th year that we've had these UCSD management-team retreats. This year the answers are different. This year we are addressing an issue; we are facing a future unlike this campus has ever done before. I can imagine that my feeling right now is similar to the feeling that Roger Revelle had when he was first building the campus.
"Change is risky

"Roger Revelle received the charge from the community of San Diego, from the Regents of the University of California, and from the governor of the state of California to build the campus. Now San Diego wasn't the only community that got that charge at that time. There were other campuses that were built. But Roger Revelle took an enormous risk, and probably personally paid for having taken that risk. You will notice that he was not ever chancellor of the University of California, San Diego. So I suspect he paid for the risk that he took. He struck out very far and very deep when he went out and started recruiting people for UCSD.

"I think we are at this stage now. We are looking to the future, and it's not particularly for the faint of heart. I don't believe for one minute that I'm as adventurous as Roger Revelle. I don't have the same vision as Roger Revelle had, but I think that we, all together in this room and in our organizations, have the wherewithal to move this university to be the number one public university in the country. I truly believe it.

"Now if you start thinking about that, you realize that I am talking about us passing by a couple of fairly distinguished universities, one of which is in the University of California system. I agree with Pat Ledden. The next five to 10 years are probably going to be the most exciting era in the history of this great university. And, if it looks like I'm really stoked about that, it's because I am.

"When I look around this room and I see the people who are here, and I know you are ready to go with this, I feel supremely confident that we are going to do something, that we are going to accomplish something, that when we can all look back 10, 15, 20 years from now, we'll look back and say 'Wow, we did it.'

Working together

"Now I will make one comment to you. On the way, I want you to, every once in a while, look at that little plaque that I hope is up in many of your offices, the Principles of Community, because I want to do it that way. I want to do it the right way. And I believe, I believe if you're in this room, I believe that you also want to do it that way. We can make a profound difference to everybody in California and change the country in doing it. So let's go together and, yes, we're going to argue about this and, yes, we're going to fight about it and, yes, there are going to be differences of opinion, but that's what a university is all about. If there were no differences of opinion we might as well be in a corporation somewhere with a CEO who says this is the way it's going to be, and down it goes.

"But if we do this together, if we listen to each other, and we listen to the outside community, I think we can do this and we can do it together.

"I expect that what we've talked about today will appear on the web, probably on my website, and so I hope that this is the beginning of a multilog that goes on with us, this
In his closing remarks, James Langley, vice chancellor for external relations at UCSD and master of ceremonies for the day, spoke of the importance of strategic thinking in the face of change.

"I read an article a few years ago in the Harvard Business Review that talked about the difference between strategic planning and strategic thinking. And the author of that article favored strategic thinking as something that an organization needs to inculcate. His argument was that strategic planning is often so cumbersome, time consuming and political, particularly in large organizations, that by the time you work your way through a formal strategic planning process you have 1) blunted the strategic edge of the thinking and 2) come up with a plan that may be already outdated.

"Now, that is a rather hard-nosed view of strategic planning. I think it certainly is required and worthwhile, but I do like this notion that strategic thinking is something that we should all engage in on a regular basis. I think we've heard a lot of it today. And while I think we need to continue to sharpen our strategic thinking, and to try to be more sensitive and responsive to a number of factors and trends, I also think it is certainly coming together at this institution."

Strategy that respects change

"My favorite definition of strategy includes the idea of internal aspirations being conditioned or informed by external opportunities and obstacles. So not only do we need to think about where we are going, but we need to envision the environment in which we are moving forward for instance, the question of who will support us and a recognition of some of the problems that we'll run into, including resource constraints and then we develop a very clear plan for dealing with all of that.

"Of course, what you have heard today is how the pace of this enormous change that we're going through compounds the complexity of that task. So not only do we need to know the lay of the land, but we also have to recognize that the lay of the land whether it's economic, demographic, sociological is changing so rapidly that one assessment may not hold over a long time.

"So how do we sharpen our strategic thinking, how do we remain both keen on certain aspirations, determined to achieve them, but also recognize that a certain amount of compromise and concession may be necessary along the way?

"I think we can certainly, out of all the activity going on at UCSD, find the themes of our own direction. There are so many foresightful people here at the forefront of their individual fields ... faculty members, administrators and academic leaders. They're all doing interesting work. They are all engaged in very important studies. But there are themes that cut across and run through many disciplines, and I think we need to find those and be able to articulate them to our external audiences. Obviously not everybody
that we want to support UCSD can understand the depth, complexity and range of the place, but I think most people can understand these sort of crosscutting themes and become enthusiastic and supportive as a result.

*Question of resources*

"When we are talking about what we hope to accomplish, the issue of resources comes up over and over and over again and it’s clear, based on the presentation from Sandy Smith, that all available state funds will be directed toward accommodating enrollment growth. There is simply no way around that.

"I think we can look to selective increases in federal funding. Obviously, certain areas will increase, like the National Institutes of Health. It looks like that will be a hot area for awhile while other areas will level off and perhaps decline, and so I think we can look for some selective increases there. But clearly there is very little in federal funding for brick and mortar. Some, but very little over all.

"So, many of the new aspirations, the new hopes of UCSD in the margin of excellence for instance, seem to fall on the shoulders of private donors, if you will. The hope is that private funds will make the difference, and indeed there is the possibility with the enormous amount of wealth being created – that private funds will make a difference. We all believe that. All of us here think that we can do better than we have done, even though we’ve seen significant increases in the recent years.

"You heard our presenters today talking about building closer ties with the community. That was a theme that ran throughout ... partnerships ... deepening involvement ... business and industry ... K through 12. You heard David Bailey say that we can’t live in a vacuum, and indeed that is true as we move forward and try to secure larger amounts of support in whatever form. I think that is a profound observation, that this will require a higher degree of partnering than we’ve ever done before. I think perhaps the real lesson to learn, as we seek out these partnerships, is that we will have to listen and collaborate and concede in order to secure that support and those funds.

*Securing alumni*

"To give you a few examples. Last year we raised $116 million. Out of that $116 million, $2 1/2 million came from alumni. But we are seeing more and more alumni capable of giving seven-figure gifts. And so we are reaching out to them.

Bob Dynes and I have gone out on the road to approach alumni who are capable of making major gifts and they have said "Great! We’re excited by what we hear but you are the first person to have come and see us in 20 or 25 years. That's no slight on the Alumni Association; they don't deal with major donors. But, if you are going to secure a gift from someone it requires a relationship. It requires trust to be in place. So I cite that as an example of how far we have to go to reach out to more and more alumni to deepen these relationships and to build the trust to secure the support that we need.
"Moreover, when we listen to alumni or when we ask them for support, they're going to give that support with strong opinions. Some people like to believe that gifts are gifts and there are no conditions on them. Well, donors do have clear ideas as to where they want to give their money, and even though they may not put restrictions on a gift, they certainly attach some very strong expectations. And so I think as we reach out to our alumni we're going to hear more and more about scholarships, about the quality of student life, and reassurance that we take those things seriously. Alumni are former students. Their identity is going to be largely with what students are trying to achieve. So are we willing to listen? Are we willing to adjust?

High-tech entrepreneurs

"Entrepreneurs. We keep hearing about the "new" wealth, and it's clearly out there. There is an enormous amount of new wealth. Where does it come from? Entrepreneurs. And in what particular area? High tech.

What do you know about the physical plant in the high-tech industries? It's not given a great emphasis. It is lean and mean, it is spare.

And so, again, Bob Dynes and I went to MP3.com to meet Michael Robertson, just to see how he was. We had no ulterior motives. And they had open bays! Michael Robertson was almost an instant billionaire, yet he doesn't have an office. He has a kind of an open cubical that people can drop on at any time, and I don't know, some of the décor looked like a MASH unit to me, but very low-key.

Then you go to these people and say we need to build a building, an elaborate building, maybe, in their eyes, an ornate building and it's a very, very tough sell. And so the question is "Why are you spending that much money? Why do you need walls? Why do you need desks? Why do you need offices?" So even though that new money is there, we're reaching out to people who don't necessarily understand what it is that we're trying to do.

Questions that may be raised

"Obviously, as we reach out to more alumni, we're also reaching out to different ethnic groups and we're hearing more ethnic voices and more concerns about ethnic causes. And again, one has to adjust and adapt. When I listen to what the aspirations of the Office of the President are, I think it will start to beg the question in the minds of many private donors regarding what the role of the state is. 'I thought all along they were supposed to provide the buildings, the residence halls, the core infrastructure for a university. Why are you coming to private donors for that?' And there may be some uneasiness as to where that line begins and ends.

"And if more donors come in and provide more basic infrastructure, they will require more of a voice in the way these things are done. So again, I think you're going to hear people saying 'Let's look afresh at these buildings; why do you need them in the form they need to take.'"
"We have seen at other institutions across the country, and I don't think it will happen here, that as more alumni become involved sometimes they become disaffected from the administration. Alumni organizations are independent organizations. They're separately incorporated, and if you read the Chronicle of Higher Education you will read about the occasional alumni organization that is somehow estranged from the university and it starts to become at odds with the administration of the university. We don't want to let that happen here. We want to be open. We want to be very responsive to those concerns and we want to have a candid dialogue about what we can and cannot accomplish.

The importance of listening

"So I think all of this is by way of saying that, as we seek new forms of support and build new coalitions, we're going to engage in a whole new set of dialogues and we're going to have to justify our case and our direction with greater clarity and greater detail then before. Securing federal funds is much different from securing private funds, because securing private funds is human, it's interactive and, in some cases, idiosyncratic.

"So how do we listen? I think the key to being a strategic thinking institution is to listen. But I also think listening is underpinned – and I like this about UCSD – by a minimum of complacency and smugness. If you're always running scared; if you have high ambitions, but worry if you're going to be able to realize those ambitions, you're going to listen to all potential partners. You're going to be responsive. You're going to minimize your institutional ego and I think you'll keep your ear to the ground.

"But I would also say that we need to continue to improve on the ways that we listen, including the alumni visits that I mentioned earlier. We need to get more and more people on the road interacting with our alumni where they live and work, not asking them to come here. We need to establish as many boards as we can within the community. I am encouraged by the number of deans and directors who have started external boards, but I would like to see many more because, again, a good board can come in and give you an external perspective, can call you up short if you become insensitive to a community concern, and keep a good intellectual ferment going. And so we're going to be working with whoever might be interested in helping us develop external boards with an emphasis on alumni involvement.

"I also think market surveys are extremely important. Win Cox and her team are leading a survey right now. We've hired an outside firm to look at how people perceive UCSD with certain descriptors in mind; and we're testing the notion that UCSD might be considered to be proficient in certain areas and whether or not those areas that we laud ourselves for are shared and understood by external constituents including opinion leaders in the San Diego community.

"I also think that UCSD needs to think about its presence in key locales in this community and other communities. Do we have a strong and sustained physical presence? Have we deployed our senior leaders in logistical ways? And are they out there so that they're intersecting and interacting with the right people and forming strategic alliances that will keep us light on our feet and responsive to emerging trends?
"And then there are feedback mechanisms. One of the recent discussions between the chancellor and vice chancellors had to do with internal communication and how we can better listen, and how we can pick up on trends before they become deep concerns, if not disasters. And so I think that's another key element if we are to maintain a strategic-thinking focus: really being able to listen to people within, because we disgorge how many thousands of people everyday from our community and they go into their own homes and communities. They interact. They're our best ambassadors and, if we don't find a better way of listening to our own faculty, staff and students, then I think we miss an enormous amount of information, and very strategic information.

"So like many of the other speakers here today, I am profoundly optimistic about the future of UCSD. I think our trajectory is remarkably steep and will become even more so in the future; I think growth is a far greater opportunity than it is anything else. And I think we are all equipped and eager to pursue that, knowing that it will require a lot of hard work, a lot of strategic thinking, and a lot of active listening.

"So thank you for listening to me and every one else today."

These texts were transcribed from a recording made on the day of the retreat. Minor omissions and alterations were made for the sake of clarity.