

00:03.12

Vincent Munoz

I think what we need to do is explain how our principles of free speech, free inquiry, will help serve the cause of justice.

Betty Friendan

The First Amendment, the constitutional freedom of speech and freedom of conscience that is the bulwark of our democracy.

00:21.94

Betty Friendan

There was a passion in what was being said affirming this, what people consider a sacred constitutional right, freedom of speech and freedom of association.

00:34.74

Michelle Deutchman

From the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, this is Speech Matters, a podcast about expression, engagement, and democratic learning in higher education.

00:45.64

I'm Michelle Deutchman, the Center's Executive Director and your host. The class of 2026 has flipped their tassels and tossed their caps and the summer solstice is in the rear view mirror, which means summer is in full swing.

00:59.93

This season allows an opportunity for members of the higher education community both to reflect on lessons learned from the past academic year and to look ahead and prepare for the fall.

01:11.79

Today's guest has completed the first academic year of his tenure as president of the greatest public university in the world. That can be none other than the president of the University of California, James B. Milliken.

01:26.58

In his role, President Milliken oversees UC's world-renowned system of 10 campuses, six academic health centers, three affiliated national laboratories, more than 300,000 students, and 230,000 faculty and staff.

01:42.01

We're eager to hear from him about his journey to higher education leadership, his connection to former UC President Clark Kerr, and the state of expression on college campuses.

01:52.89

But first, class notes, a look at what's making headlines. The Trump administration has proposed new rules that would significantly reshape the federal grant-making process.

02:05.23

The proposal from the Office of Management and Budget, OMB, expands political oversight of federal grants by requiring agencies to review new and existing awards for alignment with the administration's policies and executive orders. Under the proposal, federal agencies would designate senior appointees to oversee grant reviews and determine whether awards should be suspended or terminated.

02:29.72

The proposed rules would also broaden agencies' authority to terminate grants, including for discretionary reasons. According to the OMB, the changes are intended to ensure that federal funding aligns with the current administration's priorities.

02:44.52

Critics, however, argue that the proposal will increase political influence over research funding as well as potentially insulate the grant-making decisions from legal challenge. The proposal is open for public comment for 45 days.

02:58.36

In other federal news, the Department of Education is shifting some civil rights enforcement responsibilities to the Department of Justice. Under the new agreement, the Department of Justice investigations will play a larger role in civil rights enforcement, which, according to Education Department officials, will create more efficiency between the two agencies.

03:19.08

Critics of this change argue that the move weakens the Department of Education's capacity to protect students' civil rights and represents another step toward dismantling the agency's infrastructure without congressional approval.

03:32.28

At the beginning of June, the *Report on the State of Scholarship in the Humanities and the Humanistic Social Sciences* has garnered headlines and sparked intense debate about politicization in academic scholarship.

03:45.37

The report, commissioned by the chancellors of Washington University in St. Louis and Vanderbilt University, raised concerns about the replacement of academic rigor with ideological conformity within certain disciplines, including anthropology.

04:00.61

Critics have lambasted the report for using generalizations, misrepresenting research, and failing to interview the scholars whose work was singled out. Lastly, June is recognized as Pride Month to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City.

04:16.50

The month is notable for celebrations across cities including colleges and universities. This year, however, a number of colleges have withdrawn from local pride events or cited institutional neutrality as a reason for not flying pride flags on campus.

04:31.00

Speaker

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, UNC Greensboro, and Lamar University in Texas are among the institutions that posted and later deleted Pride Month messages.

04:41.91

At the University of North Texas, the university withdrew its support for a local Pride Festival, which it had participated in since 2017, citing concerns about violating SB 17, the state law which bans diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and related resource centers at Texas public universities.

05:02.77

While some institutions are scaling back pride-related activities, the City University of New York recently announced the formation of the Institute for LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement and Public History. The institute will act as a CUNY-wide hub to support LGBTQ+ students, strengthen collaboration across campuses, and partner with community organizations.

05:27.42

Now back to today's guest. UC President Milliken has more than 30 years of experience serving in leadership roles at large institutions. Most recently, he served as chancellor of the University of Texas System from 2018 to 2025, where he also held the Lee Hage and Joseph D. Jamail Regents Chair in Higher Education Leadership.

05:49.69

As UT's chancellor, he led one of the largest public university systems in the United States, composed of 14 academic and health institutions, including seven medical schools and five Carnegie R1 research universities.

06:04.38

He led efforts to meet the needs of a growing and diversifying state and nation, including a commitment to increasing training, education, and research programs and information, technology, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, public health, and medicine.

06:18.74

President Milliken, thank you so much for joining us. It's a privilege to have you as a guest. Before we start our conversation, I want to make sure to thank you for your support of the Center and for continuing the tradition of the UC president serving as the Center's chair.

06:33.37

President James B. Milliken

It's my honor to serve as the chair of the Center. It was one of the perks of the job that I wasn't aware of when I first accepted. So I'm delighted with the work that that we're able to do through the Center and look forward to continuing to get to know the work better.

06:48.46

Likewise. So I typically start each episode by asking our guests to share a bit of their professional journey. And you've been in the higher education space as a professor and an administrator for over 40 years. And I was hoping you could talk about what initially drew you kind of away from the practice of law towards the world of higher education.

07:09.98

Well, first of all, you've aged me just a tiny bit. I had almost 40 years, still a long time. So I had my first job out of college was to work as a legislative assistant in Washington in a political job. and And then I went to law school on a public interest fellowship.

07:28.02

I sort of stumbled into the practice of law on Wall Street. And then at some point I realized you know, this isn't exactly how I see my life going. And it was a delightful experience. And the people in the work were great, but wasn't what I thought I had set out to do. I started looking around for other things. And this is, you know, I tell my students to one of the most important life lessons that I have for them is to be

open to serendipity, open to happenstance. Some of the most important curves and developments in your life will be due to serendipity.

08:03.13

And that's what happened. I sort of stumbled into a job as a chief of staff to a university president. And I didn't know how long it would last. I didn't have the first idea of what I was doing.

08:14.65

But I had some experience in the private sector and some experience in Washington. And I thought it would be an interesting stint. You know, I was young. I thought I'd do it for a few years and then move on. But I stayed and we may

08:29.05

talk about during this show why, but I did stay. but I'd like to tell you it was clearly thought out and purposeful, but it was largely an accident and probably one of the happiest accidents in my life.

08:44.56

Well, I love that story. And one of the reasons I ask people to tell those stories is just because of what you've explained, that I think there's an idea out there that everybody who ends up in sort of very esteemed roles like yours, they had it all planned out. I think it's sort of heartening for especially people, you know, at the beginning of their careers to realize that like lots of things happen just because of the places you happen to be and the things that you try. And so I appreciate that. And I'm guessing and that when you started on the education path, that maybe your goal wasn't necessarily to be a chancellor or president, that was that sort of more organic.

09:22.49

It was organic. I mean, you know, initially I was the chief of staff and then I sort of started doing things that I had a particular interest in and, you know, possibly some aptitude for. But I started doing the strategy development at various universities. I started running their political operations, both state and federal.

09:46.07

And then I started working with boards. And I saw... One of the great things of that job is that you get to see a lot of things close up. You get to be in, you know, Aaron Burr's words, in the room where it happens. And I'm not sure he really said that, but it's in the musical, so I believe it.

10:06.97

Anyway, you get exposed to a lot of different things. And when you're 30 years old and have that opportunity, it's pretty eye-opening. And I was probably allowed to do things that I was, you know, not fully prepared for, but you know, they say you learn more from your mistakes. And so I must have learned a lot.

10:26.78

Oh, well, I think that's great. And, you know, it's interesting and reflecting on your distinguished career, which obviously is continuing and I'm not in any way trying to aid you. You've served as the president of University of Nebraska, the chancellor of City University of New York, the chancellor University of Texas and University of California as your fourth public university. And in your remarks to the Regents on May 2nd, 2025, you noted that 70% of degrees in this country are awarded by public colleges and universities. And I'm curious what you believe are the critical and unique roles and responsibilities of public higher education institutions, especially since those are the institutions that you've led.

11:09.05

Well, first of all, you mentioned in the question one of the great sort of outcomes of public universities that are doing their jobs, and that is that we produce 70 percent of degrees in the country.

11:23.51

Public universities, all of them, were established by acts of their state, and they were they were established to serve the state and the people of the state. And so it's a very clear, essential, kind of first foundational part of the mission. They weren't established, as a lot of older privates were, to serve a particular denomination. They had a special role. And then through history,

11:48.72

probably most importantly, first, the Morrill Act, where they had a responsibility to not only teach a broad liberal arts education, but to provide instruction and engineering in engineering and agriculture, the mechanic arts.

12:05.85

And that was to serve a young nation and to serve the states that created them. And then you had the GI Bill, which was an enormous infusion of students in our universities and sort of changed the trajectory of the level of education more broadly in the country.

12:24.54

And then you had the Higher Education Act and the opening of doors at universities beyond what had happened previously. And so those elements contribute enormously to the legacy the tradition and the role of public universities today. I happen to be fortunate to be in a couple of places. I count California among them, where they are among the universities are among the greatest engines of social and economic mobility the world has ever seen.

13:00.31

Certainly, CUNY in New York City was another one of those institutions. But that's something you can only say about public universities in this country. And I it's the thing I am most proud of about the work that is done at them.

13:17.04

Well, as a graduate of the greatest public university in the world, UC, of course, go Bears. I agree with you. And we're going to talk a little bit more about your current role. But you already mentioned history. And of course, I read your Substack and I you know reviewed your public remarks. And I've gathered that history is of particular interest to you.

13:35.70

And on more than one occasion, you've mentioned reading the two-volume memoir of Clark Kerr, who's the 12th University of California president. And you shared that you first read the memoir 20 years ago. And I'm wondering what about it has stayed with you these past, you know, two decades?

13:56.43

That's tough. You know, my I'm not sure how great my memory is. I will tell you one thing that sticks out at me it would be, I'll go from the ridiculous to the sublime is starting with when Clark Kerr was the first campus chancellor at Berkeley, he was ushered into his office and waiting for his first assignment from the very powerful president of the University of California.

14:28.09

And an assistant came in and handed him the dead letter file, a stack of unanswered mail and problems that the president didn't want to deal with. And so that was his assignment as chancellor. He did grow into and develop that role as the first chancellor. And now it's an incredibly important role. The creation of the master plan, which he was instrumental, is obviously a really important accomplishment that I think of often.

15:01.69

And I also think he captured in the, it's also in the gold and the blue, but he captured really at the Godkin Lectures at Harvard, where he coined the phrase multiversity, and then later published the uses of the university, where he explained what the modern university's role was in contemporary America at the time. I mean, he was just a seminal figure in higher education.

15:34.46

But now I'm going to go back to the ridiculous, because as you know, I'm sure he was also a funny, droll man and when Ronald Reagan was elected governor and carried out his commitment to fire Clark Kerr, the Board of Regents did fire him. And he was asked later by the media to react to that.

16:00.25

And he said, I leave the University of California presidency as I arrived. Fired with enthusiasm. Well, I guess you're right, you're better to laugh than to cry.

16:13.37

That's a great story. And you anticipated where I was going, which was about the master plan for higher education and do you still think it makes sense as written? and maybe if you wouldn't mind sharing any changes you might make to meet the needs of California today, especially, you know, given the changes that we're seeing in the higher education landscape.

16:38.87

You want me to change this Rembrandt to paint over it? No, I do think, I think the master plan was incredibly important. Most states have public systems of higher education. Most of them have multiple systems of them. And the reason that in largely in the 60s and the 70s, those systems were formed specifically or for a lot of reasons. I mean, you can say, you know, economies of scale, perhaps expansion of the capacity to serve a growing student population, of course.

17:13.76

But I think the reason that they have continued to exist and almost none of them have been taken apart is because they allow policymakers at the highest level, funders in state legislatures and governors, boards, lay boards of regents or trustees or whomever, to think strategically about the needs of an entire state and how you deliver what the state needs pursuant to yore yeah you know your founding obligation.

17:48.44

And whether it's in research, teaching and learning, extension, public service, whatever it is, it allows you to think about that and to deploy resources strategically.

18:01.18

So it's really an effective way. We haven't come up with a better way of deploying resources to meet the needs, the higher education needs of the state. California took that another step with the master plan.

18:15.81

So, yes, we have we do have a system, the University of California, but we also have a state university system, probably mostly were normal schools and produced teachers and others before that. And we have a community college system, over 100 campuses now.

18:32.76

So to take it a step further, the rationalizing of the delivery of higher education and the use of resources across all three of our systems is really what the beauty of the master plan was.

18:47.29

Other states have multiple systems making decisions independently, and the master plan set out an architecture for that very essential purpose of a system with a small s of higher education in a state and so that part I think yes that was important then it's important now but it may need to change over time the state had 14 million people when the master plan was first published

19:18.65

And now it has over 40. And the college going rate wasn't as high. The demands of research volume was a fraction, a small fraction of what it is today. So the universities have evolved and there are probably some elements.

19:33.56

And I believe there are. I think that I talk about the 21st century master plan when I go to Sacramento and or when I talk with the board. But to me, it's not you know replacing the architecture that's in place. It is a thinking about in 2026, how we extend the University of California and the enormous quality of education and public service and healthcare that we are responsible for today, how do we extend that to more Californians? How do we serve the state in ways that we have traditionally not been able to with 10 locations now across the state?

20:17.10

It's unlikely that we're going to create the next Merced, another location out of whole cloth. These are expensive. They require enormous commitments of resources.

20:31.64

And higher education is changing. And one reason it's changing is the enormous advances in technology. So there are multiple reasons why I don't think we'll create, you know, the 11th huge university in the University of California. And we must think differently about how to provide education and not just for four years or however many years you are matriculating, but for your lifetime.

20:59.10

I mean, these are two important considerations, I think, for the 21st century. First of all, we're not bound by location, and we need to think differently about that. Secondly, we're not going to need to provide it throughout people's lives.

21:10.74

And it's not one and done. It's more of a subscription service. Well, so yeah, there was no painting over there. I think of it more as a series of panels and what you're working on and others in this moment is another panel of where higher education is going. And like you said, with technology, you know we don't know what the impact will be. But before I jump down a technology rabbit hole, I of course want to talk to you about one of you know Clark Kerr's greatest legacies, which has to do with the free speech movement because, you know, of course, the free speech movement was born at UC. And of course, we are a free speech and civic engagement center. And that legacy is a badge of pride for the system. And of course, for the center where we aim to build on and further that legacy.

21:58.57

So following October 7, as you are well aware, numerous institutions, including UC and the University of Texas, faced encampments and other forms of protest and even violence at times. And Commentators made analogies to the free speech movement, while others argued that the moment in 23, 24 was very different from movements that had preceded it. I'm curious from your vantage point, especially having served at public institutions across the US,

22:27.74

Do you think that free speech related controversies have really evolved over time? You know, and if yes, maybe how so? And if not, you know, why not? We'll start there. It's kind of a big question, but I'll let you take it where you want to go.

22:42.10

I think that universities have a special obligation, and particularly public universities, which are bound by the First Amendment. But all universities have an obligation to be places where ideas can be freely discussed.

23:02.68

And protest is often a part of expressing those ideas. And they have to be places that are where everyone has the opportunity to do that, all of your members of your campus community.

23:18.36

And so there is a balance in our jurisprudence, as you know better than I do, that has been struck, that expression must be free and unregulated, except to the extent that there is a need for time, place, and manner restrictions, as articulated by the Supreme Court, to be able to ensure That, for instance, student's education is not interfered with significantly. They aren't prevented.

23:51.03

You can't have a protest every day in someone's philosophy class and shut it down. That, you know, that that you may be expressing your ideas, but you're also preventing the people in that class from receiving the education.

24:07.80

for which they have paid for and are entitled to so there is a balance. And we you know we see times when it's tested. It was tested during Clark Kerr's time. It was certainly tested as well at many other universities during the Vietnam War. It was tested when I was in New York over eruptions in the Middle East at that time. And it has been tested again, as you mentioned

24:35.42

within the last few years. It is important, it is essential that we have the right policies in place that are appropriate time, place, and manner policies, and that they are enforced uniformly and without regard to our content so that we satisfy our obligations to our university community. All of our students meet the Supreme Court's test, and they're still doing everything we can to promote the free expression and exchange of ideas.

25:14.10

No, thank you for that. you know, there is certainly an arc that we've seen. And I think that there's a lot of similarities and there's a lot of differences, right? I mean, we can't ignore the fact that you mentioned technology. Social media has really changed, I think, the impact and in some ways the way that people protest. So, there are many who argue that right now, you know, there is a sort of ah a chillier feeling on

college campuses. And I don't mean, I don't mean the weather, right? I'm talking about a decline in the amount of expressive activities that are currently taking place. Some argue that it has to do with how universities responded to encampments. Others argue that it has a lot to do with the targeting of higher education by the federal government.

25:59.98

I'm wondering what your thoughts are on this, because as we both know, you know, you can have victories in the court, but the chilling effect has already occurred. And I'm interested in this idea of both, you know, the safe operating of a university, but also making sure not just to protect, but uplift freedom of expression. And if you have sort of thoughts about this particular moment and this situation,

26:26.17

yeah, this claim that speech has been chilled for a number of different reasons. I think oftentimes when I hear the claims that speech is chilled or

26:41.24

an administration has overreacted or underreacted, and I'm talking about a university administration, you find very different perspectives on that. I think it has a good deal to do with what your perspective is at the outset. And you may feel that your free speech is being impinged, but others may think that the time, place, and manner requirements that are in place are

27:08.45

protecting others' rights to an education, other important rights. And I think you're always going to you're always going to have this controversy, which is fine, based on perspective. The element that seems to me new now

27:26.62

is the administration in Washington and the pressure put on universities across the country in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons and you know, we can litigate, we can settle, we can do other things, but we can't control the course of action of a particular administration in Washington. And we need to respond the best we can to protect the rights of our campus communities, their First Amendment rights and others.

28:06.39

And that may sometimes draw us into increased tension with the government, but that's so be it. That's that's our role. No, thank you for that. I mean, it's a very challenging time. you know, I think people are really worried about how higher education will be impacted, not just because of what's happening with the administration, but also because of just trust in and belief in the value of, you know, a higher education degree, you know, polling has shown that public confidence in higher education is at one of its lowest points. And, you know, I'm quoting you back to you, but when you spoke at the Regents meeting on May 5th, you discussed the importance of not just restoring trust, but deepening trust in higher education.

28:57.21

I'm wondering what you think are some of the effective ways to do this, especially given the sort of landscape that you described from this administration.

29:10.10

A lot of the polling focuses on several elements when you dig down into it further, starting with the Gallup poll in the summer of 23 and then followed by Pew and NBC and others.

29:25.21

It all found the same thing, a precipitous drop in confidence in higher education. And the reasons are often cited as cost, including debt, the relevance of a degree.

29:40.34

Am I going to get a good job is the American dream that if I you know follow the rules, get an education, work hard, I'll be better off than my parents were. You know, that is no longer the case always. And then third is, you know, is politics is what even is referred to by Gallup as one point is, you know, fear of brainwashing or indoctrination or putting a thumb on the scale. And, you know, some of the, we've seen this in in different surveys.

30:12.28

Now, some of these things may be very balanced. Some may not be. We have to take seriously what a large number of members of the public think as a public university.

30:22.74

We are dependent on, you know, the public to continue to support the work that's done here, the important work that's done here as an engine of social and economic mobility is research that is changing healthcare and saving lives and building the economy, all of that. But we also have to try to understand as best we can, what are real issues with the university that we can address. And with the first on cost, I mean, we have a Comparatively speaking, a great value on tuition at around \$15,000 across the University of California for in-state undergraduates.

31:00.60

And about half of our in-state undergraduates don't pay tuition because of a robust financial aid structure. And most of our students leave with no debt, and the debt they leave with is less than the national average for public universities. So those are all great talking points, and they're great and they're great facts, but they are not dispositive. They aren't conclusive. you know. We take it a step farther, though, and say, what are the costs of attendance at the University of California? Well, then you factor in things like housing, which is you know in a huge demand and very expensive throughout California, whether you're in a university or not. And so there are certain things where we have traditionally had less control over them. We have obviously all the control over what tuition is set out.

31:47.67

And so we are trying to build more housing at our campuses. I mean, this is really an important affordability strategy, I think, to be able to offer more of our students subsidized housing on campus.

32:03.61

It's probably good for their education as well, but it's also good for the cost. You know, the relevance issue, the ROI return goes in, what do you think an education is for? And we could spend another hour on that because I think there are some really interesting questions embedded in this about the public versus the private good of an education.

32:26.17

And, you know, it's a little something we've done to ourselves over the last couple of decades by talking about a million dollars more in earning power than if you have a college degree over a high school diploma. All of the reasons for getting an education, a lot of them have been tied to the financial return on and an investment.

32:48.18

And you know in an earlier time there was much more focus on the public good of an education and enlightened citizenry as an educated citizenry and I think we need to do everything we can to shift this conversation away from being exclusively a private good and finally on the political questions I mean I think this is where the work of the Center becomes even more important.

33:19.74

Because we're not going to we're not going to, and we shouldn't care of what political party a faculty member is in, or a student is in, or what their political views are, but we should make sure that all ideas are, we can have the opportunity to express different ideas, and that there can be an exchange of different ideas, and tested always. There can't be you know dogmatic requirements at universities. And so we, I think one of the ways that we address this confidence is to demonstrate very publicly that we do not have a thumb on the scale, that we invite people with all political perspectives to openly express their views, that we are engaged in a pursuit of truth and a free exchange of competing ideas.

34:17.72

And I think the public has had doubts about that, and that needs to be addressed. Well, I also wish we had another hour, because I have another hour's worth of questions. But on your last point, I think it's the devil's in the details, right? Because I think while many might agree that there's some problems within higher education, obviously there's a lot of fiery disagreement about how to go about altering that and whether that's the, you know, the Yale report that came out or whether it's the recent report on the humanities and humanistic studies, whether it's the development of civic, you know, centers at universities or not. I think there is sort of maybe agreement about some of the you know, impacts, but not agreement about how one will go about to sort of make those changes. At least that to me seems where there's a lot of the push and pull between people, you know, both inside higher education than also outside of higher education, you know.

35:18.17

Yeah, that's right. And if I had one piece of advice that no one asked me for is that everybody needs to have a little a higher dose of humility.

35:30.46

We have to approach issues without the certainty that we know everything better than others or better than they did in the past, better than they will in the future.

35:44.76

There needs to be a healthy dose of humility, I think, and sometimes that's lacking. I'll echo that. And I think that's not just true in the academy, but across spectrums. And, you know, sort of picking up on one of these things, I do want to talk for a minute about, you know, academic freedom, because, of course, when we're talking about, you know, the free exchange of competing ideas and a search for truth and dissemination of knowledge, right, It's academic freedom that I think is the single most important factor in creating and disseminating knowledge. And I'll just remind our listeners that those principles of free speech and academic freedom often like are incorrectly conflated, right? That they're different because academic freedom is premised on disciplinary expertise and being held to professional standards by peers.

36:34.23

And, you know, you're a student of history. Faculty didn't always enjoy academic freedom. And there was a long period of time when, for instance, if faculty didn't agree to teach the precepts of the church, they would be fired.

36:46.94

And, you know, the last few years has seen a tremendous increase in attempts by state legislatures to control what can and cannot be taught in the classroom at all levels of education and these bills are often referred to as education gag orders. And they are one of the greatest threats, I think, to academic freedom since the McCarthy era. One of the challenges it seems to me to responding to this sort of movement is how to make this issue feel relevant and even urgent to people who don't have access to, or even, you know, interest in higher education. I'm wondering if you have some thoughts on that, because we all can talk in the academy about how important academic freedom is, but how do we share that message with folks that are outside of the academy?

37:36.34

And ultimately, you are voting and can make those changes, potentially make some changes to support higher education, even if they don't have the benefit of it. The period over the last, I don't know, I would say 100 years, dating from 1915, but I'll change it to maybe 60 70 years, of a time when our faculty have enjoyed, probably over history, the greatest amount of academic freedom, the idea to pursue discovery, knowledge, truth

38:10.04

without political ideological bounds has also been the period of the most important expansion of higher education in history we talked earlier about some of the elements of that in American history and we have built in this country just the greatest system of universities that everyone has around the world has tried to emulate and part of the reason that some of them will be successful or maybe marginally successful and others won't, the freedom of the academic freedom, the freedom that our faculty have here

38:51.03

which I think it really reflects a broader sense of the American experience and the importance of things like free exchange of ideas, free speech, even though you correctly noted the difference between academic freedom and First Amendment rights. One does come with obligations and requirements, responsibilities.

39:14.46

It is not the place of a state government, a political, a legislature to define what's appropriate in a college curriculum.

39:26.55

And that's despite the fact that the public universities were created by the state to serve the state, but at the same time they put in place the architecture for that to in ensure that there was a dedicated group of individuals as a governing board and through principles that have developed over time of shared governance to make these decisions about curriculum, about areas of study, about decisions that

39:59.03

in our system have been largely left to the faculty. I would say to those legislators, this is a case for some humility also. You may not be in the best position to define a particular field and what is appropriate and what isn't appropriate for research or for teaching.

40:26.68

And so it is a fundamental stake in the ground for us. And we have made that point many times with regard to the efforts by the administration, the current administration in Washington, that, you know that is a, it's a red line. It's so a conversation stopper. We're not going to infringe the academic freedom of our faculty. It's part of what has made, it's a key part of what has made American universities the great success that they are.

40:56.86

Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, when I talk with colleagues who are living in other places in the country where their state legislatures are much more active, I realize also how, in some ways, lucky higher education is in our state, you know, and think a lot about what might be the responsibilities of California to, you know, other states. But, we near the end of our time together, which is unfortunate. And I did have two more questions for you. And one of them is circling back to Clark Kerr.

41:25.82

And, as you, of course, know, his memoir was titled *The Blue and Gold*. And you've aptly selected that title for your Substack. And in one of your posts, you wrote,

41:37.75

Kerr understands that UC embodied both aspirations and tensions with the gold representing discovery, excellence, and economic mobility, and the blue reflecting political scrutiny, competing expectations, and the logistical demands of serving a vast and diverse public institution. And I'm curious what you think are some of today's blues and golds at UC.

42:04.73

Okay. Well, you know, it's in the sense of it's better to be lucky than good, or maybe some of the nicest things in life happen through serendipity that during my first year, actually my first months as president of the University of California, was announced that five of the six American Nobel Prize winners were at the University of California, five of the six.

42:32.12

And when I went to Stockholm, because I thought if I don't do it this time, I will never do it, to spend time with our five Nobelists and to attend their lectures. to I also visited Swedish universities when I was there, but it was incredible. And people from around the world, when I would meet them and they would learn I was at the University of California, they said, what are you what do you do at the University of California? How can you be so enormously successful?

43:04.63

And that was a shot of, you know, of adrenaline and good feelings that I wish I wish everybody in the state of California could really understand how unusual that is.

43:17.17

And what a remarkable accomplishment. never been done before. I hope it'll be done again next year, but it's never been done before. And so if you're thinking about a gold at the University of California, these those metals are gold. And that's that may be the you know the perfect metaphor for it.

43:36.86

On the blue You know, I think the blue is, it seems to me quite obviously the right now it is the dealings with the administration in Washington. And, you know, it's broader than just the attacks on the University of California, which are numerous.

43:54.97

But I would say there are two things that more fundamentally trouble me about this. And one is that we're turning our back on a compact between the federal government and research universities that propelled this country to the forefront of the world post-World War II.

44:13.85

And it was a very clear compact that the federal government would support research at universities, which would provide the infrastructure and the talent. And it has worked

44:24.86

better than anybody ever would have imagined. And to harm that, to try to dismantle it in any way, is among the most irrational acts imaginable.

44:36.98

The second piece is, if you look at who won the Nobel Prizes in America over the last 70 years, So many of these winners were immigrants or first-generation Americans.

44:53.53

Several of our Nobel Prize winners were out of the five. We need to ensure that the country is still a place where the greatest talent in the world wants to live and do their work.

45:08.41

And they often want to do it just to go back to a thread from earlier, because of the liberty, the freedoms, the political traditions in this country, and free speech, free association, freedom of religion, academic freedom to pursue the truth, to pursue ideas openly.

45:27.58

And so we have been the greatest beneficiary in the history of the world from immigration. And those are two things that I think are blue for our future. They're blue for the country and they're blue for the university.

45:40.82

Well, that seems like a wonderful note to end on people can't see my face, but I had such a large smile imagining you, you know, meeting with and talking with these, you know, Nobelists. And I think that is a really hopeful way to sort of wrap up this episode as we think about, you know, the University of California in this moment and moving forward. But of course, you get the last word, both as today's guest and as the president of the university. And I don't know if there's anything else you would like to add about any of the things that we've talked about or really about anything else.

46:18.17

Well, that's a that's a big question. I just want to say again how much I appreciate the work that you and your colleagues do at the Center, how important this is at this moment, how important it is, as I suggested earlier, to the strategies to recapture and build trust among the public in higher education in America. I do think a core element of that strategy is demonstrating that our institutions are places of the open and free and civil, for the most part, exchange of ideas.

47:03.29

And while the Center addresses this more broadly, freedom of exchange, freedom of speech at colleges and universities has never been a more important issue and perhaps never under more scrutiny.

47:17.14

And so I appreciate all that you're doing to help build that that trust and anything I can do to assist in that, I'm more than willing. I need to earn my keep as the chair. Well, you're certainly doing that and by coming on this episode and sharing your thoughts, not just about higher education, but also about your own story and your own journey. And I look forward to when we can have a follow up, perhaps about AI and some of the other things that we need to deal with as we look ahead. But mostly, I just want to thank you so much for your time and say congratulations on your first academic year at the helm of UC.

47:54.30

Thank you. Thanks again for joining us today. We are grateful to President Milliken for his time and insights about UC and higher education. Join us next month to talk about America at 250.

48:07.93

In the meantime, enjoy summer.