What follows is a statement by President Mark G. Yudof, University of California, in response to the revised budget proposal put forward today (May 16) by Gov. Jerry Brown:

In the past several months, we at the University of California have been preparing — through cutbacks, layoffs, efficiencies, financial strategies and other measures — to brace for the $500 million in cuts contained in the governor's initial budget proposal.

Today, in issuing a May revision of his budget proposal, the governor also described reductions that would be proposed should the state adopt an "all-cuts" budget in lieu of extending certain temporary taxes.

The governor in his budget document asserted that, in an all-cuts budget, reductions in state funding for the University of California would be doubled, to $1 billion in cuts.

A cut of this magnitude would be unconscionable — to the university, its students and families, and to the state that it has served for nearly a century and a half.

Doubling the cut would reduce the state's contribution to the university's core funds — monies that pay professors and staff members, light the libraries, maintain the campuses, and all the rest — to roughly $2 billion. State funding of UC at this diminished level has not been seen since the early 1990s, a time when the university enrolled 80,000 fewer students.

This is not the first round of cuts we've faced in the ongoing fiscal crisis. We have been engaged in a three-year exercise in coping with wholesale cutbacks, and by now the magic bullets all have been spent. What this reduction most likely would mean, as the governor noted, is the need to yet again raise tuition.

That will be a decision which rests with our regents. I would say now, only this: An all-cuts budget, as described by the governor, would represent a dire challenge to the university and a retreat by the state from its historic support of higher public education in California.

The university has extraordinary talent and resources spread across its 10-campus system, and it will survive. In the end, it is California that would stand at risk. As the governor stated in his budget document, referring to higher education: "Reductions of this magnitude would significantly impair the universities' critical role in training the state's work force and encouraging innovation."
California was given only one great gold rush. It was through innovation and hard work and, most important, through the dedicated pursuit of a common good and common purpose that this state grew to be regarded around the world as a beacon of opportunity.

Now is not the time to abandon what has been the key catalyst for making California such an exceptional place — a commitment to providing, as a common good, an affordable, world-class higher education for all who earn a spot at our public universities and colleges.