

IN THE 2010 NRC ASSESSMENT, UCSD CONTINUES TO LOOK GOOD



By Richard Attiyeh
*Professor Emeritus of Economics and
EA President*

In the summer of 2006, the National Research Council (NRC) began collecting data for its assessment of Ph.D. programs in the United States. Four years later the results have been released. The inquiry was intended to provide universities with information they could use to improve the quality of their doctoral programs and to help prospective doctoral students make wise decisions when applying to graduate school. UCSD comes off well.

This study is radically different from the NRC's previous study, the results of which were published in 1995. The 1995 study surveyed faculty in 41 disciplines, asking them to rate programs in their discipline in terms of faculty and program quality. When the average ratings for each program were published, one outcome was an inter-institutional rankings game in which UCSD was happy to play. In terms of both the average rating of programs rated and the number of programs in the top ten, we ranked tenth in

the nation overall, and second among public institutions, just behind Berkeley and just ahead of UCLA.

The NRC adopted a new methodology in part because of complaints that simply reporting reputational ratings tended to bias the results in favor of larger and older institutions. The argument went that larger institutions (like Berkeley) and older institutions (like Harvard) tended to get higher ratings because they are more familiar to survey respondents. (UCSD was not one of the institutions that made this complaint.)

The New Methodology

The 2010 NRC study began by collecting data on faculty, students, and program characteristics for each program in 62 fields at 212 institutions. Faculty data included numbers of publications, citations, grants, awards, and diversity. Data on students included GRE scores, financial support, publications, and diversity. And program data included the number of Ph.D.s granted over five years, time to

degree, percentage of student completion, and placement of students after graduation. Altogether, data on twenty variables were collected, and there are plans to update the data periodically. The NRC website, <http://www.nap.edu/rdp>, provides information about how to obtain access to these data.

The NRC used two approaches to obtain information about how programs in a field ranked relative to each other. In the first approach, which is called the regression-based method, they asked faculty in each field to rate the quality of the many programs in their field. But they did not report the results of those surveys. Rather, they took 500 subsets of the responses and estimated for each subset a statistical relationship between the ratings and the data described above. Then for each subset, they used the estimated coefficients from the statistical relationship as weights to aggregate the data on faculty, students, and program characteristics into rankings of programs. But because there were 500 subsets of the survey responses, there were 500 estimates of a program's rank among the programs that were under consideration in each field. And to discourage the rankings game that was triggered by the 1995 study, the NRC reported for each program only the fifth and 95th percentile of the distribution of rankings generated by this method. So, for example, the NRC report says that the rank of the program in field X at institution Y probably lies somewhere in the range of tenth and 31st.

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In its other approach, which is called the survey-based method, the NRC asked the faculty surveyed in each field how important they consider each of the faculty, student, and diversity variables to be as a contributor to program quality. Again, they took 500 subsets of the responses to construct weights for aggregating the variables into a measure of each program's quality. And, again, they reported only the fifth and 95th percentile of the distribution of rankings generated by this method for each program.

How Did UCSD Programs Fare?

Although the NRC attempted to discourage inter-institutional comparisons of program rankings by reporting a range of possible rankings for each program rather than a single estimate of each program's rank in its field, it took no more than a few days for universities (including UCSD) to issue reports touting how well their programs performed in the NRC study. Many universities used the low number in the range of possible rankings to report how well their programs did, even though this inevitably resulted in many more than ten programs being in the top ten for a given field.

UCSD's approach was more conservative. First, for the sake of simplicity, we decided to use just one of the NRC methods — the R-method. Second, for each program, rather than using the highest ranking in the range of possible rankings, we chose to use the average of the highest and lowest rankings because the midpoint captures information from the full range of possible rankings, unlike the extreme of the distribution. Third, we calculated the midpoint for all programs at all universities, and for each field we ranked the programs in order of these midpoints. Results for UCSD's programs are as follows:

Biological Sciences	1 st	Computer Science & Eng.	15 th
Bioengineering	1 st	Philosophy	19 th
Scripps Inst. of Oceanography	1 st	Economics	21 st
Biomedical Sciences	2 nd	Physics	24 th
Neurosciences	4 th	Communication	32 nd
Linguistics	9 th	Music	33 rd
Mechanical & Aerospace Eng.	11 th	History	34 th
Political Science	11 th	Structural Engineering	35 th
Literature	13 th	Anthropology	45 th
Chemistry	13 th	Psychology	52 nd
Mathematics	13 th	Sociology	54 th
Electrical & Computer Eng.	14 th	Cognitive Science	62 nd
Materials Science	14 th		

How About UCSD Overall?

To measure the overall quality of an institution's doctoral programs, we identified the median ranking of the institution's programs. We then ranked all institutions according to the median ranking of its programs. The table below shows the results from this procedure. Clearly, UCSD finds itself in good company, ranking eleventh in the nation among comprehensive universities. And it is worth noting that among public universities, UCSD once again placed second, just behind Berkeley and just ahead of UCLA.

Top 20 Comprehensive* Institutions in Overall Quality by Median Rank of All Programs

Rank	Institution	Median Rank	Number of Programs
1	MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	3.00	27
2	HARVARD UNIVERSITY	5.00	52
2	PRINCETON UNIVERSITY	5.00	35
4	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-BERKELEY	5.50	50
5	STANFORD UNIVERSITY	6.00	47
6	CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	9.50	24
7	UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO	11.00	37
7	UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA	11.00	41
9	YALE UNIVERSITY	12.00	49
10	NEW YORK UNIVERSITY	13.00	37
11	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-SAN DIEGO	14.00	25
12	COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	16.00	47
12	UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-LOS ANGELES	16.00	59
14	UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-ANN ARBOR	17.00	65
15	GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	18.00	20
16	CORNELL UNIVERSITY	19.00	61
16	UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN	19.00	52
18	DUKE UNIVERSITY	20.00	39
18	UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL	20.00	51
20	BROWN UNIVERSITY	21.00	34
20	NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY	21.00	31

Derived from regression-based ranking data from the NRC study

*Comprehensive universities are those having 15 or more programs ranked.

Emeriti Website

The UCSD Emeriti Association maintains a website: <http://emeriti.ucsd.edu>

Clicking the NEWS, PROGRAMS & MEETINGS button will allow you to view past issues of this newsletter. The website also provides the constitution and by-laws, lists of members, and minutes of meetings.

Learning the Hard Way about the Business of Dying

By **Sheila K. Johnson**

I began composing this essay sitting in an old recliner in our “family room” — a large sunny space that houses the television set, a music system, and a large collection of classical CDs. Starting in mid-September of 2010 it also contained a hospital bed in which **Chalmers** (“Chal” to his friends), my husband of 53 years, was slowly dying. When he breathed his last I had to call a special number that hospice care had given me. Under no circumstances, I was warned, must I panic and call 911, for that would automatically cancel hospice care and he would re-enter the netherworld of hospitals and attempts to resuscitate him.

People come to hospice care in many ways and for many different reasons. Until the mid-1970s, it was not even available in the U.S. and only Great Britain had a movement that championed home care for the dying and strong pain medications such as the Brompton cocktail (containing mostly morphine and cocaine). As a gerontologist I strongly supported such humane efforts and applauded their introduction into the U.S. But as with all of life’s adventures, there’s a big difference between book learning and trying it out yourself.

Hospice care became a Medicare benefit in 1986 and is defined as being available to people who are expected to die within six months. I suppose this cutoff date is considered necessary because otherwise it might turn into long-term care, which neither Medicare nor most ordinary health insurance programs want to pay for. However, “revalidation” is possible. I was told about one patient who was in-and-out of hospice care numerous times over a nine-year period. How did this happen, I wondered. “Well, he had a stroke and it was thought he would die. But instead he got better. And then he had another stroke and went back into hospice care and got better again.” And so on.



Sheila and Chalmers Johnson

What comes through clearly here is not necessarily a pattern of consistent care for the patient but the economics of who pays for what and when. Hospice providers are in business, just like doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes. For every Medicare patient they enroll they currently get paid \$169.67 a day, in return for which they supply a rental hospital bed, diapers, and other paraphernalia — as well as home visits from a nurse (or a doctor, if necessary), a case supervisor, and a social worker. I believe the religious practitioner (if you ask for one) comes free.

What struck me most about hospice care when I read about it was that it was a humane way to deal with the end of a long life or a fatal illness. What struck me most as a consumer was that it was cheap for Medicare, but not necessarily for me.

Certainly it became rapidly clear to me that a visiting nurse twice a week for an hour each time to bathe my husband, and a more senior nurse twice a week to check his vital signs and medications was not nearly enough help. I would have to rely on “home health” companies who provide “caregivers,” usually for a minimum of four hours at \$25 an hour, or on what Gail Sheehy in her book *Passages in Caregiving* calls “the grey market.”

In a crisis situation I suppose home health companies are a blessing. Their workers are bonded, checked for drug use, and provided with workman’s compensation so that, as one company’s representative explained to me, “if they throw out their back lifting your husband they won’t decide to sue you.”

Home health companies of course pay their employees much less than they charge their customers, and employees must sign a form (on pain of losing their jobs) that they will never go to work privately for someone they’ve met while working for the company. Most home health companies also try to prevent such a private bond from being formed by sending out different persons. Over a two-week period during which I’d contracted for four hours three times a week, we encountered three different caregivers. One was clearly very competent but she said she lived too far away and was not reimbursed for her mileage and driving time. Another was very kind and caring but tentative when it came to doing what needed to be done, and a third mostly giggled and looked nervous.

So I turned to the grey market and was very fortunate in finding two women (sisters, as it happened) who were both competent and kind and who took turns coming to our house five hours a day, seven days a week. At \$20 an hour this cost almost as much as a nursing home ($\$20 \times 5 \times 30 = \$3,000$ a month) and it still left 19 hours a day for me, which is what makes hospice care such a good deal for Medicare.

But that’s the economics of the situation. Hospice care has other intangible benefits for the patient and his or her family that cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Most important is that it puts one in the driver’s seat, providing a modicum of control over what is other-

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wise a difficult enough trajectory.

When I worried about that 6-month up-or-out deadline, the hospice doctor told me not to worry. Most people who are bed-ridden do die within six months. If my husband had developed pneumonia, for example, I was free to withhold antibiotics — pneumonia having long been known as the old person's friend. That caused me to wonder whether I could have borne watching my husband run a high fever, his lungs filling with fluid.

However, when he developed severe, intractable pain, I was given another option — liquid morphine. Morphine suppresses the respiratory system and can kill as well as relieve pain. "What's to stop me from giving him the entire bottle one evening?" I asked the case-manager. "Well," she said cheerfully, "I'd have to turn you in." But I had the feeling that even this was negotiable. Probably if she'd suspected I was a murderess she would not have okayed the prescription.

Chal died at home in November, ten weeks after he entered hospice care. Toward the end he stopped eating and slept a great deal, and I gave him moderate doses of morphine when he asked for it or seemed to be in great pain. It was the hardest, saddest ten weeks of my life, but I cannot imagine having chosen any other way. I think most families who have taken this route would agree. However, I also think Medicare ought to be a lot more generous in providing benefits for the companies that provide hospice care and for the families that do the heavy lifting.

Chalmers Johnson, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, who died at the age of 79, taught at UC Berkeley and at the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at UCSD. He was among the most distinguished political scientists and Asia specialists of his generation, and, in recent years, a sharp critic of U.S. foreign policy.



Books by Chalmers Johnson

Recently published by Metropolitan Books:

Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire (2000)

The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic (2004)

Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic (2006)

Dismantling the Empire: America's Last Best Hope (2010)

Previously published by the Stanford University Press:

Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945 (1962)

Revolutionary Change (second edition, 1982)

MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975 (1982)

Changes in Health Benefits Affecting UC Retirees

From the UC Office of the President:

Increased cost sharing for retiree health insurance premiums

UC currently pays, on average, 86 percent of the cost of retiree health insurance premiums. Regents have approved a plan to gradually reduce that amount over time until it reaches a floor of 70 percent. The level of the UC contribution will be reassessed annually.

Protection for those without Medicare

For the current time, the President has determined that new cost-sharing provisions should not be applied to the relatively small number of retirees who are ineligible for Medicare, since they would be disproportionately affected by the increases. Instead, that group of retirees will pay premiums that are linked to employee premiums.

Current retirees below the age of 65 and therefore not eligible for Medicare will continue to be grouped with active employees, which results in a lower retiree premium.

Financial Sustainability

The changes in retiree health benefits stem from UC's urgent need to provide competitive retirement benefits while addressing the soaring costs of health care.

UC currently faces a \$14 billion unfunded liability for retiree health care and must report a portion of the liability each year on its balance sheet.

In 2009-10, UC spent \$250 million on health care for its retirees and their family members. The cost, which is paid for through departmental; assessments from the general operating budget, is projected to increase to roughly \$270 million in 2011, even with the approved changes.

As costs rise, UC has less money for hiring faculty, buying lab equipment and providing raises to faculty and staff.



Udof, Fox, Dynes, and Atkinson



Joannie Mosher and Joe Watson



Benefactors Miriam and Jerome Katzin



Walter Munk with Bob and Ann Dynes and Mary Coakley



Irwin and Joan Jacobs

Photos by Melissa Jacobs of San Diego Photo; and thanks to Jill Townsend and Erica Monzon for providing them.

Journal of Universal Rejection



Editor-in-Chief: Caleb Emmons

About the Journal

The founding principle of the Journal of Universal Rejection (JofUR) is rejection. Universal rejection. That is to say, all submissions, regardless of quality, will be rejected. Despite that apparent drawback, here are a number of reasons you may choose to submit to the JofUR:

- You can send your manuscript here without suffering waves of anxiety regarding the eventual fate of your submission. You know with 100% certainty that it will not be accepted for publication.
- There are no page-fees.
- You may claim to have submitted to the most prestigious journal (judged by acceptance rate).
- The JofUR is one-of-a-kind. Merely submitting work to it may be considered a badge of honor.
- You retain complete rights to your work, and are free to resubmit to other journals even before our review process is complete.
- Decisions are often (though not always) rendered within hours of submission.

Instructions for Authors

The JofUR solicits any and all types of manuscript: poetry, prose, visual art, and research articles. You name it, we take it, and reject it. Your manuscript may be formatted however you wish. Frankly, we don't care.

After submitting your work, the decision process varies. Often the Editor-in-Chief will reject your work out-of-hand, without even reading it! However, he might read it. Probably he'll skim. At other times your manuscript may be sent to anonymous referees. Unless they are the Editor-in-Chief's wife or graduate school buddies, it is unlikely that the referees will even understand what is going on. Rejection will follow as swiftly as a bird dropping from a great height after being struck by a stone. At other times, rejection may languish like your email buried in the Editor-in-Chief's inbox. But it will come, swift or slow, as surely as death. Rejection.

Submissions should be emailed to J.Universal.Rejection@gmail.com. Small files only, please. Why not just send the first couple pages if it is long?

Subscriptions

An individual subscription may be secured for £120 per year (four issues). Institutional and library subscriptions are also available; prices will be provided upon enquiry. It is unknown whether the subscription will be delivered in print or as electronic content, because no one has yet ordered one.

Archives

March 2009 (Vol 1, No 1) contents: (empty)

June 2009 (Vol 1, No 2) contents: (empty)

September 2009 (Vol 1, No 3) contents: (empty)

December 2009 (Vol 1, No 4) contents: (empty — because we were on holiday)

March 2010 (Vol 2, No 1) contents: (empty)

June 2010 (Vol 2, No 2) contents: (empty)

Anecdotalage

By **Sandy Lakoff**

Connie Branscomb was amused by a New York Times item about one **Eddie Feibusch**, owner of what is almost certainly the best store for zippers of all sorts anywhere in the country. While his competitors have disappeared or relocated to far away locales like China and India, Mr. Feibusch, now 86, still operates his shop on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He has everything anyone might want in the way of zippers, by length, make, and function. “Nothing replaces a zipper,” he maintains, “a button is unpleasant.” His customers have agreed, the Times noted, ever since Parisian couturiers were won over to the device in 1937. That was the year the newfangled zipper, patented in 1917, beat the old-fashioned button — in “The Battle of the Fly.” And who knows, maybe even inspired the Zippo lighter of the 1940s and such songs as “Good morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip,” and “Zippity-do-da.” Who can forget its inspiring chorus:

*Zippity do da, zippity yay,
My, oh my, what a wonderful day.
Plenty of sunshine coming my way,
Zippity do da, zippity yay!*



The Times story brought to mind a proud entrepreneur I once encountered in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn who owned a business manufacturing and selling bed pillows. “Feel these,” he said, punching a puffy, down-filled specimen. “They have forty percent more feathers than you’ll get at Macy’s — for a lower price.” And then, to make sure I appreciated the full import of the sales pitch, he pointed a finger at me and said — unforgettably — “I’m the terror of the pin-feather industry!”



The Times of London reports that the latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary includes, as usual, a number

of neologisms, including “bromance,” meaning a close but nonsexual relationship between two men, and several from recent military and security experience that need no explanation: “waterboarding,” “exit strategy,” “surge,” and “rogue state.” “Staycation” made the OED last year. “Vuvuzuela,” the long South African horn blown in the World Cup soccer matches there, also made this year’s edition. And in the U.S., we learn, **Sarah Palin**’s coinage has been picked up for one of ours. Who could “refudiate” it?



Year-to-Date Statistics on TSA Airport Screening:

Terrorist Plots Uncovered	0
Transvestites	133
Hernias	1,485
Hemorrhoid Cases	3,172
Enlarged Prostates	8,249
Breast Implants	59,350
Natural Blondes	3



Dorothy Parker really was as clever as she was cracked up to be — so to speak. **Stephen Sondheim** in his recent book *Finishing the Hat* recalls a famous poem of hers:

*Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
A medley of extemporanea;
And love is a thing that can never go wrong;
And I am the queen of Romania.*



Cutting the Hotel Bill without Priceline

(Thanks to **Anita Safran**, who also passed on the ad for The Journal of Rejection)

An elderly lady decided to give herself a big treat for a significant birthday by staying overnight in one of London’s hotels. When she checked out next morning, the desk clerk handed her a bill for £250. She demanded to know why the charge was so high. “It’s a nice hotel,” she said, “but the rooms certainly aren’t worth £250 for just an overnight stop without even breakfast.”

When the clerk told her that £250 is the “standard rate,” she insisted on

speaking to the Manager. The Manager appeared and, forewarned by the desk clerk, announced: “The hotel has an Olympic-sized pool and a huge conference center which are available for use.”

“But I didn’t use them,” she said.

“Well, they are here, and you could have,” explained the Manager. He went on to explain that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which the hotel is famous. “We have the best entertainers from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen performing here,” he said.

“But I didn’t go to any of those shows,” she said.

“Well, we have them, and you could have,” the Manager replied.

No matter what amenity the Manager mentioned, she replied, “But I didn’t use it!”

The Manager was unmoved, so she decided to pay, wrote a check and gave it to him.

The Manager was surprised when he looked at the check. “But madam,” he protested, “this check is only made out for £50 — not £250.”

“That’s correct,” the lady replied, “I charged you £200 for sleeping with me.”

“But I didn’t!” exclaimed the very surprised Manager.

“Well, too bad,” said the lady, “I was here, and you could have.”



More Womanly Wisdom

“It’s so beautifully arranged on the plate, you know someone’s fingers have been all over it.” — **Julia Child**

“Acting is the most minor of gifts and not a very high-class way to earn a living. After all, Shirley Temple could do it at the age of four.” — **Katherine Hepburn**

“The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.” — **Lucille Ball**

“You’d be surprised how much it costs to look this cheap.” — **Dolly Parton**

— From *An Uncommon Scold*, compiled and arranged by **Abby Adams** (New York: Simon and Schuster)



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Chronicles
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Mark Your Calendar!



John Evans

Associate Professor of Sociology

**The Real Conflict Between
Religion and Science**

Wednesday, February 9, 2011, 4:00-5:30 pm

Steve Schick

Department of Music

**Climbing Mount Woodson: Flowers,
Drums and Other Signs of Spring**

Wednesday, March 9, 2011, 4:00-5:30



Lynn Burnstan

UCSD-TV

**Then, Now, and Tomorrow
at UCSD-TV**

Wednesday, April 13, 2011, 4:00-5:30 pm



~ Green Faculty Club ~

Chronicles

Newsletter of the UCSD Emeriti Association



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