FAREWELL ADDRESS OF IRWIN W. SHERMAN,
CHAIR OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

MAY 18, 2004

I have now served as Chair of the Riverside Division for 7 years. This will be my final Division meeting as your Chair. Please allow me to take this opportunity to say “farewell” and to make some personal observations.

As some of you know, I joined the UCR faculty in 1962 as an Assistant Professor in the Biology Department. At that time the student body was less than 2000. The Chancellor was Herman Spieth, who had been my Professor in Field Zoology at CCNY. Spieth had left CCNY in 1954 to head up a Division of Life Sciences at a new campus of the University of California in Riverside. When I contacted him some years later I had completed a doctoral degree and was a post doc at the Rockefeller University. Spieth had moved on too. He was the Chancellor here. He received my letter of inquiry concerning a job and passed it on to the chair of the department of Life Sciences. I interviewed and was offered the job and accepted. That was to become my first job and also my last job. At the time of my appointment, the total faculty numbered about 150 and we were a close knit group. We did not hold to departmental boundaries and we socialized widely. We also recognized then, perhaps as few do today, the value of Senate service for we believed that we were charting UCR’s academic future. We knew our students to be the best and the brightest and that our institution was the finest in higher public education. We took pride in UC and in UCR.

That brings me to my first bits of advice:

- Socialize widely
- Mentor our younger faculty
- Concern yourselves with UCR’s future through the Academic Senate as well as in your classroom teaching
- Hold to the highest standards for yourselves and your students
- Ensure, through your efforts in research and teaching, that UCR maintains its place as one of the best institutions of higher education in the world.

Being at UCR has been one of my great loves and that affection has been returned to me many times over. At times, however, during this 42 year love affair I became saddened by our loss of collegiality, our cynicism and especially the lack of appreciation within the UC family for our great strengths.
As I moved through the professorial ranks at UCR, I felt an obligation to serve my colleagues in the department as they had served me. So, when asked to become chair of the Department of Biology, I did so gladly. The goals, as I saw them, were to garner the resources they needed and to make certain that those deserving of merits and promotions got them. If you become a chair (or even if you do not) these should be some of your highest priorities. Later, I was asked by Chancellor Tomas Rivera to serve as Dean of the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences; again I served because I felt that in that role I could contribute to the forward momentum of the College. After Tomas’ death, Ted Hullar became our Chancellor. Chancellor Hullar once told me he loved administration. I told him I abhorred administration. As I recall it, my rejoinder to him was “don’t love administration but do it well and leave the institution better off when you depart. In some small measure, I hope I succeeded in benefiting UCR by acting as Dean.

When Chancellor Hullar moved on to UC Davis, Rosemary Schraer became Chancellor. Due to an altercation with Chancellor Schraer, I quit as Dean in 1988. Another piece of advice comes as a result of this experience: stick to your principles and don’t compromise them for perks or stipends.

“Retired” from administration, I returned to teaching and research from 1988 to 1993, and during that time was elected Vice Chair of the Division. In 1993, Chancellor Raymond Orbach asked me to serve as Interim Executive Vice Chancellor, and I did so. When the search for a permanent Executive Vice Chancellor resulted in the appointment of another, and there was an opportunity for me to take early retirement, VERIP III, I “retired.” But my association with UCR did not end there. Under a very generous recall policy, I was able to teach, to carry out a research programs and to run for Division Chair. You elected me Chair 4 times. It is, as I have said on many occasions, the best job in the University. In September, I will pass on the mantle – and this time I expect as an old solider, I will slowly fade away.

In 42 years I have heard talk about UCRs promise and character: the campus with the personal touch, the Swarthmore of the West, the jewel in the crown of the Inland Empire; it hurts me to say that some of that luster has slipped away. Make the promise of UCR – now age 50 – come true. You can do it.

So my friends, cherish UCR, the Academic Senate, and shared governance. Be loyal and be generous in giving public credit. Have pride in and commitment to UCR and never sacrifice your dreams and your high standards. Thank you for all that you have done for me and our Academic Senate. Fiat Lux.