

October 22, 2023

Paying Respects to a Legendary Bruin: Chancellor Emeritus Charles E. “Chuck” Young

Campus Update

Chancellor Block shared the following message with the UCLA campus community.

Dear Bruin Community:

I write to share the news that this morning our community lost one of its towering and most beloved figures. Charles E. “Chuck” Young, who served as UCLA’s chancellor for 29 years, from 1968 to 1997 — passed away at the age of 91 at his home in Sonoma County.

Many members of today’s UCLA community may only know Chuck as the namesake of the Young Research Library and the road that runs through much of our campus. But whether or not you were acquainted with him personally, I am certain that you have felt Chuck’s influence upon our university: Perhaps more than any other individual, he is the one responsible for UCLA’s remarkable ascent over the course of the last half-century.

When Chuck first became UCLA’s chancellor at the impressively young age of 36, he inherited a mid-size commuter school with an operating budget of \$170 million that had not yet seen its 50th birthday. By the time he retired, UCLA was a world-class research university with a \$2 billion budget that was attracting students and scholars from across the globe. As chancellor, he was a staunch advocate of excellence in research and teaching, an ardent proponent of the value of ethnic and cultural diversity at the university, a firm believer in the importance of public service, a champion of UCLA Athletics and of inclusiveness within the enterprise, and a passionate defender of academic freedom — even [when taking a principled stand nearly cost him his job](#).

I encourage you to [read more about Chuck Young’s life and many contributions on UCLA Newsroom](#).

Even well past his retirement from UCLA in 1997, Chuck remained a committed public servant who brought his administrative talents to organizations in need — whether stepping in as interim president of the University of Florida in 1999, or steering the Museum of Contemporary Art out of financial trouble in the late 2000s. Most recently, in 2017 and at the age of 85, he became interim superintendent of the Sonoma Valley Unified School District when the district encountered a leadership crisis. Through it all, he remained active on the UCLA campus — often calling me up to offer thoughtful guidance on how to manage an issue or wise counsel on an important decision.

Chuck is survived by his second wife Judy, his son Charles Young Jr., two step-children, seven grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. I offer my deepest condolences to his entire family, as well as to all those whose lives he touched. We will have a memorial for Chuck on the UCLA campus in the months ahead.

In his inaugural address to the Academic Senate in 1968, Chuck said that he hoped to take UCLA “from the second level of good to the first rank of excellent universities.” He accomplished this goal, beyond a doubt. In doing so, he vastly expanded access to quality education in California, facilitated world-changing research achievements and did much to advance the common good. His legacy is greatly missed, though his legacy surely lives on.

Sincerely,

Gene D. Block
Chancellor

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