

THE *Current*

May 2, 2025

UC Office of the President

James B. Milliken named 22nd president of the University of California

The University of California Board of Regents today approved the appointment of James B. Milliken as the 22nd president of UC's world-renowned system of 10 campuses, six academic health centers, and three nationally affiliated laboratories.

A seasoned higher education leader, Milliken has been serving as the chancellor of the University of Texas (UT) system since 2018. His distinguished career also includes serving as chancellor of The City University of New York (CUNY) from 2014 to 2018, president of the University of Nebraska from 2004 to 2014, and senior vice president at the University of North Carolina from 1998 to 2004.

"The University of California is universally regarded as the preeminent public research university in the world, and I am deeply honored to have an opportunity to join the many talented faculty, staff, and campus leaders in their vital work. It is more important than ever that we expand the education, research, health care, and public service for which UC is so widely admired and which has benefited so many Californians," said Milliken.

Guided by his commitment to expanding opportunity and student success, Milliken has been a leader in expanding access to higher education for low-income students. At UT, he led a bold initiative to cover the full cost of tuition and fees for qualifying

students whose families have incomes under \$100,000. Milliken's leadership at UT also includes record-setting enrollment levels, low college debt, and almost \$5 billion in annual research expenditures, ranking second in the nation. The UT system's health enterprise, with seven medical schools, is one of the largest health care providers in the nation.

"Chancellor Milliken embodies the qualities and leadership experiences the University of California community needs at this moment," said Janet Reilly, chair of the UC Board of Regents. "He understands how critical UC's contributions are to the state and the country, and he has decades of experience leading public institutions during times of unprecedented change in higher education. Chancellor Milliken is simply the right person for UC at just the right time."

At CUNY, Milliken expanded a pilot program called ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs), nearly doubling the three-year graduation rate of community college students, and oversaw the launch of the CUNY School of Medicine, focused specifically on underserved communities in New York City. Milliken was a distinguished professor of Law, Public Policy and Education at The CUNY Graduate Center. At the University of Nebraska, Milliken led a record fundraising campaign and launched a partnership with the United States Strategic Command, creating one of the few University Affiliated Research Centers in the country. Through the Collegebound Nebraska program, he provided free tuition and mandatory fees for students whose family income was less than \$50,000. At Nebraska, he held faculty positions in the schools of law and public policy.

"Chancellor Milliken has the depth of wisdom and experience to handle the challenges and opportunities of this position," said current UC President Michael V. Drake, M.D. "I have great confidence in both his leadership and his commitment to the University's enduring values. I'm excited about his appointment and look forward to seeing all that he will accomplish at the University."

Milliken was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Nebraska and earned a law degree from New York University, where he was a Root-Tilden Scholar. He has received numerous prestigious honors, including the Distinguished Nebraskan Award presented by the state's governor, The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, awarded by the North Carolina governor, the Lifetime Achievement Award from City & State New York, the Fulbright Award for Global Education, and the President's Award from One Hundred Black Men of New York.

Milliken is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Council on Education and previously served on the board of the Association of Public and Land-grant

Universities (APLU), the Business-Higher Education Forum, and the Council on Competitiveness. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

“Over the last year we heard extensively from students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners about the profound impact UC has had on their lives and their aspirations for the future. In Chancellor Milliken we found common ground in support of a leader who will serve with integrity, openness and a deep commitment to the promise of public education — to advance opportunity, access and outcomes in service to the diverse communities of this state,” said Carmen Chu, UC regent and chair of the Special Committee to Consider the Selection of a President. “Chancellor Milliken’s distinguished career and lifelong commitment to public education prepares him to lead the University of California in this new era. As the University evolves, it is critical we engage leaders adept at navigating change and positioning the institution for long-term success. I am proud to welcome Chancellor Milliken and look forward to working with him. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank my colleagues on the Special Committee for their unwavering dedication and guidance in the process and our amazing search team, Alberto Pimentel and the team at SP&A, for their partnership and advice through this process.”

Milliken will assume his role as UC president on August 1, 2025, with a Board-approved annual salary of \$1,475,000. He succeeds President Drake, who has served as the University’s president since 2020 and who announced that he would step down in July 2025.

“Chancellor Milliken’s strong track record of collaborative leadership, his ability to listen, and his talent for building consensus serve him well as we enter a time of great change in higher education,” said Steven W. Cheung, M.D., chair of the Faculty Academic Senate. “In Milliken, we have found a highly respected leader who shares our highest aspirations for UC. I am confident that he will build on the University’s tradition of academic excellence, shared governance, indomitable resilience, and exceptional talent to ensure its continued positive impact on society and the world.”

The six-month-long search for the University’s next systemwide leader began in November 2024. Guided by [rigorous criteria](#) approved by the regents, the extensive

search process incorporated valuable input from a broad range of stakeholders, including faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community partners.

With nearly 300,000 students and generating over \$80 billion in economic activity, UC enhances the daily lives of people in California and across the country through world-class educational opportunities, groundbreaking research, and top-rated health care.

“Serving on the search committee was a tremendous responsibility and an opportunity to represent student voices,” said Student Regent Josiah Beharry. “Throughout this process, we were searching for more than just a leader — we were looking for someone who could speak the language of equity with action, who understands that affordability is not a privilege, but a promise. In Chancellor Milliken, we found someone who not only believes in the transformative power of public higher education, but who knows how to communicate its worth — to students, to families, and dreamers. He is someone who will champion those within the UC system and honor our responsibility to the communities beyond its walls. His collaborative spirit and unwavering belief in the power of education to open doors make him the kind of leader this moment demands.”

Milliken, 68, and his wife, Nana Smith, have three adult children.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.