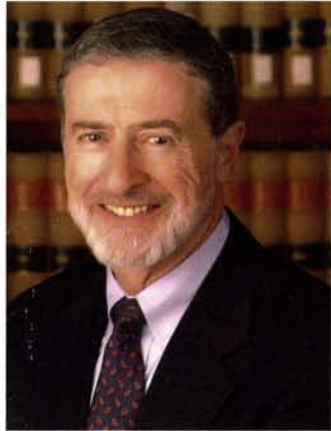


Norman Abrams, '55

On July 31, Norman Abrams, '55, completed his one-year term as Acting Chancellor of the University of California, Los Angeles. Reviewing his tenure, a reporter for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* wrote



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"The typical interim presidency is a quiet year or so of minding the store until a new president arrives. Interim chiefs lack the prestige, power, and time to accomplish much. Norman Abrams has bucked that trend."

Among other things, Abrams led a comprehensive effort that doubled the number of African-American students entering the university. He stood up against what he called "domestic

terrorism," condemning violence committed by groups protesting the use of animals in laboratory research. And he responded with alacrity and transparency to crises involving theft of personal data from university computers and alleged abuse of force by campus police.

He could do all that in part because he had both prestige and experience from positions he has held at UCLA, whose law faculty he joined in 1959. His teaching and scholarly writings won him substantial academic prestige, and he has served in high level administrative posts – including ten years as the campus's vice chancellor and a year as interim dean of the law school – where he earned widespread respect among the faculty. "He operates from a principled core and brings his own values into whatever he does," one faculty dean said of him.

His deep affection for UCLA is plain, but he says it has not supplanted his love for the University of Chicago, where he received his bachelor's degree (in two years) as well as his J.D. "I compare it to a first love that you never forget or quite get over, even as you spend many years afterward in a wonderful relationship with someone else. The Law School meant the world to me and shaped what I later became," Abrams says. Asked to name a particularly influential professor, he answers, "How could I do that? How could I choose among Blum, Kalven, Levi, and Meltzer, to name just four out of so many? They all were remarkable."

UCLA received about 47,000 applications for undergraduate admissions in 2006, more than any other college in the United States. African-American students made up only two percent of that incoming class, a situation Abrams found unacceptable. "We were becoming known as a place that did not welcome African-American students," he recounts. So he attacked the problem on many fronts, still respecting California's law that prohibits consideration of race in admissions to state universities. He influenced changes in the admissions process designed to view applications more holistically and he successfully pushed for the creation of more private funded scholarships for African-American students. He also spoke to high-school guidance counselors and visited predominantly African-American schools to express and reinforce UCLA's commitment. 2007 enrollment of African-Americans doubled as a result.

"I found the chancellorship remarkably exhilarating and fulfilling," he says, "but I'm also looking forward to returning to my writing and teaching." One of the first things Abrams did as his term wound down was to inform his publisher that he intended to prepare a third edition of his casebook, *Anti-Terrorism and Criminal Enforcement*, which was the first to tackle its topic and which approaches its subject matter from the perspective of substantive criminal law as well as criminal procedure. He also co-authored the fourth edition of his groundbreaking casebook, *Federal Criminal Law and Its Enforcement*, and co-authored the ninth edition of *Evidence – Cases and Materials*.

What has Abrams learned from the past year's experience? "A lot about my own capabilities and a lot about what happens when you collaboratively put positive values into action. I get too much credit for many things that couldn't have been accomplished without the efforts of many hundreds of people. I also learned that being a university president can get into your blood. Satisfied as I am right here at this place that means so much to me, I am not looking for a presidency – but if a special opportunity came in, I'd consider it."

"Maybe most importantly," he adds, "I learned a lot about my wonderful wife. She's always been basically a shy person, but she stepped into the role of UCLA's 'first lady' with an aplomb and energy that dazzled and delighted everyone, especially me."