Another View
By Mark G. Yudof

Growth in non-academic personnel is a tempting target in these days of budgetary shortfalls at universities across the nation.

In the case of the University of California, the inconvenient truth is that virtually all of the growth has been in parts of the system not funded by the state – the medical enterprise, research and auxiliary services.

It’s easy to miss the bull’s-eye by underestimating the scale of the total UC enterprise, as the Sacramento Bee did in a Sunday editorial comparing the pace of administrative growth vs. the growth in enrollment.

During the past decade, the greatest growth in non-academic, full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions has been in teaching hospitals (52 percent of total growth), followed by auxiliary services, such as residence halls and parking services (10 percent) and research (9 percent).

And the system launched the first new public university of the century, UC Merced.

One-fourth of UC employees – and a roughly equal proportion of administrators – work at five medical centers and associated teaching hospitals. The Bee mistakenly lumped these employees together with academic administrators. Similar distinctions should have been made for the research universe.

We can’t move money around. The truth is when we receive a dollar in a research grant or a dollar for patient care, we can’t move it to another account. Making administrative cuts to our medical centers or research enterprises will not yield the desired savings.

There are also misconceptions about the functions performed by managers and senior professionals, who, in addition to managers, include high-level computer programmers, doctors and dentists, nursing supervisors, pharmacists and engineers. This category makes up 5 percent of all FTE.

Ladder-rank faculty represent 9,400 of 14,200 faculty FTE. The editorial left nearly 5,000 instructors out of the equation in comparing administrative roles to faculty.

That said, it’s not wrong to emphasize the need to search vigilantly for administrative efficiencies. As stewards of the University of California, we owe it to the state to look constantly for ways to make the best use of UC resources, and we have been doing so for some time – even before the most recent state funding reductions. For example, the UC Office of the President cut $60 million and 500 employees, and is actively pursuing best practices and efficiencies in information technology, procurement, space management and other administrative categories.

In an institution of this size and scope, there’s always more to do. And we’re on it.