

Like a bull

The newest chancellor of the 350,000-student California State University, Charles Reed, approaches the job like the linebacker he was, leading the nation's largest college system at a time of unprecedented change and a breaking tidal wave of Boomers II.

By Sigrid Bathen

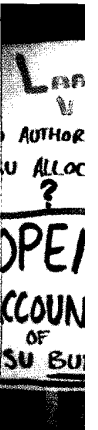
"Finally, we overcame the perception that the only thing they could do in Florida was play football and pick cotton."
— Florida State University Chancellor Charles Reed,
in a 1997 interview.

When Charles ("please, call me Charlie") Reed was chancellor of the Florida State University system, he would periodically take a day off from his regular job to work unannounced in the trenches of academe — in a college admissions office ("the lines were horrible"), as a maintenance worker, in a campus power plant, a student health center and at least once a year as a university police officer during a big football game in a state where folks take their football very seriously.

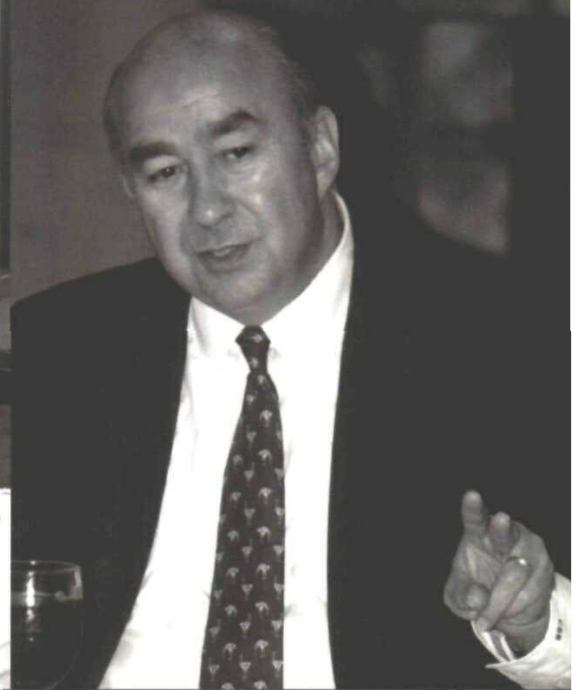
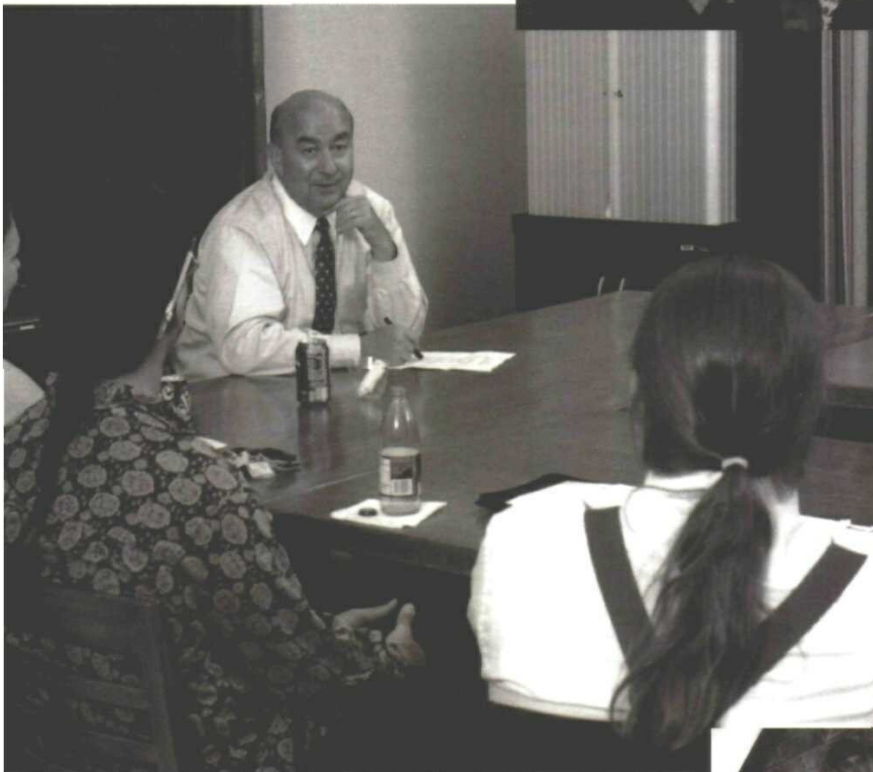
"Being a policeman on the night shift during homecoming at the University of Florida will teach you things you will never see in the office," he says.

It is vintage Reed — get to the heart of a problem from the ground up, then deal with it. If one fails — which he insists rarely occurs over the long haul — he draws on his high school and college football years: "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and try again tomorrow."

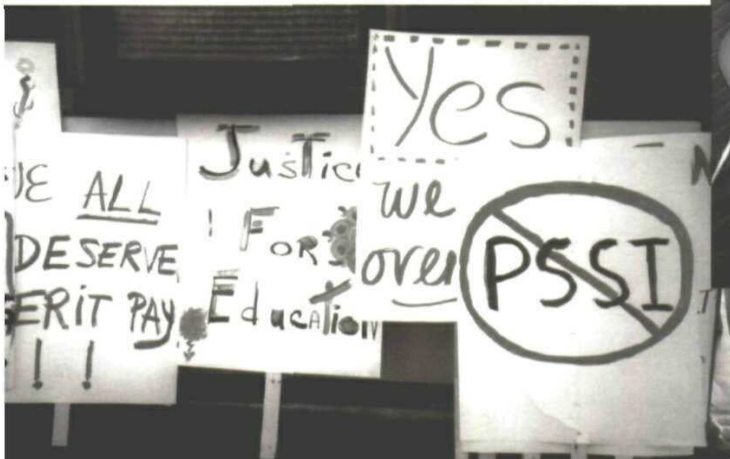
Nothing if not tenacious — "like a bulldog," is perhaps the most frequently heard description — Reed has thundered into California's \$3 billion state university system at a critical juncture. Like much of public education in California, it is a system under severe scrutiny, charged with providing high-quality, affordable education and responsible, among other things, for training teachers and nurses in a state with serious shortages of both. It is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, complicated by an aging, dissatisfied senior faculty threatened by the increasing use of part-time, non-tenured lecturers,



dog



(clockwise from top right): Faculty members picket a CSU Trustees meeting during a contract dispute; CSU Chancellor Charles Reed; with gifted teens in early entrance program at CSU-LA; more pickets; Reed meets with student leaders at CSU-Chico. Photos courtesy of CSU Public Affairs and California Faculty Association.





Charles Reed

perhaps even the end of tenure itself—and facing a tsunami, the so-called “Tidal Wave II,” of the boomers’ college-age babies all grown up and ready to matriculate.

“One of the things that attracted me to California was the mission of Cal State,” says Reed. “It attracts people who ordinarily may not have a chance to go to college, to better themselves and get a degree, to improve their quality of life, improve their community, help their families. It really is the people’s university.” But not, in his view, inclusive enough. Determined to open up the 23 CSU campuses to 24-hour, year-round operation, with increased use of technology for classes by cable and Internet, Reed has run into a brick wall of resistance in some quarters, mainly among the faculty unions, but vows to knock down the wall, or, better yet, walk through it.

“My single biggest surprise in coming here is how Cal State doesn’t operate on a year-round basis,” he says. “I am going to work as hard as I can to have us operate 12 months a year, six or seven days a week, 12 or 14 hours a day. That means more night classes, more weekend classes — and having faculty on campus six days a week. And faculty don’t like hearing this. I represent change, and they don’t like change.”

Tough words, which haven’t endeared the burly ex-football player to

the CSU Academy.

“He’s a decent human being who is misguided and does not quite understand the California situation yet,” says California Faculty Association President Terry Jones, a sociology professor at CSU-Hayward. “I think there is hope for him. And I think he is significantly better than our previous chancellor.”

That would be the mercurial Barry Munitz, now head of the J. Paul Getty Trust, transition director for Governor Gray Davis and arch enemy of faculty unions over proposals deemed a threat to faculty tenure and academic freedom. Though reportedly hand-picked by Munitz to succeed him (there were no other candidates), Reed does not seem to inspire the same level of animus, perhaps because of his homespun style.

The son of a Navy man who worked in the coal mines of western Pennsylvania, the oldest of seven children, Reed, 57, was born in Harrisburg and raised in Waynesburg, site of the largest bituminous coal mine in the world, where a minuscule number of residents are, or become, college graduates. The first in his family to graduate from college — one of three siblings to do so — he recalls his father’s admonition when he turned 17: “‘Charlie, you can either get a job next year, or a scholarship.’ That was reality.”

A high school quarterback, Reed won a full football scholarship to George Washington University in Washington, D.C., majoring in health and physical education, then stayed to earn master’s and doctoral degrees in education, working several part-time jobs. He taught at George Washington for seven years, rising to an associate professor. He married his seventh-grade sweetheart, the former Catherine Sayers, in 1964;

they have two children, a 31-year-old son, a money manager in Atlanta, Georgia, and a daughter, 29, who works for IBM in Raleigh, North Carolina.

After giving a speech about school reform in 1971, Reed was offered a job in the Florida Department of Education, where he coordinated educational policy and legislative relations. Working closely with the state Legislature, he caught the eye of Democratic state Senator Bob Graham, then chair of the Appropriations Committee and later Florida’s governor. Reed, a Democrat, went with Graham to the governor’s office as education coordinator, moving on to become the governor’s chief of staff. “The best education I ever received was those seven and one-half years as chief of staff to the governor. Your perspective, your insights and leadership, decision-making, crisis management, planning and budgets — all those come together in the governor’s office.”

Known as a tough, savvy political operative, Reed gets high marks for his lobbying skills from friend and foe alike. Steve Uhlfelder, chairman of the Florida state Board of Regents, called him “relentless” in pursuit of his goals. Proclaiming Reed “probably the best politician in all of Tallahassee,” Florida state Representative Bill Sublette (R-Orlando), chair of an educational funding committee in the Florida Legislature, said, “I found out very quickly



Reed at CSU Chico



how overmatched I was.”

Reed was tapped to head the 220,000-student Florida State University system in 1985, staying 12 years, longer than any previous chancellor, and seeing enrollment more than double in the 10-campus system, which, unlike the CSU, includes a mix of teaching and research institutions. By the time he left, federal funding for research in the Florida State system had ballooned from \$165 million in 1985 to \$750 million, and he was instrumental in landing a major national laboratory—the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, one of 28 national labs — to be run by two Florida universities and the federal Los Alamos lab in New Mexico. Reed regards the lab deal as a critical juncture in the progress of the Florida system. “Finally,” he said, “we overcame the perception that the only thing they could do in Florida was play football and pick cotton.”

He also established a new university—one with three to five-year teaching contracts and no tenure. Unable to get faculty support for the contract proposal throughout the Florida system, Reed instead opted to try it in one place, Florida’s Gulf Coast University. Faculty recruitment ads that ran in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Black Issues in Higher Education* and *Hispanic Outlook* in the spring of 1997 urged academics to “become a part of the rare academic adventure” in an institution committed to “new and innovative techniques” with a faculty willing to “experiment, assess, change and laugh.” And, not coincidentally, live on Florida’s sun-blessed southwest coast between Fort Myers and Naples.

Reed says there were 18,000 applicants—“mostly tenured faculty” at other institutions — for 120 faculty positions at Gulf Coast. According to a

study of the new university funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Project on Faculty Appointments, 15 percent of the faculty relinquished tenured positions at other universities and 24 percent abandoned “tenure-track” positions to work there on contract. Seventy-five percent had doctorates, compared to 67-70 percent at other central and southern Florida universities, and many of the new hires said they gave up tenure to be part of an innovative new university.

Reed was actively recruited for the CSU job, first by Munitz and then by the CSU Board of Trustees. In Florida, when the Board of Regents got wind of the California recruitment effort, they begged him to stay, even offering to up his annual salary to the \$254,000 of-

fered by CSU. Although faculty members were irritated by the closed nature of the hiring process, others offer such glowing endorsements of the new chancellor as to be almost maudlin. “There is virtually no superlative that does not apply to Charlie Reed,” said the late Florida Governor Lawton Chiles. “He is quite simply the best.”

Except for the California faculty unions, there seems to be virtually no state education leader who doesn’t like Charlie Reed. “He is a very smart, tough, dedicated administrator,” says William Hauck, president of the California Business Roundtable and president of the CSU Trustees. “His whole experience is in education and state government, and that is exactly what we needed.” Former state Senator Gary

Charles Reed

Professional

- Chancellor, California State University (1998-)
- Chancellor, State University System of Florida (1985-98)
- Office of the Governor, Florida: chief of staff (1984-85), deputy chief of staff (1981-84), director of legislative affairs (1980-81), education policy coordinator (1979-80)
- Florida State Department of Education: director, Office of Educational Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation (1975-79), associate for planning and coordination (1971-75)
- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education: director, national project (1970-71)
- George Washington University, Washington D.C.: associate professor of education (1970); assistant professor of education (1965-70), graduate assistant and instructor of physical education (1963-64)

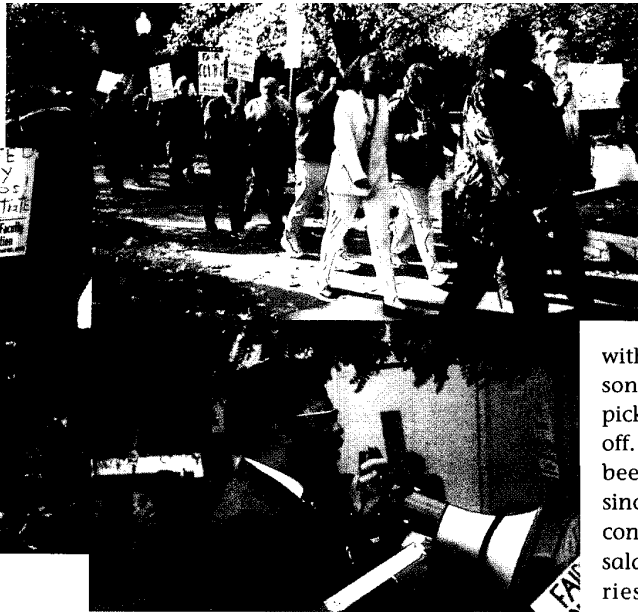
Education

- Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education (1963), Master of Science in Secondary Education (1964), Doctorate in Teacher Education (1970), George Washington University

Personal

- Born: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, September 29, 1941
- Family: wife, Catherine Sayers Reed; two children, Chip, 31, and Susan, 29.

Faculty union pickets



CSU faculty association President Terry

Hart (D-Santa Barbara), former chair of the Senate Education Committee and Governor Gray Davis' new education secretary, calls Reed "hard-charging, hard-working, very focused—he's certainly not a laid-back academic. He listens very carefully to different constituencies."

Many say Reed's strength is his

blunt-spoken ability to call it as he sees it. "Your family will tell you that you have spinach on your teeth," says state Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, "but others may not. Charlie will."

Some faculty members say Reed

"got off on the wrong foot" in California, first with the closed-door recruitment process and his identification with Munitz, long a thorn in the side of the faculty unions, and then with Reed's steamroller persona, which appeared to pick up where Munitz left off. Faculty members have been without a contract since their last three-year contract expired June 30; salaries are far below salaries in similar colleges around the country—a disparity Reed says he is committed to rectifying—and his emphasis on merit pay and technology-based, so-called "distance learning," all contributed to his prickly relationship with CSU faculty. Reed has visited all 23 CSU campuses, where he has had some tense confrontations with faculty mem-

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bers, many carrying pickets protesting his proposals.

While visiting the CSU campuses, he often meets with K-12 superintendents as well, mindful of the fact that the CSU is responsible for training most of California's teachers and must fund remedial education for the state's often underprepared high school graduates.

"I found his impatience refreshing," said David Gordon, superintendent of the fast-growing Elk Grove Unified School District in southern Sacramento County, which has long had a teacher-training "partnership" with area colleges.

Reed is adamant that California train its teachers more effectively and faster. "A lot of states produce very good teachers, and they do it in four years," says Reed. "In California, you go to school for four years, and then you go out [in the fifth year required for a California credential] and find you don't like kids. We have to include more clinical [classroom] experience in the freshman year."

During one of his typical campus visits last fall, this one on Election Day, November 3, Reed was greeted at CSU-Sacramento by chanting pickets, many of them students, and angry faculty. He doggedly met with them for much of the day, lunching with the Faculty Senate and fielding sometimes heated questions in a packed campus ballroom. Reed never lost his cool, but neither did he back down, later calling some of the histrionics "childish." He insists he wants to "improve tenure," not destroy it, increasing pay for valued professors using a merit system that many faculty say is capricious and would undermine academic freedom. Contract talks, stymied for months, appeared to be progressing during the CSU winter recess in late December and January, and both sides

were cautiously optimistic they could reach a viable compromise. "It remains acrimonious," said CSUS government professor Jeff Lustig, faculty association president at CSUS. "But you come to agreement not because you like each other."

Reed's western Pennsylvania working-class roots give him a strong identification with what he sees as the principal clientele of the CSU, students struggling to get a college education with limited financial resources. He becomes visibly angry when presented with examples of a system that sometimes does little—offering sparse night, summer or weekend classes and a crazy-quilt financial aid system—to bolster the educational aspirations of college students who have to work for a living.

"My brothers work shift work for Bethlehem Steel," says Reed. "My father worked in strip mines, and he helped build what they call 'tiples,' which is how you take the men down and bring them out of the mines. I have six brothers and sisters. Two of them went to college after I did. I really saw what an education can do for you."

Reed's critics often chide him for a widely published comment that he "welcomed" private universities that cater to working adults, scheduling courses on evenings and weekends, utilizing working professionals as faculty—and charging considerably more than the CSU. "Right now they are more convenient than we are," he says. "That is why they are beating us. So let's offer more night classes, more Saturday classes, more cohort classes where you can complete something in three or five weeks in the summertime."

Stunned that many CSU institutions operate minimally during the summer and are virtually closed on weekends—save libraries, food ser-

vice, some labs, but few actual classes—Reed thunders: "The summer thing has just shocked me. Students and faculty are scared to death that they might have to go to school in the summertime, work in the summertime. Culturally, it is just really foreign to California."

Something to do with the formerly agrarian economy of the region, when youth were needed to harvest the crops?

"California is a global economy," he says curtly. "We are no longer farmers." 🏠

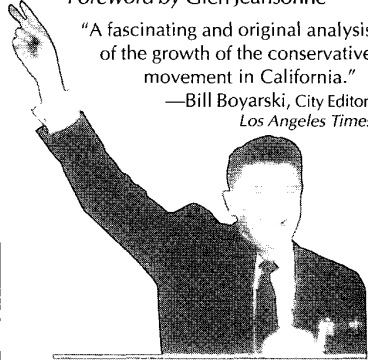
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