



UC Berkeley Rausser College of Natural Resources

April 18, 2025

Nomination of Gordon Rausser for the U.C. Berkeley Emeriti/a of the Year Award

Dear Members of the Emeritus/a of the Year Award Committee:

We are pleased to nominate Professor Gordon Rausser for the Emeritus/a of the Year Award. Since retiring from the U.C. Berkeley faculty on July 1, 2019, and assuming the role of Robert Gordon Sproul Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Dean Emeritus at the Rausser College of Natural Resources, and Professor of the Graduate School, Professor Rausser has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the university through his continued research, leadership, and public service. His post-retirement accomplishments and contributions exemplify the enduring value of emeriti faculty at Berkeley.

We first discuss his intellectual contributions and then his public service.

Intellectual Contributions

In his seven years as an emeriti professor, Professor Rausser has advanced and strengthened his leadership in original fundamental research on the frontiers of public policy, natural resource economics, and the measurement of governance structures. He has 13 publications, including in the *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science*, *Applied Economics Perspectives and Policy*, and the *Journal of Economic Literature*.

He is still regarded as an intellectual leader, as demonstrated by the number of times he has been invited to give keynote addresses at major global conferences. He has given more such addresses since retirement than in the last ten years of his active faculty status (2009–2019).

Professor Rausser has continued to play a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and institutional landscape of economics during his emeritus years. As the founding editor of the *Annual Review of Resource Economics* (ARRE) since 2006, Professor Rausser has actively stewarded the journal into one of the most influential publications in its fields: agricultural economics and policy, environmental economics, development economics, and natural resource economics. In addition, he has authored prefatory and introductory articles for every volume, framing each year's contributions and highlighting emerging research frontiers in the field.¹

¹ Rausser, G., Zilberman, D. 2024. Harnessing the Impact of Climate Change, Technology, and Institutions for Decarbonization. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*. pp. i–viii. Rausser, G., & Zilberman, D. 2023. Preface to the Fifteenth Volume of the *Annual Review of Resource Economics*. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 15, v–xii.
Deaton, A, Rausser G, Zilberman D. 2020. On the Life and Research Contributions of Angus Deaton. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 12.
Rausser, G., Zilberman, D. 2022. Resource Economics and Modern Science to the Rescue. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*.

Under his leadership (in collaboration with the ARRE editorial committee he selected and convinced to serve), the journal has steadily risen in disciplinary rankings across multiple domains. In *Agricultural Economics and Policy*, ARRE climbed from 9th of 17 journals in 2015 to 1st of 21 in 2020 and remained in the top 3 through 2022. In *Environmental Studies*, it improved from 65th of 93 in 2011 to 20th of 128 in 2020 and is currently ranked 44th of 182 in 2023. Even in the broader and more competitive category of *Economics*, ARRE rose from 108th of 305 in 2010 to a peak of 27th of 381 in 2021—a remarkable achievement for a journal dedicated to a specialized interdisciplinary field. Professor Rausser’s editorial leadership has transformed ARRE into a premier platform for synthesizing frontier research across natural resources, agriculture, development, and environmental economics. His sustained guidance, well into his emeritus years, has helped shape the discourse and direction of the field, amplifying the visibility and impact of interdisciplinary scholarship for a generation of academics and policymakers.

Setting the stage for future advancements in natural resource economics and public policy, a major Festschrift was organized upon Professor Rausser’s retirement, culminating in the 2022 volume *Modern Agricultural and Resource Economics and Policy: Essays in Honor of Gordon Rausser*.² Far from a retrospective, the book includes two forward-looking contributions by Rausser,³ advancing new directions in the field and reinforcing his continued role in shaping its future.

Professor Rausser’s most significant post-retirement academic achievement is his development of a new framework for understanding and guiding government policy design, culminating in his forthcoming delivery of the Galbraith Keynote Address at the 2025 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association’s (AAEA) annual meeting—one of the highest scholarly honors of his discipline.⁴ His lecture, “The Curation of Smart Governments” (with W. Foster), is based on his body of post-retirement research that redefines the economic foundations and political realities of governmental intervention. In a field long divided between free-market advocates and proponents of government intervention, Rausser introduces a third way: a portfolio-based framework that integrates pie-expanding public good policies (PERTs) with complementary redistributive policies (PESTs) to achieve both economic efficiency and political feasibility.

Traditional economic counsel often calls for maximizing public good provision while minimizing redistribution. Rausser challenges this view by showing that redistributive policies, when designed intelligently, are not merely politically necessary but can also be economically productive. He develops a framework in which “smart” PESTs, which compensate politically or economically disadvantaged groups while increasing resource mobility, become essential complements to PERTs in overcoming coordination failures and political resistance.

Dasgupta, P., Rausser, G. C., & Zilberman, D. (2023). Sir Partha Dasgupta: Meeting the Challenges of Environmental and Development Economics. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 15, 1–18.

Rausser, G., & Zilberman, D. (2021). Introduction. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 13, v–viii.

Rausser, G., & Zilberman, D. (2019). Introduction. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 11, v–ix.

² de Gorter, H., McCluskey, J., Swinnen, J., & Zilberman, D. (Eds.). (2022). *Modern agricultural and resource economics and policy: Essays in honor of Gordon C. Rausser*. Springer.

³ Howitt R, Karp L, Rausser G. 2022. Remote Sensing Technologies: Implications in Agricultural and Resource Economics. Chapter 18 in *Modern Agriculture and Resource Economics and Policy: Essays in Honor of Gordon Rausser*. Springer-Verlag. Rausser G., Just R. 2022. Principles of Policy Modeling in Food and Agriculture. Chapter 5 in *Modern Agriculture and Resource Economics and Policy: Essays in Honor of Gordon Rausser*. Springer-Verlag.

⁴ See Professor Sofia Villas-Boas’s accompanying nomination letter.

His empirical work applies this model to a range of real-world policies, including, among others, payment for ecosystem services, climate change adaptation, agricultural development subsidies, and transportation infrastructure.⁵ In each case, Rausser specifies the policy portfolio, distinguishing between growth-oriented and compensatory components and demonstrating how their joint implementation enabled success.

This approach has three major intellectual advances:

1. It recognizes political complementarities, where redistributive policies are crucial for breaking through political inertia and overcoming opposition from blocking coalitions.
2. It emphasizes economic complementarities, where redistribution improves economic outcomes by reducing frictions such as asset immobility and information asymmetries.
3. It introduces “prescriptive realism” to policymaking: a framework that neither idealizes nor demonizes government but acknowledges the complex trade-offs required to make governance both intelligent and adaptive.

What makes this research particularly compelling is its normative ambition and practical utility. Rausser is not only offering critique; he is curating an empirically grounded and strategically implementable model of government. The resulting vision of “smart government” reflects his lifetime of engagement with public policy, including three federal government political appointments, but it is distinctly a post-retirement contribution, one that has already begun to shape scholarly and policy discussions on how to design institutional arrangements that are equitable, efficient, and politically durable.

Professor Rausser has also taken his research on “smart governments” to international audiences, serving as a keynote speaker at two Berkeley–China Summits (“The Curation of Smart Governments” in 2023 [attached] and “The Political Economy of Capitalism: Democratic vs. Autocratic Regimes” in 2024 [attached]), where he addressed policymakers, scholars, and institutional leaders. In May 2024, he delivered a major presentation at Peking University titled “*The Design and Implementation of Smart Governments*,” reinforcing the global relevance of his work. Additionally, at the International Consortium on Applied Bioeconomy Research (ICABR) Conference in Ravello, he gave three invited presentations on: “*The Co-Existence of Capitalism and Democracy: Implications for the Bioeconomy*,” “*Smart Policies for Bioeconomy Systems in the Face of Climate Change*,” and “*Promising New Technologies for Decarbonization*.” These international engagements reflect the wide resonance of his ideas and his continued leadership in shaping global policy dialogues.

Public Service

Since retirement, he has made critical public service contributions to the University of California, Berkeley. As an emeriti professor, he provided the leadership to establish the Berkeley Space Center at Moffett Field, chairing two faculty steering committees. He was selected as co-chair of the UC Berkeley Campaign, February 2020–February 2024, which required a huge amount of his available time. More recently, with the inauguration of the new Chancellor Rich Lyons, Professor Rausser was asked to serve as an advisor (pro-bono) to the Office of Intellectual Property & Industry Research Alliances. The Chancellor instructed each team member to read Rausser’s publication on public-private research university partnerships (an award-winning book by Rausser and two of his students).

⁵ Rausser, G., Foster, W., Choi, E. 2025 The Political Economy of Industrial Policies in Natural Resources. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, forthcoming.

Professor Rausser has continued to contribute at the highest levels of university governance. As a member of the Board of Trustees of the Central European University (CEU) and his role on the trustee's finance committee, he is serving in two critical leadership roles: Chair of the Governance Committee and Chair of the Search Committee for CEU's next Rector. In these positions, he has helped guide a globally renowned academic institution through pivotal transitions, demonstrating the same commitment to institutional integrity and strategic vision that has defined his career at Berkeley.

Equally impactful has been Professor Rausser's sustained public service commitment to U.C. Berkeley itself, where he has taken on a series of high-level strategic leadership roles that have directly shaped the university's future.⁶ First, Professor Rausser chaired a faculty steering committee to evaluate whether UC Berkeley should enter into a long-term partnership with NASA to develop the Moffett Field site for research and instructional use. The committee's report, completed in December 2019, dubbed the Rausser Report, was instrumental in shaping campus strategy.⁷ Professor Rausser was subsequently invited to present the report's findings to the Board of Regents and the Academic Senate, advocating for the approval of a 99-year lease with NASA. This work culminated in a peer-reviewed publication in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which further evaluated the potential of Public-Private Research and Development Partnerships (PPRDs) and the innovation opportunities in space exploration.⁸

Second, in 2022, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Ben Hermalin asked Professor Rausser to serve in another role as chairman of a follow-up committee on the Moffett Field strategic development following the Regents' approval of the partnership.⁹ The committee, comprising 17 campus thought leaders (all Academic Senate faculty except Professor Rausser and Darek DeFreece), met weekly throughout the spring semester and continued its work through the summer and fall of 2023. The final report in November 2023 was over 100 pages in length.¹⁰ On December 12, 2023, Professor Rausser presented its key findings to the Chancellor's Cabinet and the Council of Deans.

Third, Professor Rausser was one of four co-chairs of the most successful development campaign in U.C. Berkeley's history—the only emeritus faculty member asked to serve in this role. From the campaign's public launch in early 2020 through its completion on February 29, 2024, he provided sustained leadership and strategic guidance. The campaign surpassed its original \$6 billion goal, ultimately raising \$7.37 billion. His contributions are documented in a dedicated website prepared by Chancellor Carol Christ.¹¹

Fourth, Professor Rausser's thought leadership in university-industry collaboration is now being actively integrated into campus operations. In August 2024, Eric Geigerich, Director of Berkeley's Industry Alliances Office, reached out to Professor Rausser to express his intent, at the direction of Chancellor

⁶ See Alexandre Bayen's supporting nomination letter.

⁷ See the attached charge letter from former Vice Chancellor and Provost Paul Alivisatos and the "Moffett Field Project at NASA Ames Faculty Steering Committee Report."

⁸ Rausser, G., E. Choi, A. Bayen. 2023. "Public-Private Partnerships in Fostering Outer Space Innovations." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

⁹ See the attached charge letter from Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Ben Hermalin.

¹⁰ See the attached "Berkeley Space Center Faculty Steering Committee Final Report."

¹¹ See the attached dedication website from former Chancellor Carol Christ.

Rich Lyons, to incorporate the frameworks from Rausser's 2016 book, "Structuring Public-Private Research Partnerships for Success: Empowering University Partners," into the office's internal training and external strategy.¹² In his message, Geigerich noted that the book's insights closely mirror and elevate best practices in contract negotiation and partnership design and proposed further collaboration through staff training and high-level discussions with campus leaders.¹³ This renewed engagement with Rausser's earlier work underscores its enduring relevance and institutional impact. It demonstrates how his research continues to shape Berkeley's evolving approach to innovation and entrepreneurship in the present day. These contributions demonstrate Professor Rausser's unwavering commitment to the campus and its mission.

Imagining an emeriti professor who has accomplished more in public service, scholarly leadership, and institutional impact is difficult. His post-retirement contributions have had an enduring influence on research, strategic partnerships, and university advancement. His roles as a scholar, editor, global thought leader, and institutional steward exemplify the rare breadth and depth of engagement that this award seeks to honor. His continued service spans disciplines, borders, and institutions, affirming why he eminently deserves the Emeritus/a of the Year Award.

Signed (listed alphabetically),

James Analytis
Charles Kittel Chair of Condensed Matter Physics
Professor, Physics

Kathryn Moriarty Baldwin, MPA
Assistant Dean of Development
Rausser College of Natural Resources

Steven Beckwith
Professor of the Graduate School
Professor Emeritus, Department of Astronomy

Darek DeFreece
Regent Emeritus
Berkeley Space Center

Alain de Janvry
Professor of the Graduate School
Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics

Roger Falcone
Professor of Physics

Lee Fleming
Professor of IEOR, College of Engineering
Faculty Co-Director, Tusher Strategic Initiative for Technology Leadership, Haas School of Business

¹² See the attached "Introductory Email from Geigerich" and "Geigerich Questions and Topics Posed."

¹³ See the attached "Geigerich Thank You Email."

Amy Gardner
Interim Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Finance

Marta Gonzalez
Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning and
Civil & Environmental Engineering

Ann E. Harrison
Professor and Bank of America Dean Emeritus
Haas School of Business

Randy Howard Katz
Vice Chancellor for Research Emeritus and United Microelectronics Corporation Distinguished
Professor Emeritus in
Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

Jeffrey M. Perloff (nominator)
Distinguished Professor
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Elisabeth Sadoulet
Professor of the Graduate School.
Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics

Leslie Schibsted, BS 86
Interim Vice Chancellor of UDAR and the Campaign Director of Campaign Planning and Board of
Visitors in the University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR) department

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