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UC to spend up to \$6m on crumbling mansion for new president Janet Napolitano despite tuition fees doubling and teacher layoffs due to budget cuts

- Despite recent cutbacks University of California has asked for millions from private endowment board to renovate historic Blake House
- It will cost \$3.5- \$6m to completely renovate the run-down abode, that for decades housed university presidents
- Napolitano, former Homeland Security Secretary and the first female UC president will live in rented house costing \$10,000 a month while mansion repaired
- Napolitano's base salary will be \$570,000, and she'll receive \$142,500 in moving expenses
- Plans also call for adding a laundry, kitchen and upgraded bathrooms to the 4,300-square-foot private living quarters

By [Associated Press](#)

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When former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano takes over as president of the University of California later this month, she will live in leased accommodations that the college system is renting for nearly \$10,000 a month.

While the price tag is several thousand dollars less than what the university spent leasing her predecessor's home, some university officials say it might be more cost-effective in the long run to fix up a vacant mansion that housed previous university presidents.

A committee of the University of California's governing board agreed Tuesday to spend \$620,000 toward the multi-million cost of renovating the historic Blake House, which is located not far from UC Berkeley and has been unoccupied since 2008. The full Board of Regents must review the request, which it is scheduled to do on Wednesday.



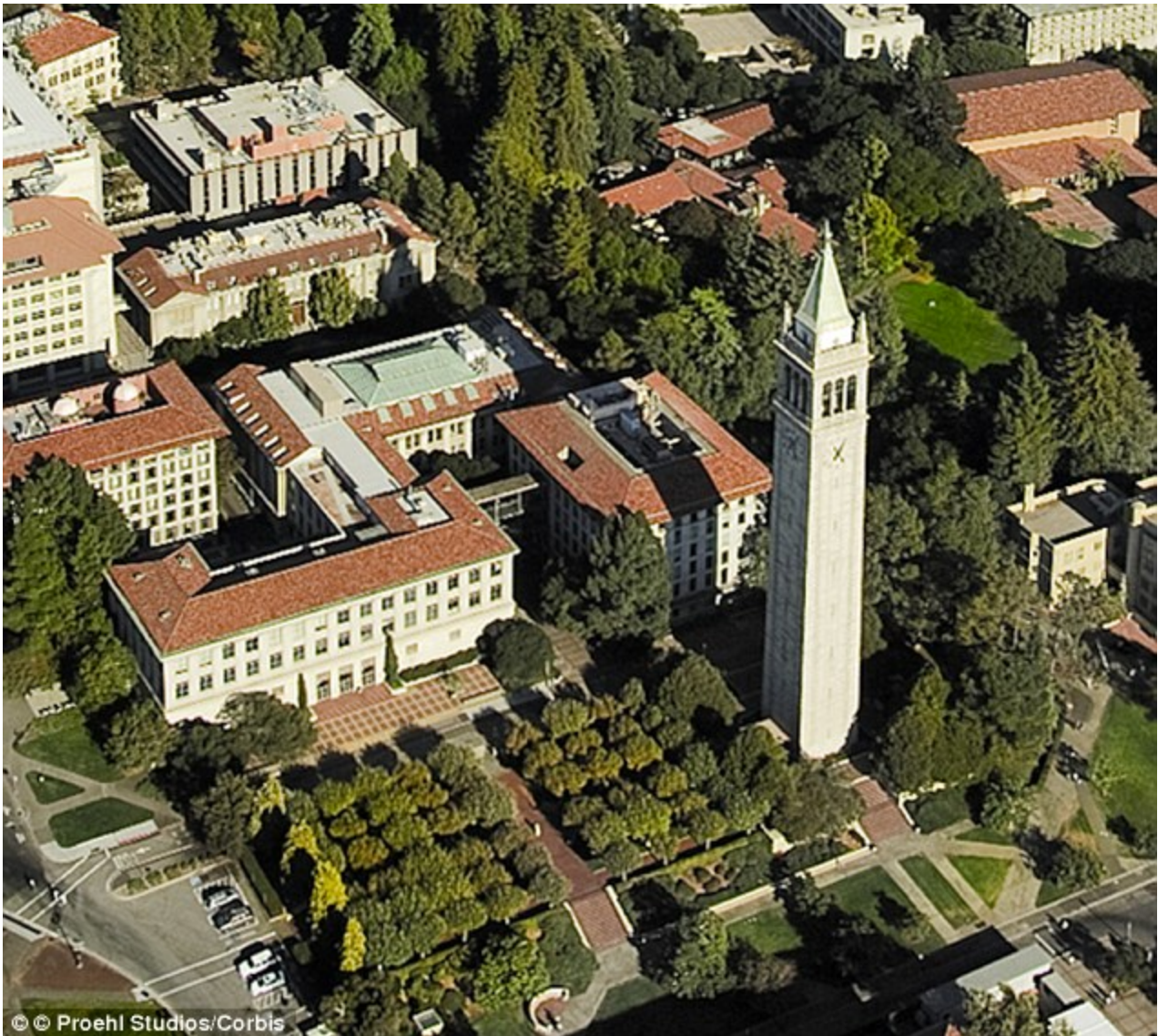
University of California prepares to repair and renovate this 13,269-square-foot mansion, the Blake House, that for decades housed past University presidents. Located in East Bay hills not far from the Berkeley campus, house has been vacant since 2008 and declared uninhabitable following years of neglect

The money will be used to repair the roof and to study if the three-bedroom, seven-bath house and its 10 acres of gardens should again be used as the president's official residence, reconfigured for some other purpose or sold off.

Napolitano succeeds outgoing president Mark Yudof, who saw the system through one of the most difficult financial periods in its 145-year history, which led to sharp cutbacks in state support for public higher education. In the last five years nearly \$1 billion was cut from the university's state funding.

'We should focus on what is the best use of this piece of property, is it sale, renovations, divisions, or rezoning it,' Regent Hadi Makarechian said.

'We shouldn't just spend money to fix the roof and then do nothing about it for another three or four years.'



An aerial shot of the University of California at Berkeley. Decaying Blake House in Kensington, a 1924 mansion, is located nearly the Berkeley campus

The house has been unoccupied for the last five years, a period in which the university spent more than \$100,000 a year renting houses for the president Napolitano is replacing.

It will cost an estimated \$3.5 million to \$6 million to completely renovate the stately, but run-down abode, where the university's president is expected to entertain and hold meetings, as well as live.

Money for both the repairs and the rent for an alternative presidential residence come from a private endowment.

The house, built in 1924 and located in the hills not far from UC Berkeley, was bequeathed to the university by wealthy alumni and became home to President Charles Hitch in 1968.

According to the [San Francisco Gate](#), \$97,636 in private funds has been spent to maintain the home.

Foundation problems and roof problems are among the many repairs the home is in need of. Due to the recession, plans were put on hold.



Former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano is the first female UC president in its 145-year history. She will live in leased house that UC system is renting for nearly \$10,000 a month while mansion is repaired for her possible use

The university has leased Napolitano a 3,500-square-foot residence in Oakland as she begins her new job on September 30, Montiel said.

At \$9,950 a month, the rent is \$2,250 less than the home where Yudof and his wife have spent the past three years and \$3,400 less than the house they rented for two years before that.

Yudof is now among the officials arguing that it would be more cost-effective to fix up Blake House and have future presidents live and host university-related functions there.

A report prepared for the Regents' Committee on Grounds and Buildings states the officials considered buying another house for that purpose this year, but were unable to locate one under \$5 million.

What's more, selling Blake House is complicated because its gardens were donated to the Berkeley campus to train future landscape architects.

To get the house into shape, officials are thinking about strengthening its ability to withstand earthquakes, repairing the plumbing and electrical systems, enlarging one of the first-floor kitchens to better accommodate large functions, and improving overall security by adding gates, barriers and surveillance cameras connected to the UC Berkeley police.



Blake House in Kensington, Calif. will be renovated as new university president, Janet Napolitano prepares to take over for Mark Yudof. The mansion has been vacant since 1968 when President Charles Hitch lived there

Plans also call for adding a laundry, kitchen and upgraded bathrooms to the 4,300-square-foot private living quarters.

Although money for the project would come from the private endowment, which as of July was valued at \$188 million with annual earnings estimated at \$6.5 million, UC officials historically have been reluctant to spend money on routine maintenance at Blake House, much less a complete renovation.



A view of the Blake House around the time it was built in 1924. The mansion is 13,329 square feet and currently uninhabitable

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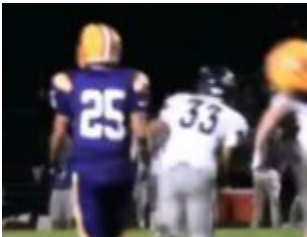
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Leftist elitist.

- [Slewischwy](#) , Conway, 18/9/2013 23:08

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I'm a liberal, and I think this is ridiculous. With that kind of salary, she can afford her own rent.

- [Denise](#) , Land Of Lincoln USA, 18/9/2013 23:05

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With her \$600 K base salary who says CA is broke?

- [Marc](#) , DC, United States, 18/9/2013 23:03

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Put her in a FEMA trailer and tell her, good luck.....

- [Grace](#) , tucson, United States, 18/9/2013 23:03

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outrageous!

- [PoPollyfeller](#) , Pocantico Hills, 18/9/2013 22:48

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A university president generally lives in a provided house, and it is usually pretty elegant. Sounds to me like they are doing it the right way. If there are budget constraints, the remodel should be financed with private money, and that's what they are doing. If I had anything to do with that, I would want to make sure that a vegetable garden was a required part of that property, even tho UCLA isn't Ag. By the way, I don't care much for that individual, but I think UC knows well enough who they want to hire. It is one of the best state university systems anywhere.

- [fishbait](#) , Inland NW, 18/9/2013 22:46

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Liberals

- [Mari](#) , Florida, United States, 18/9/2013 22:41

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Great idea...you stupid selfish rich woman. use your own \$\$\$ by donating it to the school, you still get to live in it.

- [Coach](#) , Troy oh, 18/9/2013 22:39

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Glad Janet Incompetanto will be someone else's headache soon.

- [Rigil](#) , Kent, 18/9/2013 22:31

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She belongs in prison .

- [SlobberingFits](#) , Florida, United States, 18/9/2013 22:20

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