

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:

The University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) met three times by videoconference in Academic Year 2018-2019 to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in Senate Bylaw 130. Highlights of the Committee's activities and accomplishments are noted in this report.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING PRIORITIES AND POLICIES

Last year the committee monitored developments related to new screening policies for discretionary grants instituted by federal funding agencies which politicized decisions about science research funding and may have resulted in the denial of grant applications for political reasons. As delineated in [a memo to Academic Council](#), UCAF was concerned that this politicization has the potential to harm UC faculty who depend on federal grant funding to further their research. In December, UCAF learned that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had notified the principal investigator of a UCSF HIV research lab that it would not renew the facility's contract in 2019. The researcher was informed that the decision had been made by high level political administrators, not by the NIH. UCAF agreed to restate its earlier concerns about this evident disregard for academic freedom. In [a new memo to Council](#), the committee again urged the University to take a strong stand against the ongoing politicization of research funding and to monitor and document cases of interference that undermine scientific discovery and academic freedom.

HARASSMENT OF UC FACULTY AND STUDENTS

UCAF discussed the tactics being employed to intimidate, disparage, and harass UC faculty. UC academics engaged in controversial research are being bombarded with California Public Records Act and Freedom of Information Act requests, which has reached an abusive level. The committee will track the drafting of legislation to protect faculty from the abusive use of these laws. The use of social media to attack faculty (and students) was also discussed by UCAF in March. Websites, often operated and funded anonymously, target people who are liberal scholars or politically active in support of Palestinian rights. At present, the University views online harassment as legally non-actionable but the committee agreed this activity is a threat to academic freedom. In [a memo endorsed by Council](#), UCAF outlined the potential negative ramifications of cyber abuse and Council subsequently [issued a broader statement](#) condemning these attacks. It should also be noted that interlopers identifying themselves as representatives of college-focused alternative right groups have engaged in intimidating behavior on UC campuses and within classrooms.

OTHER ISSUES AND ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

In response to requests for formal comment from the Academic Council, UCAF also issued views on the following:

- Proposed new APM Section 011, Academic Freedom, Protection of Professional Standards, and Responsibilities of Non-Faculty Academic Appointees
- [Chancellors' Letter on Academic Boycotts](#)

Additionally, UCAF devoted part of each regular meeting to reports on issues facing local committees, including controversial speakers on campus and resources on academic freedom.

Respectfully submitted,

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