



November 30, 2009

Open letter from the Academic Council to the University of California community

We are the Academic Council of the University: we are the chairs of the ten campus divisions, as well as the chairs of the systemwide committees. We write to address the protests on many of UC campuses over the Regents' decision to increase student fees by \$2,500 per year. This decision followed budget shortfalls that have entailed significant staff layoffs and cuts to a range of student services. Faculty and staff also are suffering from significant reductions in compensation due to the current year's salary reductions and furloughs.

We share the anguish over the policies adopted in the face of the state's abrupt 20% disinvestment in higher education. The budget shortfall wounds the institution and community we cherish. We believe these policies are a regrettable but necessary response to the state's actions. While we are committed to doing everything we can to mitigate their effects on the most vulnerable populations of our students and staff, we recognize that many disagree deeply, and that vigorous and vocal protest is an understandable response. The passionate advocacy of students, staff, and faculty for the University and its public mission has been remarkable.

Many of the protest activities were appropriate forms of peaceful advocacy. We are concerned, however, about activities at several campuses that disrupted our educational mission and interfered with the freedom of fellow students, faculty, and staff, to teach, learn, research, and work. We are especially concerned about group protests in which a number of individuals attempted to move past police barricades, physically threaten and throw objects at police, and surround vehicles to trap those within. These activities are unlawful and disrespectful of the rights of others, and they create a serious risk of violence for everyone in the area: police, protestors, and bystanders. A number of injuries, some serious, were sustained last week by both protestors and police officers.

We will insist, through all avenues open to us, that uses of force by police will be subject to inquiry and review, as well as the policies that govern crowd control. While we expect campus police professionals to be committed to accommodating peaceful protest, we realize that there may be failures of policy or individual action. We are committed to ensuring that the University remains a place where it is safe to teach and learn – and engage in peaceful protest.

At the same time, we wish to remind everyone of the limits of protest, and of our obligation to be civil, to show respect for different points of view, and to take personal responsibility for our own and each other's safety. Occupation of university buildings, for example, directly interferes with the rights of other members of the community.

The problems that confront our University are daunting, and finding solutions to them will require the collective best efforts of our students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. Tempers will worsen and patience will shorten as these policies take hold, but we must channel our energies outwards, towards advocating for restoring funding to the University of California so that it can fulfill its mission of providing democratic access to the great research universities of our state.

Sincerely,

Henry C. Powell, Chair
Academic Senate

Daniel L. Simmons, Vice Chair
Academic Senate

Christopher Kutz, Chair
UC Berkeley Divisional Senate

Robert Powell, Chair
UC Davis Divisional Senate

Judith Stepan-Norris, Chair
UC Irvine Divisional Senate

Robin L. Garrell, Chair
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Martha Conklin, Chair
UC Merced Divisional Senate

Anthony W. Norman, Chair
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William Hodgkiss, Chair
UC San Diego Divisional Senate

Elena Fuentes-Afflick, Chair
UC San Francisco Divisional Senate

Joel Michaelsen, Chair
UC Santa Barbara Divisional Senate

Lori Kletzer, Chair
UC Santa Cruz Divisional Senate

Sylvia Hurtado, Chair
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Farid Chehab, Chair
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Alison Butler, Chair
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Keith R. Williams, Chair
University Committee on Educational Policy

Shane White, Chair
University Committee on Faculty Welfare

Gregory Miller, Chair
University Committee on Research Policy

Peter Krapp, Chair
University Committee on Planning and
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