



UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Assembly of the
Academic Senate
Faculty Representative,
UC Board of Regents
Academic Senate

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April 8, 2025

Michael V. Drake, M.D.
President, University of California

Re: Academic Council Statement: The Defense of the University

Dear President Drake,

On behalf of the Academic Council, I am transmitting the enclosed statement, *The Defense of the University*, which the Council unanimously endorsed at its special meeting today. I also request that you forward this transmittal to the Council of Chancellors and the Board of Regents.

The statement is a call to action and a reaffirmation of the University's public mission in the face of threats to higher education nationwide. It highlights the essential role of shared governance and urges you as president, UC campus chancellors, and UC Regents to take bold, coordinated steps to protect academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and the safety and privacy of our faculty, students, and staff.

The Academic Senate stands ready to partner with the administration and Regents to preserve the University's capacity to serve California and the world through excellence in teaching and mentoring, transformative research, and public service. Unity, courage, and clarity of purpose are more essential now than ever.

Thank you for your attention to this significant matter.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Academic Council

Encl.

cc: Academic Council
Provost and Executive Vice President Newman
Secretary and Chief of Staff to The Regents Lyall
Vice President and Chief of Staff Kao
Senate Division Executive Directors
Senate Executive Director Lin



**Academic Council Statement: The Defense of the University
April 8, 2025**

Higher education is under direct and sustained attack. Deliberate and systemic shifts in the federal government’s approach to higher education—which include defunding crucial research, intervening in academic affairs, and policing expression—will have profound downstream consequences, threatening the integrity of knowledge production and the public role of universities in a democratic society. The mission of the University of California is thus existentially at risk.

Unity will be critical in the weeks, months, and years ahead, as the University of California fights to preserve its capacity to prepare the next generation of the workforce. These graduates will be leading health care providers, educators, authors, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Given the opportunity, they will conduct the research leading to breakthroughs in science and technology, new treatments for disease, new forms of creative expression, and new insights about the world we inhabit. Let us remember that our university played a foundational role in the development of the Internet, satellite communications, nuclear energy, biotechnology, agronomy, and many other domains that have substantially improved our collective well-being. If our research and teaching mission is compromised, what future discoveries will be lost, and at what cost to the public health and welfare of all Californians?

The Academic Senate is one of the pillars of shared governance of the University of California, along with the Regents and the administration. Policies and practices of shared governance have served the institution well during previous crises, and we will have even greater need of them as we move forward. The urgency and complexity of the problems we confront necessitate collaborative efforts. We need to stand, speak, and work together—informed by our shared, fundamental principles—in order to guard our mission. This approach requires that the Regents, President, and Chancellors of the University of California actively engage faculty and leverage their expertise to secure a strong future for the University and the many constituencies it serves. Now is the time for bravery to override fear.

We thus call on the Regents, President, and Chancellors of the University of California to expend every effort, commit necessary resources, and use all legal measures to defend our ability to conduct consequential, transformative research and provide high-quality teaching and mentoring. We call on our leaders to ensure the safety and privacy of students, faculty, and staff. And we further call on our leaders to protect academic freedom and faculty control of the curriculum—proactively and publicly.

While current events may seem shockingly unprecedented, there are historical parallels. From these we learn that the future is contingent upon how we respond now. We must come together as a community to strengthen our ability to fulfill our institutional mission and uphold our commitment to the state of California. These collective efforts extend to working together with colleagues at other universities to envision and implement plans for preserving higher education's ability to contribute to the common good.

Let the future historical record show that we rose to the challenge of defending the University of California, and we did so in ways that did not betray its core values.

The distinctive [mission of the University](#) is to serve society as a center of higher learning, providing long-term societal benefits through transmitting advanced knowledge, discovering new knowledge, and functioning as an active working repository of organized knowledge. That obligation, more specifically, includes undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, research, and other kinds of public service, which are shaped and bounded by the central pervasive mission of discovering and advancing knowledge.

Fiat Lux.

University of California
Systemwide Academic Senate [Council](#), 2024-2025