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Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate  
Faculty Representative to the Regents  
University of California  
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

April 16, 2021

**MICHAEL T. BROWN  
PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

**Re: Bullying at the University**

Dear Michael,

At its March 2021 meeting, the Academic Council unanimously endorsed the attached letter from the University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) asking the Academic Council to work with the administration to develop a systemwide policy on bullying.

UCFW suggests that such a policy would include definitions, guidelines, resolution strategies, and consequences for bullying and abusive conduct. Although bullying and harassment are related to one another, they differ in several important ways. The result, at present, is that bullying is not covered in existing policies or dealt with uniformly across the campuses. Moreover, the UCOP guidelines regarding bullying put forth in 2016 by President Napolitano (<https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000647/AbusiveConductAndBullying>) have not been adopted on all campuses. The letter from UCFW describes other key points, including that this unacceptable workplace behavior is currently addressed on campuses by deans and departments chairs, who often are ill-equipped to handle these matters. As the letter states, instances of bullying would be more effectively and fairly addressed by independent campus-level bodies with specific expertise.

Council agrees that bullying has a serious, often menacing, impact on campus climate that effects faculty morale, retention, and recruitment. We look forward to working with you on a policy that addresses bullying problems at the University and supports a more inclusive and welcoming campus environment.

Thank you for considering this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Gauvain".

Mary Gauvain, Chair  
Academic Council

Cc: UCFW  
Vice Provost Carlson  
Chief of Staff Peterson  
Academic Council  
Senate Directors  
Systemwide Senate Director Baxter

Encl.



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE (UCFW)  
Shelley Halpain, Chair  
[Shalpain@ucsd.edu](mailto:Shalpain@ucsd.edu)

Assembly of the Academic Senate  
1111 Franklin Street, 12<sup>th</sup>  
Oakland, CA 94607-5200

March 16, 2021

**MARY GAUVAIN, CHAIR  
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**RE: Bullying at the University of California**

Dear Mary,

The University Committee on Faculty Welfare (UCFW) has discussed bullying at the University of California, and we write to ask your assistance in this complicated but important area. In our discussions, several points became clear:

- Bullying occurs at every level of interaction at UC: faculty-faculty, dean-faculty, faculty-researcher, staff-faculty, faculty-TA, etc. Incidents of bullying in the medical centers appear to be even more frequent and egregious.
- Current efforts are inadequate. The few anti-bullying programs that exist focus on prevention, but offer no guidance for resolution strategies or consequences. These programs are administered differently across and within campuses. A standard definition of bullying and a system of fairness and accountability are lacking system-wide.
- Female faculty, staff, and students, those from underrepresented groups, and international scholars and researchers are more likely to be subject to bullying, and more likely underreport its occurrence.
- The difference between bullying and harassment is unclear to many, and the threshold at which bullying becomes harassment must be made clear.
- Trying to shoe-horn bullying into the wrong framework would be a disservice to the UC community.

UCFW asks the Academic Council to work with the administration to develop definitions, policies, and consequences for bullying and abusive conduct for the system. We note that such policies should not leave adjudication to deans or department chairs, because responding to bullying with fairness and appropriate remedial actions requires specialized expertise and the avoidance of conflicts of interest. We also suggest exploring ways to conduct more in-depth background checks to potential new hires, to avoid hiring individuals with a prior history of bullying.

UCFW understands that there are many types of bullying, and the best ways to resolve them may differ. We suggest working with ombuds offices and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) coordinators to identify the most common types of bullying, to further develop toolkits, and inform future planning. Acceptable policy solutions must include important protections not only for those accused of conduct violations but also for complainants, similar in concept to whistleblower protections.

Campus climate surveys routinely report bullying as a significant concern, and we are eager to make progress in redressing this issue.

Sincerely,

Shelley Halpain, UCFW Chair

Copy: UCFW  
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director, Academic Senate  
Robert Horwitz, Academic Council Vice Chair