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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 6, 2021

**MICHAEL DRAKE, PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

**Re: Support for Animal Research at the University of California**

Dear President Drake,

At its March 2021 meeting, the Academic Council endorsed the attached letters from the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) and the University Committee on Academic Freedom (UCAF) expressing concern about the harassment of UC animal researchers and calling on the University to defend faculty with stronger expressions of public support. The letters emphasize that the harassment can affect faculty mental health, personal safety, and also academic freedom, given its potential to drive researchers from their fields and impair the advancement of knowledge.

The Academic Council joins the committees in calling for a proactive systemwide effort to educate the public about the benefits of animal research and to communicate institutional support to faculty on campuses. We understand that there is promising activity in the form of a new Working Group on Transparency in Animal Research led by the systemwide Office of Research and Innovation. Nonetheless, this issue should be a greater priority, and we believe it is worth considering a presidential-level effort that coordinates academic, legal, and communication units at UCOP.

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: Vice President Maldonado  
Academic Council  
UCORP Chair Desjardins  
UCAF Chair Soucek  
Chief of Staff Kao  
Campus Senate Directors  
Senate Director Baxter

Encl.



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY (UCORP)  
Richard Desjardins, Chair  
Email: desjardins@ucla.edu

University of California  
Academic Senate  
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Fl.  
Oakland, California 94607

March 29, 2021

MARY GAUVAIN  
CHAIR, ACADEMIC COUNCIL

**RE: Support for Animal Research at the University of California**

Dear Mary,

Animal research is a major part of the research enterprise at the University of California. Researchers at the UC do field, laboratory, and agricultural work with a variety of species including everything from insects to fish, to rodents, agricultural animals, and non-human primates. Animal research at UC has led to many highly important discoveries in the areas of human and animal health, and it brings in a large amount of federal, state, and foundation funding. Animal research at UC is conducted with the highest regard for animal welfare and in accordance with all regulations of state and federal law. All ten UC campuses are fully accredited by AAALAC International, which monitors laboratory animal welfare.

Animal rights organizations have recently ramped up activity aimed at harassing researchers, including those at the University of California. A record number of Freedom of Information and Public Records Act requests have been submitted, requesting multiple research protocols and research materials including photographic and videographic content. These requests may go as far back as nearly 20 years, are extremely burdensome to both researchers and legal staff, and are clearly aimed at eliminating animal research at UC.

While public records requests themselves are legal, the current requests are also aimed at obtaining information that can be used to more effectively attack researchers (for example, videos have been disseminated with inflammatory and inaccurate comments). At UC and at other US institutions, subsequent actions instigated by social media use and misrepresentation of these materials have led to compromised safety of researchers, including receipt of death threats, vandalism, picketing at their homes and stalking at scientific conferences. For example, Louisiana State University Professor Christine Lattin has been a target animal rights activists for over three years, disrupting her research and impacting her personal life.<sup>1</sup>

Animal rights organizations are also putting pressure on legislators to reduce animal research through introduction of restrictive language into funding bills. PETA's misrepresentation of animal research to the public and to legislators threatens the careers of biomedical researchers, as well as the capability of the American biomedical research enterprise to respond to crises like the current

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/education/article\\_3e7e3288-4c86-11eb-8804-cb483404445c.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_3e7e3288-4c86-11eb-8804-cb483404445c.html)

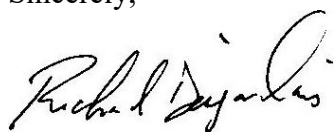
pandemic. The shortage of nonhuman primates for COVID-19 research has been recently highlighted by both the NIH and the popular press – and it is largely believed that this shortage of research animals is directly related to a decrease in production and importation of nonhuman primates for research in the United States because of pressure from the animal rights movement. Not directly addressing this issue therefore puts not only UC’s capacity for scientific advancement at risk, but also the health of our nation.

COVID-19 presents a perfect opportunity to demonstrate and advocate for the importance of animals in the national research enterprise, as it acutely illustrates the importance of animal research. For example, COVID-19 mechanisms, vaccines, convalescent plasma and antibody treatments are being widely tested in rhesus monkeys, including monkeys at the California National Primate Research Center at UC Davis, one of the seven National Institutes of Health National Primate Centers. Given that vaccines will be key in enabling us to finally emerge from this pandemic, it is not an overstatement to say that overcoming the pandemic would not be possible without animal research. We should note that as new drugs and therapies are developed, assessment of their efficacy and safety in people is not possible without the use of appropriate animal models, and not testing them in animals would endanger countless human lives. Thus, the broader UC mission of advancing human health necessitates strong support and protection of ethical animal research.

For the most part, UC has been reactive to pressures from the animal rights movement, dealing with issues and requests on a case-by-case basis as they arise. Recently, UCOP’s Office of Research and Innovation formed a multicampus working group on “Transparency in Animal Research.” Priorities identified by the group include communication strategies regarding animal research, promotion of the safety of researchers, promoting legislative change, grassroots organizing, and educational efforts. Initially, the group membership included representation from several campuses, as well as UC Legal, Strategic Communications, Federal Governmental Relations, and State Governmental Relations, the last three falling under UCOP’s External Relations and Communications division. However, after assessing that these issues were not high priority for the division, the External Relations and Communications leadership withdrew the members from these three offices. This withdrawal then led to one of the two Academic Senate members dropping out due to discouragement at the apparent lack of UCOP support.

UCORP proposes that it is time for UC to leverage its influence and resources to more efficiently and effectively enable animal research to continue more smoothly in the future. We recommend that UC demonstrate its commitment to its faculty through public and proactive stances on animal research, including a Presidential-level charge to the Office of Research and Innovation to come up with a strategy for support of animal research, with commitment of resources from other offices. This support should ideally include increased coordination between campuses, a proactive legal strategy, increased lobbying to state and federal government, and a public information campaign to counter widespread misinformation regarding animal research.

Sincerely,



Richard Desjardins  
Chair, University Committee on Research Policy



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM (UCAF)  
Brian Soucek, Chair  
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March 5, 2021

**MARY GAUVAIN, CHAIR  
ACADEMIC SENATE**

**RE: STATEMENT ON ANIMAL RESEARCHERS**

Dear Mary,

The University Committee on Academic Freedom is concerned about the University Committee on Research Policy's report that animal researchers at the University of California continue to be subject to targeted harassment and misinformation campaigns that distort their research and threaten their continued funding.

As UCAF said in 2012, in a statement of support endorsed by Academic Council:

Universities in this country have three prominent missions: teaching, research and service to the broader community. Research is a critical component of the mission of academic institutions because it is the source of new knowledge that underlies progress in all human endeavors. University-sponsored research has made remarkable contributions to society. Unfortunately, the number of threats to research endeavors at universities is growing rapidly. Among these threats, our primary concern is the ongoing use of harassment, intimidation and violent attacks mounted by individuals opposed to certain types of research on college campuses. Recent attacks have targeted scholars engaged in research on Middle Eastern politics, as well as those who use vertebrate animal subjects. ...Illegal acts of violence and abusive behavior are a threat to the research mission of universities and are to be condemned harshly. They also represent an infringement of academic freedom, which is the principle that underlies the pursuit of new knowledge at modern universities. We strongly support the rights of our colleagues and other university researchers to engage in scholarly research in a safe and open environment, and we condemn the use of violence and other forms of intimidation that erode our shared values.

In light of the continued threats to academic freedom that UCORP reports, UCAF joins UCORP in calling for a Presidential Task Force, or some similarly proactive response from UCOP, to address these threats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Soucek".

Brian Soucek, Chair  
UCAF