

Chancellor Gillman's Response to 36 Organizations Re: Implementation of Regents' Statement

Via Email

May 25, 2016

Dear Prof. Rossman-Benjamin:

Thank you for your thoughtful message and questions regarding the disturbing events that took place on the evening of May 18 and actions relating to the Regents' recently adopted Principles Against Intolerance.

I assure you that we are taking the May 18 incident very seriously. As you know, I issued a campus-wide message shortly after the incident. I stated that threats, harassment, and incitement are not protected by free speech principles and reiterated our commitment to shelter everyone's right to speak without fear or intimidation. I announced that we are investigating the incident to determine whether disciplinary or legal actions are appropriate. We are conducting this review as quickly as possible and will provide additional comments once the investigation is complete.

I'd also like to address your statement that there is a "long-standing and pervasive problem of anti-Semitic anti-Zionism" on our campus. The people who know us best -- virtually all members of our tremendous Jewish student body, the leaders of our local Hillel and Chabad chapters, and our community partners such as the Jewish Federation and Family Services of Orange County and the Rose Project (<http://jewishorangecounty.org/get-involved/college/about-the-rose-project>) -- would disagree with this characterization.

In fact, we are consistently praised for our efforts at creating an outstanding environment for our Jewish students. David Siegel, the Consul General of Israel in Los Angeles, has worked very closely with the campus over many years. He has often praised the campus' efforts and has publicly stated that, in his judgment, UCI has become exemplary in American higher education on all the issues we all care so much about (a sentiment he reiterated to me just a few weeks ago). Our Jewish students have become so frustrated by the false and malicious characterizations of their experiences on our campus that they have posted their own YouTube video to try to correct the record (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SU5fcTvqg>).

This praise for the university extends to our handling of the May 18 incident. Lisa Armony, executive director of the Hillel Foundation of Orange County, was quoted today in the Jewish Journal (http://www.jewishjournal.com/los_angeles/article/protesters_crash_pro_israel_event_at_uci): "There is no excuse for the behavior that took place Wednesday night," she said. "At the same time, it is important to note we are appreciative of what the university is doing. They are taking this extremely seriously." I also understand from a member of the community that, the day after the incident, at an event discussing anti-Semitism on college campuses, you expressed support for my quick response, and if that is true I thank you.

In this age of instant and broad commentary, we understand how easy it is to create false and incendiary impressions. We hope we can count on you to help set the record straight as outside groups attempt to paint an overall picture of a campus they only know second-hand.

I and all members of my administration strongly support the Regents' recently adopted Principles Against Intolerance, and especially their statements against anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic forms of anti-Zionism.

We appreciate your interest in our university, and the well-being of our Jewish and pro-Israel students, and I look forward to providing more information in the near future.

Howard Gillman
Chancellor