

**From:** Tammi Benjamin <tbenjami@ucsc.edu>

**Subject:** Fwd: Correspondence from Associate Chancellor Sahni

**Date:** March 25, 2013 at 9:50:08 AM PDT

**To:** Chancellor <chancellor@ucsc.edu>

**Cc:** Laura Welp <Laura.Welp@ed.gov>, President <President@ucop.edu>, regentsoffice@ucop.edu, Charles Robinson <charles.robinson@ucop.edu>, "Jesse M. Bernal" <jesse.bernal@ucop.edu>, Carole Rossi <crossi@ucsc.edu>, Ashish Sahni <ashish@ucsc.edu>

Dear Chancellor Blumenthal,

I believe you have misunderstood the intentions of my previous correspondence, and I would like to clarify them.

As you know, last summer I spoke out against campus anti-Semitism at a synagogue near Boston, in order to alert members of the local Jewish community to the problem of intimidation and harassment that some Jewish students face on college campuses today. In my speech, I did not state, nor imply, that all Muslims or members of MSA and SJP are terrorists, or associate with terrorists. I spoke to raise awareness about a situation that exists in some instances on some campuses. My intention was not to make a blanket statement or blanket accusations. Yet my statements are being distorted by the Committee for Justice in Palestine to demonize me, I believe in retaliation for my speaking out against campus anti-Semitism in general, and initiating a Title VI complaint in particular.

In exercising my 1st amendment rights, a campaign of harassment, defamation and intimidation has been waged against me by CJP students. They certainly have the right to disagree with me, to ask for clarification, to voice dissent. However their chosen response is deeply disturbing and alarming. Rather than disagree with me in a way that fosters understanding or asks for clarification, I am being harassed, intimidated and defamed in ways that are causing me to fear for my physical safety (as you will see below).

My purpose with this letter is not to shut down free speech or dissent, nor to request that you do so in this instance. Rather, I want to make you aware of my urgent concern regarding the violent campaign that is being waged against me by CJP students and my concern that other students and faculty may now feel afraid to speak up about anti-Semitism on our campus after having seen the repercussions for doing so, and I want to urge you to address these concerns as quickly as possible.

Please understand that not only have my words been misinterpreted and misconstrued, but a vicious campaign has ensued that includes everything from defamatory flyers posted widely on our campus; a petition accusing me of racism; a series of more than a dozen Youtube videos condemning me as "hateful," "dangerous," and "Islamophobic;" and a website with an illegally pirated video that has been taken out of context. In addition, students UC campus-wide have been urged to fill out hate-bias reports against

me, and last week the ASUC passed a libelous resolution condemning me for my "inflammatory, hateful, and racist assumptions."

Please understand that besides harming my reputation as a UCSC faculty member, the CJP's attacks on me, as well as the attacks they have helped to organize on other UC campuses, have not only caused me considerable emotional distress but, for many reasons, have made me fear for my physical safety and for the safety of other students and faculty who choose to speak out about campus anti-Semitism, including: (1) the last time faculty members were vilified on campus posters, two of them had their houses firebombed and another (my neighbor) had his car completely destroyed by a bomb; (2) both the petition and the video of me have been widely circulated on the International Solidarity Movement listserv - a listserv on which death threats based on dissenting views are not uncommon; (3) as recently as this morning, I have received hateful, anti-Semitic email accusing Jews of being "the cause of global financial and political unrest," "barbaric," "evil," and "today's Nazis"; (4) in these situations things often turn violent, such as recently when a large group of students, including several SJP members, illegally "occupied" a UC Davis administration building, which resulted in the protesters committing assault and battery against students with dissenting views.

Given these concerns and that my intent is not to shut down free speech but to prevent harassment and physical harm, I felt deeply dismayed by your last letter in response to me. Considering the grave escalation of the situation, I was disturbed to receive no response for two weeks, followed by a reply that I felt ignored and belittled my concerns. This issue is very serious.

Yes, students have the right to speak out when they disagree, but these students are now violating University policies. In violation of the UC Policy on Student Conduct 102.09, they are engaging in harassment, "conduct that is so severe or pervasive, and objectively offensive...[that it] substantially impairs [my] access to University resources and opportunities." In violation of UCP 102.24, "the actors have communicated a serious expression with intent to terrorize [me], or have acted in reckless disregard of the risk [of doing so]." This situation has gone from free dissent to a very public and potentially very dangerous witch hunt.

I am not asking you to curtail free speech, but I am asking you to prevent the harassment and terrorization of a UC faculty member, and to ensure the physical, emotional, and intellectual safety and freedom of expression for all students and faculty who speak out against anti-Semitism on our campus.

I eagerly look forward to hearing what steps you will take to address this situation.

Thank you,

Tammi Rossman-Benjamin  
Lecturer in Hebrew