

Sample Email Response from San Francisco State University President Mahoney to
Individuals Concerned about the Leila Khaled “Open Classroom” Event
on September 23, 2020

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for contacting me. It is not uncommon for professors to invite speakers to address classes and invite the public to attend in some circumstances. This event is being held jointly by professors from two departments, and Ms. Khaled is one of several panel speakers.

An invitation to a public figure to speak to a class should not be construed as an endorsement of point of view. Higher education and the college experience are an opportunity to hear divergent ideas, viewpoints and accounts of life experiences. An important outcome of the college experience is to learn to think critically and come to independent, personal conclusions about events of local and global importance.

San Francisco State University supports academic freedom, including the freedom to engage in intellectual debate, to express individual viewpoints, and to challenge the viewpoints of others without fear of retaliation or censorship. A university is a marketplace of ideas, and SF State supports the rights of all individuals to express their viewpoints and other speech protected by law, even when those viewpoints may be controversial.

We also strive to be a welcoming and nurturing campus for students from a variety of ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. We recognize that the exercise of free speech and academic freedom can result in discomfort or pain for others. We have systems in place to support our students, including our Division of Diversity and Community Inclusion.

Sincerely,
Lynn Mahoney