

July 20, 2021

Michael V. Drake, M.D.
President, University of California

Dear President Drake,

The undersigned, constituting the Ad hoc Faculty Committee for Academic Integrity, wish to express outrage at a hateful and offensive "[Statement](#)" posted by the UCLA Department of Asian-American Studies on May 21, 2021. Individual University faculty members are, of course, free to take public stands on political controversies. But for an academic department to do so is certainly ethically wrong, and almost certainly a violation of university policy and California law. We have conveyed our concerns about this matter to Chancellor Block, and received a reply stating that the UCLA Administration is waiting for policy guidance from your office.

We first describe the policy and legal issues. The "Statement" violates [UCLA Policy 110](#), Section IV(A)(2)(f), which states that faculty cannot use "University Assets or their affiliation with the University in any manner that suggests or implies University support, endorsement or advancement of, or opposition to, any issue, activity or program, whether political, religious, economic or otherwise" without obtaining prior written approval in accordance with the process outlined in the policy. The "Statement" also violates [California Education Code 92000](#), which states that "The name 'University of California' is the property of the state. No person shall, without the permission of the Regents of the University of California, use this name, or any abbreviation of it or any name of which these words are a part, in any of the following ways [including] (3) To display, advertise, or announce this name publicly at, or in connection with, any meeting, assembly, or demonstration, or any propaganda, advertising, or promotional activity of any kind which has for its purpose or any part of its purpose the support, endorsement, advancement, opposition, or defeat of any strike, lockout, or boycott or of any political, religious, sociological, or economic movement, activity, or program."

Importantly, neither academic freedom nor general First Amendment rights are implicated when a department of a public university engages in official speech.

Second, and irrespective of the legality of the "Statement," it does harm to students and to the environment of mutual respect, diversity and inclusion that should characterize all academic programs. For students, an academic department represents the University as an institution. Therefore, proclamations of official departmental political positions create an unwelcoming, even toxic, atmosphere for students who disagree with them. This is particularly troubling in the present case, in which political disagreement is entangled with ethnic identity. Jewish students who identify with Israel and who are Asian-American studies majors, or even enrolled in one of the department's classes, can now expect, quite reasonably, that their academic careers will suffer because of their beliefs or identity. The same holds true for students at affiliated departments who would quickly discover the intimidating nature of the statement issued by the Asian-American Studies Department.

Moreover, the "Statement" contains extreme, indeed fabricated, claims that criminalize the very creation of Israel, and, by implication, indict all its citizens and supporters, including us. Prospective UCLA students and faculty who see themselves condemned, by the university itself,

as complicit in “seventy-three years of settler colonialism, racial apartheid, and occupation” will be unlikely to choose UCLA.

We ask you, at a minimum, to (1) condemn the content of the "Statement" and the improper way it was posted, and state unequivocally that it does not reflect an official viewpoint of the University of California; and (2) instruct the UC Office of the General Counsel to deal with this case in the appropriate manner.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter,

The Ad hoc Faculty Committee for Academic Integrity*:

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