

May 23, 2024 Hearing before House Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Questions for the Record to Chancellor Gene Block, University of California, Los Angeles  
July 24, 2024

**Representative Michelle Steel (R-CA)**

- 1. There are reports that “ Hamas-leaning faculty members offered extra credit and better grades for those who took part in "chaos and disruption caused by the campus terrorists.” The UCLA Faculty Code of Conduct says that faculty should avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. Can you assure this committee that formal discipline will be taken against these faculty? Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.**

I am not aware of any instance in which faculty members offered extra credit or better grades to students who participated in campus terrorist activities, but UCLA reviews reports that it receives of potential policy violations by faculty members pursuant to its faculty disciplinary process. If I were to receive credible information about faculty engaged in such conduct, I would refer the allegations to the appropriate administrative body for investigation. UCLA will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or intimidation of our students.

- 2. I watched a video of your campus where a person physically attacked a Jewish person with a taser on campus. According to UCLA policy, lethal weapons, less lethal weapons & stun guns are all prohibited on campus. The video clearly shows the person physically slap the Jewish student, remove the Jewish student’s head covering, and pull out a taser and follow him. Was this person barred from campus for breaking UCLA policy?**

Engaging in acts of violence against anyone – and particularly toward a group of people based on their religion or race – is not only appalling and contrary to UCLA’s values, but also our policies. Law enforcement is still investigating events related to the Royce Quad protest encampment and associated protest activity. We expect those who inflicted violence on our community will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. Any member of the university community who is arrested for unlawful behavior or cited for a serious violation of university policy must go through the applicable review process, which may include suspension and expulsion from the university.

- 3. According to reports, students had to show ID and answer questions related to their religion (which is a violation of their civil rights) to gain entry in campus classrooms and library buildings. Do you agree this is against the students’ civil rights? Has discipline been taken against students who blocked access to these buildings based on religion? If those who were blocking the building were not students, have they been barred from campus?**

It is unacceptable for anyone to block students from freely accessing a part of our campus. No individual should be singled out, threatened, or excluded based on their beliefs or their identity.

When I learned of this conduct, I issued a public statement condemning these offensive actions and instructed my team to take steps to ensure that all students retained access to the buildings surrounding Royce Quad until the encampment could be removed. UCLA has an obligation to protect free speech on our campus, but the right to free speech does not permit students to block other students from accessing their own campus, and our policies do not permit discrimination, intimidation, and harassment. UCLA is conducting a broad-based review of reports of antisemitic and anti-Arab or Islamophobic discrimination and harassment that may have interfered with students' abilities to access the university's educational programs and activities during the 2023-2024 academic year. This review will encompass allegations of discrimination and harassment related to the Royce Quad protest encampment.

- 4. Over the last two months, there have been many circumstances where students were kicked in the head, slapped, and otherwise assaulted because of their religion. One Jewish student was kicked in the face and taken to the hospital. Who is being held accountable and responsible for letting this happen? Does the buck stop at you Chancellor?**

As I previously stated, acts of violence against an individual because of their religion are abhorrent and will not be tolerated at UCLA. Law enforcement is still investigating events related to the Royce Quad protest encampment and associated protest activity. As I testified to the Committee, I expect those who engaged in violence or violated UCLA policies to be held accountable.

- 5. On March 27th, an activist gave a mandatory lecture to first-year UCLA medical students. It's part of the mandatory Structural Racism and Health Equity class. During this lecture for medical students, the lecturer led the students in a "free, free Palestine" chant. Why are medical students required to stand up and chant "free, free Palestine" in a mandatory lecture? Some faculty have called for the course to be suspended and investigated. Have you opened an investigation or committed to an investigation today?**

UCLA's Ethics and Compliance Office has been investigating the incident referenced in this question. Additionally, the Dean's Office of the David Geffen School of Medicine has formed a task force to review and make recommendations on improving the first and second year curriculum as a whole, including this particular course. The Dean's Office has also formed a separate committee that is focused on strengthening the school's culture and climate. That committee has sponsored presentations on Dialogue Across Differences, Antisemitism, and Free Speech.

On a personal level, as a life-long educator, I was disturbed to learn that students in one of our classes may have been put in a position where they felt compelled to repeat a particular political mantra. We do not tell our instructors what they can say, or who they can invite to speak to their classes, but we also expect that they will not put students in a position of feeling like they must conform to an instructor's ideology or political beliefs.

- 6. During the Structural Racism and Health Equity lecture, when one medical student refused to kneel on the floor and chant "free, free Palestine", a faculty member asked the student's name. What do you think went through that student's thoughts? Should medical students have to attend a lecture where they are required to chant "free, free Palestine?"**

If a student experienced what you describe in the question, it is utterly unacceptable. Again, as an educator, I am disappointed if any student is put in a position where they feel compelled to repeat a political mantra or to conform to anyone else's ideological or political beliefs. As stated above, the Ethics and Compliance Office has been investigating the incident and the Dean's Office of the David Geffen School of Medicine has formed a task force to review the entire first-year curriculum, including this particular course.

- 7. UCLA's Jewish Faculty Resilience Group called for the School of Medicine to be independently investigated over antisemitism. Have you stepped in and opened an independent investigation?**

As noted previously, the Ethics and Compliance Office has been investigating allegations about an incident that occurred during a Structural Racism and Health Equity lecture. Additionally, the Dean's Office of the David Geffen School of Medicine has formed a task force to review the entire first-year curriculum, including that particular course. I have confidence in these ongoing reviews and, thus, I have not opened a separate inquiry.

- 8. Chancellor, the UCLA's Jewish Faculty Resilience Group has raised some recent concerns. I hope you are taking their comments seriously. Have you stepped in and told the medical school to stop inviting speakers who require students to chant "free, free Palestine" and make students pray to "mama Earth?"**

I do indeed take their concerns seriously, and plan to await the completion of the pending review of the allegations before deciding what discussions, if any, should occur with the medical school. Please see my responses to Questions Nos. 5, 6 and 7.

- 9. There are reports of a group meeting on your campus that may not be an official student organization but are still publicly meeting at UCLA. There are reports that they are called the "Vietnamese Student Union (VSU) at UCLA." The VSU at UCLA describes itself as "the voice of all Vietnamese Students at UCLA." They "condemn the atrocities and the genocide of Palestinians, funded by US and Western Imperialists." There have been reports that members of this group have called for and joined recent violent antisemitic protests against "Israel's genocide" at UCLA. In addition to advocating in favor of the violent encampments and using antisemitic language against Israel, VSUBruins - as they style themselves - have also shared graphics on their Instagram page connecting the violent North Vietnamese conquest of free Vietnam as a shared history of struggle to advertise a joint event with Students for Justice in Palestine. The graphic shows an armed Hamas fighter and an armed North Vietnamese Communist guerilla. The graphic credit is given to Cau Kieu Collective, a "leftist Vietnamese media collective" that**

**promotes communist Vietnamese propaganda, refers to the fall of Saigon as the “liberation of South Vietnam,” and is avidly anti-American. Are you aware of any organization or group that meets at your campus regularly and claims association with your university that promotes hate and falsehoods? How can you ensure the public that you will ensure these types of groups will not use UCLA to spread hate and propaganda that target Jewish students?**

While I am aware of an organization known as the Vietnamese Student Union at UCLA, I am unaware of these specific allegations. As you know, the First Amendment does not permit UCLA to discipline student groups based solely on the content of its members’ speech, even speech we find repugnant, but I can assure you and the public that UCLA will not tolerate discrimination, intimidation, and harassment. This balance is central to UCLA’s educational mission. It is not always easy to strike a perfect balance, but it must always be our goal.

**Representative Susan Wild (D-PA)**

- 1. As we look to the summer, and preparation for the fall semester, the potential for similar challenges with respect to campus protests, encampments, and potential violence is a distinct possibility. What is your administration doing now or planning to do over the summer to prepare for the next school year?**

We share your concern about the need to take additional preparatory measures before our students return to campus in the fall. Accordingly, after the Royce Quad protest encampment was removed, I created a new Office of Campus Safety with an inaugural Associate Vice Chancellor (AVC) that reports directly to me. I directed the AVC to work directly with me to provide a high-level review of the protest response, to advise on leadership and organizational changes, and to stand up the new Office of Campus Safety unit—all with the goal of ensuring that the Royce Quad protest encampment and related incidents could never happen again. I also moved oversight of the UCLA Police Department (“UCLA PD”) and Office of Emergency Management from the Administrative Unit to the Office of Campus Safety.

Since the Office of Campus Safety was created, we have successfully intervened to prevent at least three efforts to occupy parts of our campus, including by promptly asking for law enforcement assistance to respond to unauthorized protests that violate UCLA policies. There are currently no protest encampments on UCLA’s campus.

We are actively planning for UCLA’s fall 2024 semester and the 2024-2025 academic year. We have been using these summer months to run through various scenarios with senior leadership and experts to proactively put strategies in place to respond to potential civil unrest.

Additionally, our Dean of Students is incorporating training on UCLA’s nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, including antisemitism, in her annual meetings with important stakeholders on our campus, including incoming first year students, student group leaders, and athletic teams.