



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

November 25, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We, the Divisional Council of the Academic Senate, write to express our deep concern over the events of Friday, November 20, which took place in connection with protest activities inside and outside Wheeler Hall. Scenes of violence and personal injury during these activities have been widely disseminated, raising serious and as yet unanswered questions about the campus's policies and protocols for accommodating demonstrations. As faculty, we regard it as a fundamental duty to keep the members of our campus community safe.

We have already begun to address these questions with the campus administration and the UC Police Department. We are heartened that both have committed themselves to a thorough and transparent review and investigation of the Wheeler events by the campus Police Review Board, with appropriate involvement by Senate members. We also expect that this review will serve to inform new administrative policies directed toward strengthening our long-standing tradition at Berkeley of civil discourse, free speech, and peaceful demonstration, as befits any great university.

We also take this opportunity to urge the campus administration to persevere in its efforts to open dialogue with the students involved in protest activities. It is apparent to us that mistrust is bred and anger kindled by a lack of engagement. While we insist that all members of the campus community respect each other's rights to learn, teach, and work, we recognize that the student activists have legitimate concerns that demand respectful treatment. We also encourage the administration to continue seeking advice from members of our faculty who can play a mediating role with the protesting students.

Finally, we exhort the administration to provide the campus community with guidance concerning the limits of freedom of expression in the interest of public safety. We urge our students, individually or through their organizations, to make sure that their important concerns about the challenges to our public mission are expressed with the aim of resolution, not confrontation. We must all work together or we shall lose, by our discord, one of the finest institutions of higher education ever created.

The Divisional Council of the Berkeley Academic Senate:

Christopher Kutz (Law), Chair

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Please direct comments to acad_sen@berkeley.edu.