
To: Chancellor Howard Gillman
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Hal Stern
Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs Willie Banks
Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Life & Leadership & Dean of Students Rameen Talesh

CC: Associate Chancellor & Chief of Staff Lars Walton
Associate Provost & Chief of Staff Kate Brigman
Vice Chancellor, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Dyonne Bergeron
Assistant Vice Chancellor & Chief of Staff Edgar Dormitorio
Associate Dean of Students & Executive Director, Student Government Student Media Stephanie N. Van Ginkel
Professor, School of Law and Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) Chair Katie Tinto

Subject: On the Violation of Student Rights and Safety at UCI

Dear Chancellor Gillman, Provost Stern, Vice Chancellor Banks, and Dean Talesh,

We are writing to you today, on behalf of the UCI student body, to express our extreme distress over the unconscionable and aggressive actions waged against peaceful members of the student and faculty community that we and the nation witnessed today. Armed law enforcement, including police and sheriffs from neighboring cities, arrived without warning and began destroying student property, treating students as dangerous trespassers rather than valued members of our university community.

Among the scenes we witnessed today were several instances of dangerous conduct - choke holds, three officers kneeling on a single student, legal observers being pushed by police, students being pushed into dangerous conditions on stairs, and tenured faculty being forcibly shoved to the ground and arrested, to name a few. The live footage showed a student bleeding from prolonged facial pressure on the ground even when not resisting arrest. In fact, this latter student was handing the police flowers just before his violent arrest. We have also seen live coverage from news sources, including ABC, claiming that less-lethal rounds have been used against our students, causing undue panic and chaos. Despite claims of water being thrown at police, news coverage has shown no footage of students doing anything physically aggressive to the police. Rather, video footage showed multiple instances where batons and other forms of violence were used against our students. These actions and threats persisted during our community's times of prayer as well.

We are also deeply concerned that students and residents on our campus have been displaced and unable to reach their homes to be able to shelter, putting them at further risk. The ZotAlerts sent around to campus simply confused students who were engaging in normal activities and caused more to appear on the scene, escalating the situation. The decision to close road access to housing has further exacerbated this situation and put more students at risk. Additionally, and shockingly, press with identification were threatened with arrest, ejected, and told that they could not document the brutality of the police.

As stated by Mayor Farrah Khan today, "[t]aking space on campus or in a building is not a threat to anyone. UCI leadership must do everything they can to avoid creating a violent scenario here. These are your students with zero weapons." The actions of our campus and police today have not made our students or campus more safe. Rather, they raise serious concerns about the administration's commitment to prioritize the safety of our community. Serious harm to our reputation, including amongst alumni, is one of the many results.

In summary, peaceful protest, free speech, and freedom of the press are the cornerstones of a democratic society. Given the large proportion of immigrant and first-generation residents on our campus who are proud to exercise their rights, UCI and police actions that disrespect those tenets are especially painful and deny all our institution should stand for. Disruption or defacing property is not adequate justification for violence or aggression against peaceful students. People's safety must take precedence over property concerns. Our students' lives and safety should be the number one priority for our campus. The actions today put this in serious doubt and have made us all reconsider the sincerity of our university in your claims of campus safety and community outreach during times like these.

Sincerely,

Zoë Chaetana Miller-Vedam & Jun Jang
Presidents, 2023-2024
Associated Graduate Students & Associated Students of UCI

Amelia Roskin-Frazee & Ethan Martinez
President-Elects, 2024-2025
Associated Graduate Students & Associated Students of UCI