

Dear Chancellor Blumenthal,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the Demonstration Planning Team's Report. Our comments focus on two main issues.

-- The process of communicating with and gaining input from different campus constituencies

We commend the DPT for its emphasis on the need for communication and outreach to different campus constituencies. We also see this as a critical component to the success of any future campus efforts. The Council of Provosts wishes to underscore its view that collective activities, whether political, social, or artistic, are extremely important in the life of any university campus and in our common educational mission. We are committed to keeping dialogue open on this important topic.

Given its importance, we would like to see more clarification about the nature of this outreach and its timing. For example, what does "regular communication between Student Affairs, Labor Relations, Academic Senate, PIO..." (p.8, Step One) mean? What about other campus constituents, such as student organizations and their staffs, college staff, and others not directly represented on the DPT? It also appears as if units not directly represented on the team will be informed of a demonstration response plan in Step Three, when the Demonstration Operations Order is circulated (p. 10). This is too late for getting serious input from important constituencies.

Some of these concerns stem from some people's experience with the Demonstration Planning Team this year. Despite the stated desire for input, many found that the requests for feedback and suggestions were not taken seriously or came too late to influence the Team's prior decisions. This was especially the case around the January 25 event and the Career Fair. For example, many meetings were held before the January 25 event-at the Senate level, with provosts, and elsewhere. Rather than elicit suggestions, the agenda was presented as a fait accompli, although serious questions were raised about its efficacy. It was changed only when it became clear that many students and faculty were refusing to participate in an event in which they felt they had little input over the agenda.

Given this experience, it would have been useful if the DPT had included some assessment of their efforts over this last year and what lessons they take for the future. Instead, the Report simply states how they held the January 25 event to address SEC and/or Hayashi Reports recommendations to "gain cooperation of students" and to "increase communication between faculty and administration on student issues." Many on campus feel that this event did not successfully achieve these goals. Unless the DPT specifically addresses how it intends to address these concerns so that different constituencies feel that their input is more than token, the Report's recommendations to continue dialogue with students and to include more faculty (which we fully support) will be difficult to implement.

--Police presence and oversight

The DPT Report reviews previous reports' recommendations on the presence of the police. The Academic Senate's Report on the Tent University "concludes that police presence caused tension, that police could have better explained arrest options, and the tension probably could have been diffused without resorting to arrests" (p.6). The Tent University report also refers to students' opinion "that the extra police presence only created a greater potential for violent confrontation" (p. 6). In contrast, the Hayashi Report "suggests that having more rather than fewer officers at a protest is a sound practice. He also suggests, by citing a past example at UC Berkeley, that early intervention by administration and/or law enforcement can help to curtail potentially difficult protest situations" (p. 7).

The DPT Report doesn't point out this apparent contradiction or how the DPT chose to resolve it. In practice during 2006-7, as well as in their recommendations, the DPT seems to have taken the approach recommended in the Hayashi Report. For example, the recommendation that any gathering of more than 50 people would qualify as a "major" demonstration, with all the attendant precautions, seems to support this approach. It would be helpful if the DPT made explicit their thinking on this matter and explained their rationale for coming to their conclusion.

It would also be helpful if they included mechanisms for parties to complain about inappropriate behavior by the police as well as clear mechanisms for reviewing such complaints. No where in the report is there any mention of the possibility of inappropriate activity by the police, including excessive force. While there is enormous attention to how to educate and prepare students about what kind of conduct is acceptable, there is no mention of this kind of training and preparation for the police and administrators, despite the reference to the lack thereof in the Tent University report cited above. Given the events of last October, and ongoing student concern about the issue, we would have thought that some discussion of proper procedures would have been included.