

iCP/EVC Lee and Chancellor Blumenthal
Chancellor's Office

Re: Kerr Hall Occupation

Dear Herbie and George,

We are writing to express concerns about the handling of the protests that led to the effective shutdown of the campus on Monday, May 1.

On Monday, communications with faculty, staff, and students were limited primarily to brief messages delivered via the CruzAlert system. This led to a great deal of confusion and uncertainty regarding the impact of the protests on students and other members of the campus community, who were trying to determine whether they should (and, if so, would be able to) hold class, attend class, come to work, etc. The CruzAlert system is certainly an efficient and effective mode of real-time communication; however, once it became clear that it was going to be virtually impossible to maintain safe access to campus (and that business as usual was going to be severely disrupted) due to the protests, we believe it would have been more productive to officially close the campus and to send a more extensive and thoughtful message to everyone.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of the May 1st protests on our students. Because both entrances to campus were blocked for most of the day, many students were unable to attend their classes. Given these circumstances, it is hard to understand why classes were not officially cancelled, especially since students must have the permission of their instructor to make up any exam or other assignment they miss if classes are not officially cancelled. In the future, we hope that you will cancel classes as soon as you anticipate that access to the campus will be restricted for a prolonged period, thus ensuring that students are not subject to the arbitrary beliefs and practices of individual faculty members. In addition, we strongly encourage you to continue the previous practice of consulting with CEP and GC prior to known protest activities so they can contribute to the communications with faculty (in the past, for example, CEP sent a memo to faculty encouraging them to be flexible in their attendance, assignment, and exam policies on strike days).

We would like to be especially clear that we are not challenging the right of the campus community to protest. However, we do not condone some of the tactics used by the demonstrators, including physical intimidation to campus community members, which resulted in at least one case of physical harm to a student.

Although SEC's concerns did not extend to the takeover of Kerr Hall—which had not occurred at the time of our meeting—we have heard from several faculty members with similar complaints about campus communications. We are disappointed that there was only one message from Public Affairs regarding the takeover (although campus administrators and Senate leadership were provided more frequent updates). In addition, we have heard from many faculty members with a range of questions, including the demands being made, the safety of those involved, etc. Furthermore, some faculty have raised concerns that the communications regarding the takeover and its resolution might

give other student groups the impression that the most effective way to have demands met is to take over a building.

We encourage you to consider updating the campus policies regarding the impact of campus closures on instruction in consultation with CEP and the Graduate Council. If the Demonstration Advisory Group has been disbanded, it might also be worthwhile considering bringing it together again.

Sincerely,
Senate Executive Committee