

## Resolution to Defend Academic Freedom and Shared Governance

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

### Background:

The wave of academic repression we are witnessing right now stands to permanently damage the mission and public role of the University of California and imperil its core commitment to academic freedom and longstanding tradition of shared governance. We note with alarm that since October 7, 2023, the UC Regents have attempted to implement policies that run roughshod over Senate guidance on departmental statements and faculty discipline. These top-down efforts to restructure the university uneasily mirror conservative assaults against the mandate of the public university and diversity in education more broadly. They distort the definition of [academic freedom](#), which at its heart, is the [protection of free and open inquiry](#), including the right to “address the larger community with regard to any matter of social, political, economic, or other interest.” We also condemn the scholasticide that has occurred in Palestine, where Israel has killed 439 academics, destroying 11 of 14 universities in Gaza. No pretense of academic freedom can exist for our Palestinian colleagues in light of these ongoing attacks.

The current, wide-ranging attacks on faculty authority are operationalized through crackdowns on certain “unpopular” forms of speech and expression—particularly pro-Palestinian speech and expression. In their January meeting, the UC Regents introduced [a policy](#) that would disallow anyone other than the chair of the Board of Regents, the UC president, the chancellors, and the Academic Senate leadership from issuing statements on matters of “public import” on “official channels of communication maintained by the campuses, schools, departments, centers, units, and other entities.” Paired with this policy is the regents’ slated [review of the policy](#) regarding the discipline and dismissal of faculty. This is particularly worrying given mounting threats to academic freedom, including UC President Michael Drake’s misguided remarks on the need to support a “[viewpoint neutral](#)” history of the Middle East. We reject any conflation between religion and political belief and affirm the imperative of shared governance.

The Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) have pointed to a deeply concerning trend of [deteriorating academic freedom](#) after October 7, with universities “acceding to external political pressures and demands for political censorship” rather than “protecting the academic community’s central mission of education, research, and service to the broader society and to the public good.” The Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) has similarly [expressed dismay](#) at the “chilling climate across the United States, and increasingly on UC campuses.”

The university must furnish a space of critique, especially during times of crisis. We underscore the fact that multiple campuses in our system, including [our own](#), have led the way in rethinking

and revising [personnel evaluation standards](#) to account for the significance and value of engaged scholarship within a democratic society. It is a given that the University of California is strengthened by the research, teaching, and service—including public intellectual work—of scholars who work on topics that are politically sensitive and matters of urgent public import. The foundation of such engaged scholarship is academic freedom. It is no coincidence that faculty who do engaged scholarship are disproportionately the most structurally vulnerable. At UC Santa Cruz, [social justice](#) is identified as central to the mission of our campus. Advancing this laudable goal, however, requires that scholars are free to conduct their research and teaching in accordance with their expertise and free from intimidation or harassment when addressing topics that could be considered controversial. While faculty who speak in support of Palestinians are currently facing particular threats, we defend the right of our colleagues to teach and write on a variety of issues, including structural racism, gender inequality, and climate justice.

**WHEREAS:** Academic freedom has come under chilling attacks after October 7, 2023, both at the University of California and more generally;

**WHEREAS:** UC faculty members and students who have criticized Israel’s war crimes in Palestine have been particularly targeted for repression;

**WHEREAS:** Many senate faculty teach and research subjects – including but not limited to the Middle East – that could be viewed as politically controversial; and

**WHEREAS:** The UC/UCSC mission is to encourage free debate and promote social justice.

**Therefore be it resolved:** The Academic Senate calls on the administration to actively defend academic freedom by affirming the right to teach, conduct research, participate in institutional decision-making and do the work of public scholarship free from intimidation or harassment; to [formally condemn the interference](#) of outside organizations who wage harassment campaigns and encourage threats, doxxing, and harm against UC faculty and other members of the university community; to resist any measures from the UC Regents to introduce disciplinary procedures that exceed the current rules for shared governance laid out in the Senate bylaws and [APM 15](#); and to protect [the rights and freedoms of students](#), including participating in associations to advance their common interests.

Respectfully submitted;  
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Faculty for Justice in Palestine  
The Santa Cruz Faculty Association (SCFA)

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