RE: Joint Senate-Administration workgroup on the role of the university and its units in political and social action

Dear Colleagues,

We write to invite you to serve on a short-term joint Senate-Administration workgroup to recommend: 1) a draft set of principles and issues to consider when the university and its units are commenting on matters about which people have deeply held views; and, 2) resources for operational unit and academic department officials to help them consider when and how to issue statements about current events and subjects about which people are known to disagree on behalf of their units. We ask for your report by May 15, 2022. The group should also provide feedback on the recommendations from the systemwide University Committee on Academic Freedom before March 22, 2022.

Although this is driven in part by statements posted recently on academic department websites at several campuses regarding events in the middle east, the issues of individual academic freedom, free speech, institutional censorship, community, diversity, inclusion, and justice are timeless. As such, your recommendations should not focus on a specific communications medium or issue. You should aim for your recommendations to stand the test of time, adaptable to changing communications technologies and future external social and political events.
In doing so, we suggest that you review similar statements developed by other universities and that may exist or presently be under development at other University of California campuses and on behalf of the University of California systemwide. We have enclosed several such statements for your review.

Sincerely,

Carol T. Christ
Chancellor

Catherine P. Koshland
Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Ron Cohen,
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Enclosures:

Kalven Committee Report on the Role of the University in Political and Social Action
Draft system wide statement
Universities Try to Force a Consensus About Kyle Rittenhouse (Conor Friedersdorf, The Atlantic)