



Academic Engagement Network (AEN) Statement on Pitzer College Council Vote to Suspend Study Abroad with the University of Haifa

Washington, DC, March 15, 2019: The Academic Engagement Network (AEN) condemns the decision of Pitzer College's College Council to pass a faculty-originated motion to suspend Pitzer's direct-enroll study abroad program at the University of Haifa in Israel. At the same time, AEN deeply appreciates Pitzer College President Melvin L. Oliver's forceful, courageous, and eloquent [statement](#) refusing to implement the Council's recommendation, and offers him our full organizational support.

As an organization which mobilizes over 660 faculty members on over 225 campuses across the country to oppose the BDS movement and defend academic freedom, AEN is deeply disappointed that this [motion](#) was initiated by faculty. As President Oliver made clear in his statement, the motion curtails academic freedom, hinders intercultural exchange and understanding, and singles out one nation above all others for condemnation and ostracism. All of these run counter to the core values of academia.

This is not the first attempt to end study abroad to Israel – it follows a campaign to end New York University's academic partnership with Tel Aviv University, and the refusal of two University of Michigan professors to write letters of recommendation for students seeking to study abroad in Israel. These efforts align with a core [strategy](#) of the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI), which has developed an extensive [toolkit](#) for activists seeking to end their institutions' relationships with Israeli colleges and universities.

USACBI's "talking points" list involves erroneous allegations against Israel, gross mis-readings of its policies, and a one-sided narrative about the conflict in the Middle East that precludes any possibility of mutual dialogue or understanding. It is telling that the University of Haifa, which proudly has a 35% Arab-Israeli student body and serves as a model of diversity, coexistence, and collaboration in the Middle East, was the most recent target of this destructive campaign. AEN is deeply concerned that the Pitzer College Council's vote on March 14 will serve as a precedent for similar divisive campaigns that threaten the academic rights and educational opportunities of students.

Fortunately, there has been pushback to these efforts, in the form of forthright statements like President Oliver's, and earlier that of the ten chancellors of University of California campuses, who strongly declared their [opposition](#) to any academic boycott of Israel. AEN hopes that more faculty and administrators join President Oliver and the UC Chancellors in raising their voices against this disturbing trend and standing up for academic freedom and intercultural exchange.

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