



Academic
Engagement
NETWORK

January 4, 2021

Chancellor Juan Sánchez Muñoz
Office of the Chancellor
University of California at Merced
5200 North Lake Rd.
Merced, California 95343

via email: chancellormunoz@ucmerced.edu

Dear Chancellor Muñoz,

We write as chair of the Advisory Board, Executive Director, and Deputy Executive Director, respectively, of the [Academic Engagement Network \(AEN\)](#) to express our admiration for the [statement](#) that you released on December 29 in which you forcefully and unequivocally denounced the pattern of “abhorrent and repugnant” [antisemitic comments and images](#) posted on a [now-deleted Twitter account](#) associated with one of your faculty members. We further commend you for committing to develop programming for the spring semester that addresses “free speech, hate speech and antisemitism in academia.” Having thoughtful leaders who take a clear moral stance on these issues is key to creating a campus environment in which all students can thrive.

AEN is an independent and non-partisan national organization of over 750 faculty members on more than 265 campuses. AEN seeks to counter the delegitimization of Israel on campus, helps to defend campus free speech and academic freedom, promotes robust discussion of Israel in the academy, and responds to antisemitism on campus when it occurs. Chaired by Mark G. Yudof, former President of the University of California system, prominent university leaders and distinguished scholars serve on AEN’s [Advisory Board](#), including Scott Cowen, Roger D. Kornberg, Deborah E. Lipstadt, and Steven Davidoff Solomon, among others. In addition, dozens of University of California faculty members are longtime members of AEN.

We appreciate that you referenced at the start of your December 29 statement the Principles Against Intolerance established by the UC Board of Regents in 2016. AEN has long [supported](#) the UC Principles as a path-breaking step forward in highlighting that antisemitism and antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism are types of bigotry and hate requiring attention in California universities. But as we have also noted, the Principles provide no concrete guidance on implementation. It is up to university leaders to set the tone and to take the lead in fostering an atmosphere of civility, respect and tolerance, as you did with your strong statement. In this regard, we would like to mention that [UC-Irvine has done admirable work](#) in recent years to integrate and implement the Principles into university policy and practice and to improve the experiences of Jewish students on campus, for example through its [Confronting Extremism Initiative](#).

Given your goals for UC Merced, we also thought that you may be interested to know that AEN has launched an [Improving the Campus Climate Initiative \(ICCI\)](#) which aims to assist university leaders to meet the needs and concerns of Jewish students while also promoting an equitable, inclusive and diverse campus community where free expression and open inquiry thrives. Geared primarily for mid-level university administrators and staff, *ICCI* aims to provide the specialized training in antisemitism awareness that they need to effectively address the issues that directly impact Jewish student life on campus. We are now working with a number of public and private universities across the country, including in California, and are closely [coordinating our efforts](#) with Hillel International which recently launched a similar [initiative](#) of its own.

Through its executive team, advisory board members, and members of its national faculty network, AEN has considerable expertise in helping universities develop and deliver such trainings. We are available at your convenience to offer input and to help you think through what antisemitism awareness training and educational programming for UC Merced might look like. To these ends, we are also able to put you in touch with other university leaders who have developed and are now implementing such programs on their own campuses, so that you may consult with them. For example, we are currently supporting a compelling [antisemitism education initiative at UC-Berkeley](#) and would be happy to connect you with our colleagues there, so that they can share their work and materials with you.

As you continue to work to ensure that your campus is an inclusive and welcoming place for students from all backgrounds, we applaud you for being responsive to the concerns of the campus Jewish community, for pledging to undertake a review of relevant policies and expectations against intolerance, and for committing to develop programming to address and counter antisemitism in order to foster the positive learning environment that you so strongly support.

If we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely yours,



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