



Hillel International and the Academic Engagement Network Urge California Public Universities to Take Action Against Biased Political Statements from Academic Departments

Washington, DC, September 13, 2021: Hillel International and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) have sent a statement to the University of California president and the chancellors of all 11 UC institutions, calling for “firm and decisive action” against academic departments using their platforms to make one-sided political statements about the Middle East conflict

The statement from Hillel, the largest Jewish student organization in the world, and AEN, a national network of active faculty members on more than 250 campuses across the country, is in response to multiple instances of public university academic departments using public resources to condemn Israel, and Israel alone, for the recent hostilities in the Middle East and denigrate, marginalize, and erase the viewpoints of those who disagree. In particular, the statement highlights the “seriously adverse impact” that these “apparently official departmental declarations have had...on the campus climate experienced by Jewish students, faculty, and staff at California’s public higher education institutions.”

The statement says the state legislature and university should enforce rules for deciding when a university unit may speak on contested political matters and when approval from a higher authority is required. “California law and campus policy do not permit University of California departments to advance a one-sided position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and similarly bar any group of self-appointed faculty from commandeering the digital resources of a UC department for such purpose,” the statement said, honoring a “long tradition in the academy of separating the mission of the university from the imposition of political viewpoints.”

“In the face of the extraordinary upsurge in anti-Israel rhetoric on university campuses, it is imperative that public university departments understand that they are not authorized to speak for their universities or for the diverse opinions held by individual faculty, students, and staff,” said Mark G. Yudof, Chair of the AEN advisory board and former president of the University of

California.

“It is imperative for the University of California leadership to prevent university departments from stifling open debate and dissent through these political statements,” said Mark Rotenberg, Hillel International’s Vice President for University Initiatives and Legal Affairs. “These statements create an environment that inhibit the academic freedom of Jewish students and other supporters of Israel and are inconsistent with the values of higher education.”

About The Academic Engagement Network

The Academic Engagement Network is an organization of American college and university faculty who oppose the delegitimization of Israel, support academic freedom and freedom of expression, promote education and robust conversation about contemporary Israel on campuses, and respond to antisemitism wherever it occurs. <https://academicengagement.org/>

About Hillel International

Founded in 1923, Hillel has been enriching the lives of Jewish students for more than 90 years. Today, Hillel International is a global organization that welcomes students of all backgrounds and fosters an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning and Israel. Hillel is dedicated to enriching the lives of Jewish students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world. As the largest Jewish student organization in the world, Hillel builds connections with emerging adults at more than 550 colleges and universities and inspires them to direct their own path. During their formative college years, students are challenged to explore, experience and create vibrant Jewish lives.

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