



Academic Engagement Network (AEN) Applauds the University of Southern California for Implementing an Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism

WASHINGTON, DC, JANUARY 18, 2022 — The [Academic Engagement Network](#) (AEN) applauds the University of Southern California (USC) for issuing a strong condemnation of antisemitism, including hateful anti-Zionist rhetoric, and for committing to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan for improving the campus climate for USC’s Jewish community. AEN deeply appreciates USC President Carol L. Folt’s forceful and courageous January 13, 2022 [statement](#) and fully supports the specific new actions that she has pledged to undertake to “systematically and operationally combat antisemitism...in all its forms” and to provide an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for Jewish and all students.

AEN is a non-partisan organization representing faculty across all ranks and disciplines on over 250 campuses nationwide, including at USC. AEN works to advance a rigorous pedagogy and discourse about Jewish identity and the Jewish experience in the U.S. academy, promotes academic freedom and campus free expression, and partners with other civil rights and educational organizations to counter antisemitism on campus.

AEN commends its faculty members at USC for their steadfast support of Jewish and Zionist students and for repeatedly raising their [concerns](#) with university leaders. Spearheaded by several AEN faculty members, in recent months over 60 USC faculty have united to urge that immediate and concrete steps be taken to address continuing instances of antisemitism and virulent anti-Zionism. Their efforts underscore the vital role that faculty play in fostering civil dialogue and debate on campus and in the fight against antisemitism and the intolerable harassment, intimidation, ostracism, and demoralization of Jewish students, faculty, and staff.

AEN finds the action plan that USC has now committed to undertake, as delineated in President Folt’s recent statement and [accompanying FAQ](#), to be a constructive move forward. Indeed, the articulated benchmarks and measurable goals for supporting USC’s Jewish community are among those that AEN recommends as best practices. Creating a new Advisory Committee on Jewish Life at USC; offering educational opportunities for university leaders and officials; and incorporating Jewish representation into Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts and antisemitism awareness into anti-bias protocols and trainings, are each useful next steps. Their timely implementation will begin a necessary healing process and will help to ensure that all Jews at USC can feel valued and respected, including those for whom the right of the Jewish people to a homeland and self-determination, the essence of Zionism, is a central component of their religious, ethnic, and ancestral identity.

As USC continues to address campus antisemitism and the safety and well-being of the Jewish community, we are delighted that the university has already participated in AEN’s [Signature Seminar Series](#), a recently launched professional development opportunity geared for DEI officials and staff. In the months ahead, we look forward to continuing to support USC through our *Improving the Campus Climate Initiative* and to collaborating with other national partners in this important work.

For more information on AEN’s [Improving the Campus Climate Initiative](#), please contact its Director, Naomi Greenspan, at naomi@academicengagement.org.

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