

20 UC IRVINE STUDENTS CONCERNED ABOUT CHANCELLOR DRAKE'S SILENCE ON CAMPUS ISRAEL BASHING AND ANTI-SEMITISM

We are current and former students at UC Irvine who are deeply concerned about the anti-Semitism at UCI that has been frequently couched as false and hateful attacks on Israel. We do not believe that UCI Chancellor Michael Drake has exercised his responsibility as an educator and university leader in response to the anti-Semitism. We strongly disagree with the press release issued by five Jewish students at UCI on March 26, 2008, supporting Chancellor Drake.

1. We are deeply disappointed that Chancellor Drake continues to refuse to condemn ongoing hate-filled programs and speeches on campus that demonize Israel and Jews. These hateful programs have included "Holocaust in the Holy Land;" "Israel: The 4th Reich;" and recently in February 2008, "From Auschwitz to Gaza: The Politics of Genocide." Hateful and bigoted speakers have made such statements as "Zionist Jews . . . are the new Nazis," and that "the apartheid state of Israel is on the way down . . . your days are numbered. We will fight you until we are martyred or until we are victorious." Speakers have blamed Jews for 9-11. The medieval anti-Semitic blood libel – that Jews use the blood of non-Jews for ritual purposes – has been dredged up on campus: Last May, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was caricatured as a cannibal, and other Israeli leaders were described as his "supporting cast." The Star of David appeared at the bottom of the image. Also last May, a poster outrageously and falsely claimed that "children as young as 3 will be shot on sight" by Israelis, and there were images of the Israeli flag smeared with blood.
2. While Chancellor Drake has issued a few general statements condemning hateful speech, he has refused to condemn any specific speech or conduct as hateful and anti-Semitic. Therefore, no message is sent to and no lesson is learned by those students who sponsor these programs. The Chancellor has also failed to send a message to the campus community that that certain speech and conduct are false, bigoted, and intended to incite hatred of Jews and Israel. While the Chancellor may not suppress free speech, he has his own right to free speech and should be exercising that right by denouncing anti-Semitic speech and conduct as against the values of the UCI community.
3. Chancellor Drake has not only failed to speak out against anti-Semitic bigotry. Under his leadership, a student who was instrumental in the decision to exclude Jewish student groups from a university-wide "anti-hate" rally was repeatedly honored and praised by UCI. This student was given the Outstanding Community Service award by the UCI Alumni Association, the student was celebrated in a UCI publication for

the campus community, and the student was chosen to speak at the commencement ceremony in 2006. We believe that this sent the wrong message to our campus community – that a student who actively tried to divide the campus is deserving of praise, when instead, Chancellor Drake and his administration should have criticized her conduct.

4. We were so troubled by Hillel's decision to give Chancellor Drake a coveted platform to speak at its national Summit in Washington, D.C. on March 24, 2008, that 41 students signed a letter to Wayne Firestone, the president of Hillel, requesting a meeting to express our concerns. In a conference call with Mr. Firestone where we described our experiences at UCI, Mr. Firestone commented that prior to the call, he had not heard much about the UCI administration or about Chancellor Drake's reluctance to comment on blatant hate speech on campus. After the conference call, we were troubled to learn that in fact, Mr. Firestone knew in great detail about Chancellor Drake's failure to respond appropriately and effectively to the anti-Semitism on his campus.
5. The five students who signed the Hillel press release themselves acknowledge the "reality" at UCI: "that *verbal* anti-Semitism spurred by controversial student groups unfortunately continues to exist on campus" (emphasis in original). We are troubled by these students' emphasis on the word "verbal." Any expression of anti-Semitism is intolerable and unacceptable. It should be intolerable and unacceptable to those five students, to Hillel, and to Chancellor Drake and his administration. Verbal anti-Semitism breeds hate and bigotry. Verbal anti-Semitism can lead to physical violence. Verbal anti-Semitism can create a hostile and unwelcoming environment for Jewish students. Verbal anti-Semitism can make Jewish students feel harassed, threatened and intimidated, and even fear for their physical safety.
6. An independent Task Force of Jewish and non-Jewish community members recently issued a report that followed from a year-long investigation of allegations of anti-Semitism at UCI. The Task Force found that "acts of anti-Semitism are real and well documented. Jewish students have been harassed. Hate speech has been unrelenting." The Task Force recommended that Jewish students "consider enrolling elsewhere unless and until tangible changes are made."
7. The Task Force criticized Chancellor Drake for remaining silent in response to the anti-Semitism on campus, or when pressed, issuing generalizations about hate speech that do not name the hate

speakers. According to the Task Force, this leads to the impression that there is equivalent hate speech from the Jewish students when there is not. And it will encourage students to accept the anti-Semitic conclusions as true. According to the Task Force, "[t]he Chancellor has failed to exercise his moral authority as an educator and leader by abrogating his leadership responsibilities."

8. The Task Force criticized Hillel, the Jewish Federation, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee for failing to hold Chancellor Drake and his administration accountable for their failure to support an environment conducive to all students. According to the Task Force, "[t]he Jewish Federation, Anti-Defamation League, Hillel, and the American Jewish Committee, the organizations the Jewish community look to for leadership on these matters, have not effectively represented the Jewish Community or Jewish students at UCI." We agree with the Task Force's conclusions about these groups. They must demand that Chancellor Drake specifically condemn all forms of anti-Semitism that occur on his campus, including when it is expressed as false and demonizing criticism of Israel.
9. Had it not been for the complaint filed by the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) on behalf of Jewish students at UCI, and ZOA's opeds, letters, etc., UCI officials would still be as unresponsive today as they were in the past. The UCI administration is not doing enough to respond to campus anti-Semitism, but it is more sensitive to enforcing campus policies as the result of ZOA's actions. In addition, students are more aware of their civil rights thanks to the ZOA.
10. The five students who signed the Hillel press release speak for themselves. They do not speak for us or for any other members of the UCI community who have been affected by the anti-Semitism at UCI and who believe that Chancellor Drake has not done enough to combat it. Chancellor Drake must stop remaining silent when Jews and Israel are demonized. He must do more than issue general and vague statements about hate speech that do not specifically identify what the Chancellor is supposedly objecting to. Chancellor Drake must start following the example of other university leaders and specifically condemn the hate and bigotry as anti-Semitism and against the values of the UCI community. We hope that all members of the UCI community, Hillel and other Jewish organizations will support us in this urgent call to the Chancellor.

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