



Alexandra Minna Stern
Dean of Humanities
Office of the Deans
2300 Murphy Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1540
Tel: (310) 825-4856
E-mail: amstern@college.ucla.edu

To: Andrea Kasko, Chair, UCLA Faculty Senate

From: Alexandra Minna Stern 

Chair, [University-Hosted Web Statement Policy Committee](#)

Date: February 20, 2024

Our committee thanks the UCLA Faculty Senate for closely reviewing the policy document shared in October 2023. Our committee took very seriously the feedback from the nine committees that reviewed the draft and has revised portions of the document in response to these comments. (See attached draft). We believe that Senate feedback was instrumental to making the document stronger and clearer.

This document provides an overview of recommendations that we addressed and did not address with revisions along with explanations for those decisions. Although concerns were raised about the need for such a policy giving existing Senate guidelines, our committee believes it is important to move forward with the policy. Notably, the UC Regents are considering a blanket prohibition on the production and issuance of statements by Academic Campus Units (ACUs) on all UC campuses.

Our committee sustains that the policy we have developed offers an alternative approach that is more responsive to the interests of the entire academic community. We believe this policy can serve as an exemplar that balances academic freedom, freedom of speech, and the freedom not to speak, alongside the need to ensure that the University is represented appropriately. It provides a procedural framework for ensuring that all opinions are respected.

Senate committees' recommendations *not* addressed in the document

Among the nine Senate committees that reviewed the policy document, several stated that the policy was not needed given the university's principles of academic freedom. As one committee

suggested, it's a non-solution to a non-problem. Two committees suggest it could violate the Faculty Code of Conduct.

We disagree with these assessments. We believe this policy is needed given the pressures being placed on universities to develop processes in keeping with academic freedom that allow academic campus units to express their opinions in a fair and balanced way about matters of conscience through discretionary statements. Many ACUs want to know how to handle requests for statements and what procedures will respect the interests of the entire community. This policy, unlike the protections in the Faculty Code of Conduct, also issues guidance and protections for nonfaculty members of the campus community who are members of ACUs and may be represented and affected by the statements of ACUs.

In addition, we believe the procedures we have developed respect the interests of all community members, interests that arise from the diverse range of perspectives among faculty, postdoctoral scholars, graduate student employees, and staff. The procedures have been crafted to be consistent with the flagged provisions of the Faculty Code of Conduct. They do not restrict any individual's right to speak, and they require that ACUs avoid any impression that they speak for the university.

Because Discretionary Statements are not produced as part of the personnel process or to conduct Academic Senate business, we believe ACUs enjoy the freedom to adopt supermajority requirements for their issuance.

Senate committees' recommendations addressed in the document with revisions

One committee stated that the purpose of the policy was not well defined, and thus we revisited and revised the first section "Purpose and Scope" to better define and clarify Public Statements and Discretionary Statements. We added a sentence about the purpose of the policy. Specifically, we now define Discretionary Statements as a subset of Public Statements. We also added additional language about the distinction between Public and Discretionary Statements in the section on Definitions. We clarified that the policy focuses on the production and issuance of Public Statements, and their posting ACU websites. There is, as before, guidance on management of content of social media accounts.

We received several understandable requests to reference the June 2022 UC Academic Council endorsement of the May 2022 University Committee on Academic Freedom recommendations and the UC Regents Policy 4403: Statement of Principles Against Intolerance. This was an oversight in the previous draft, and thus we rectified this absence; first, in general terms in the preamble, and second, with specific hyperlinks in the References.

In response to a request for greater clarification about speech related to electoral politics and legislation, we reference existing UC policies and laws that foreclose university commentary on candidates and ballot initiatives. In the guidance section, we reference the UC policy that ACUs will coordinate with the campus government relations office if they comment on pending or proposed legislation.

With regard to questions about enforcement, we added language that we expect ACUs to adhere to the policy, through good faith self-implementation. Of course, other policies may reference this policy and if necessary, other methods of implementation and enforcement may be added at a later date. At present, we feel the most urgent need is for clear guidelines to establish expectations within our community.