

For Immediate Release

February 23, 2010

UC Irvine Student Statement

As students at UCI, we respectfully disagree with the ZOA's position that students should stop attending UCI, and that donors should stop supporting the many programs at the school.

This is both counterproductive and one of the worst ways to deal with the Muslim Student Union (MSU) at UCI.

Instead, we believe the best response to their hateful speakers and programs is to be proactive by engaging in positive dialogue and peace-seeking efforts. An important part of this is to bring more students to the campus who are interested in making progress towards peace between groups on campus as well as in the Middle East.

The 11 students and their supporters claim that they were only exercising their own free speech, but as U.S. Constitutional scholars Alan Dershowitz and Erwin Chemerinsky explain, the organized disruptions by these students are not protected by freedom of speech.

We applaud the UCI Police Department for arresting the students who broke the law. We also applaud the university administration for swiftly beginning the student conduct judicial review process which can result in suspension or expulsion. We know that this process may be lengthy, and we patiently await the outcome.

The ZOA also criticized Chancellor Drake for not exercising his own freedom of speech and publicly condemning the MSU's regular programs and their members' actions during Ambassador Oren's speech. While the authors of ZOA's statement were not present at the program, we were, and Chancellor Drake did in fact publicly speak out against the disruptions, and subsequently released a statement on the school's website.

We can all agree that MSU's consistent anti-Israel and anti-Semitic programs are reprehensible, offensive and embarrassing for the university. However, this is not reason enough to advise prospective students to stay away from attending UCI, and recommend to the school's donors to stop their financial support. Without such support, it would not have been possible to make our community on campus as thriving as it is today. Through programs and events we have grown stronger and more successful than ever before.

As students on this campus, we feel that one of the very best ways to send a message to the MSU is to increase the attendance of students who will speak out against them and stand up for American principles such as freedom of speech. One of the greatest advantages of living in this country is access to a quality university education, and we are proud that UCI is one of the finest and safest academic institutions in the nation. Why would anyone want to deny a student this benefit?

One of the reasons that UCI has become such a high-ranked university is because of the array of academic programs, extra-curricular opportunities, and innovative faculty. One recent example is UCI's new School of Law. All this would not be possible without the financial support of many generous donors in the community.

Unfortunately the MSU continues to bring negative programming to campus, which continues to give UCI an undeserving terrible reputation. As proud UCI Anteaters, the rest of us will continue to build a thriving and robust campus life for our fellow and future students.