

The Louis D. Brandeis Center Blog



The Louis D. Brandeis Center, Inc. (LDB) is an independent, non-partisan institution for public interest advocacy, research and education. The Center's mission is to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and to promote justice for all.

Berkeley Chancellor Repudiates Student Senate's Anti-Israel Divestment Resolution

Posted on April 19, 2013 by brandeis

Outgoing University of California at Berkeley Chancellor [Robert J. Birgeneau](#) has rejected



Chancellor Birgeneau

the anti-Israel divestment [resolution](#) that the Berkeley student senate passed just yesterday. The Daily Californian has [published](#) Birgeneau's statement, which emphasizes that the student senate has no influence on the university's investment policies. In a pointed repudiation of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, Birgeneau argues "that targeting a single nation or state in this highly complex world is not appropriate and does little to advance the cause of peace and coexistence":

To the members of the UC Berkeley community:

In the wake of the ASUC Senate's passage of SB 160, "A Bill In Support of Human Rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," I want to offer some thoughts about how we can move forward as a campus community. I also want to acknowledge that this may be the first step in a process that could, among other things, include consideration of other proposed bills that support Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

As you all know, the ASUC is an independent student organization, and its vote in this matter will not change investment policy established by the Regents of the University of California. In addition, it is my personal opinion that targeting a single nation or state in this highly complex world is not appropriate and does little to advance the cause of peace and coexistence. Ultimately, we believe that engaging in dialogue on these difficult issues is the best hope that we have for achieving peace. It is the path that we hope world leaders will follow and our students will emulate.

This, of course, is not the first time that the Israeli divestment issue has arisen on this campus and I sincerely hope that we can avoid the rancor and divisiveness that arose in the wake of a previous ASUC vote in 2010, even as we support every student's right to freedom of expression and acknowledge the diversity of views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Chancellor, a pillar of my vision for UC Berkeley has been to create a campus where equity and inclusion are fundamental values that sustain our principles of community and allow freedom of expression to occur through civilized and informed debate.

Compiled by the Faculty Action Network

At the same time, all of our students must feel that the campus is a safe and inclusive environment for them, one in which they have the freedom to express their views without fear of intimidation. In fact, UCPD has informed me of its investigation into a recent incident on Sproul Plaza in which, according to preliminary eyewitness accounts, a Berkeley student handing out pro-divestment flyers was struck in the face. I am deeply concerned by these initial reports and must state in no uncertain terms that this behavior is unacceptable in our community. We will take firm steps to bring perpetrators of such acts to justice. Our Principles of Community require that debate on our campus—even debate over emotional and important issues such as these—remain civil and respectful.

I and members of my administration will continue to work hard to build and sustain the sort of campus climate that I believe we all benefit from. We will also continue to support efforts like The Olive Tree Initiative, a student-led endeavor that is fostering dialogue and discussion here on campus and in the Middle East. Above all, we hope and expect that the ongoing discussion and dialogue about the conflicts in the Middle East will happen in a manner that respects and acknowledges the views and beliefs of others.

Sincerely, Robert J. Birgeneau



Tweet



Posted in Anti-Israelism Tagged BDS, Israel, University of California

permalink [<http://brandeiscenter.com/blog/berkeley-chancellor-repudiates-student-senates-anti-israel-divestment-resolution/>]