



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
1111 Franklin Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

December 4, 2020

Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA)  
1270 Farragut Circle  
Davis, CA 95618

Dear Executive Board of the Council of UC Faculty Associations:

I write to follow-up on my letter to you dated November 3, 2020 regarding your September 24, 2020 letter to President Michael V. Drake, M.D., which was forwarded to my office for review, appropriate follow-up, and response. In your September 24, 2020 letter, you expressed concerns about the decision of several media platforms to cancel an event sponsored by a group affiliated with San Francisco State University on September 23, 2020, titled, "Whose Narratives: Gender, Justice and Resistance."

I would first like to affirm that the University of California is committed to upholding and preserving principles of academic freedom. These principles reflect the University's fundamental mission, which is to discover knowledge and to disseminate it to its students and to society at large. In recognition of the importance of academic freedom, as well as freedom of speech, my office in partnership with other internal stakeholders, has been actively engaging with Zoom regarding your concerns and determined that there have been no cancellations of events sponsored by the University of California. In addition, we confirmed that Zoom does not monitor use of its platform by participating in public or private events, including classes, events, or protests hosted on its platform.

I understand that prior to canceling the event at SF State, the campus and Zoom attempted to resolve the concerns ahead of time and that the interpretation of whether a violation of federal law had occurred remained unresolved prior to the cancellation. If Zoom receives any complaints regarding a UC sponsored event that would potentially violate Zoom's acceptable use policy, my office will be consulted in advance in an effort to remedy the situation and to enable a joint conversation to discuss the approach. As the Regents of the University of California have bestowed on the Academic Senate, through its role in shared governance, the responsibility to protect academic freedom at UC, the Academic Senate will be involved in the joint conversation.

Zoom has also assured us that they are taking these concerns seriously and that, effective November 2, 2020, former UC President Janet Napolitano has been appointed to the Zoom Board of Directors. I understand that on November 6, 2020, CUCFA wrote a letter to former President Napolitano alerting her to the concerns regarding the potential for censorship of faculty by Zoom and requesting that as a faculty member of the University of California she make clear to Zoom that censorship is not consistent with the values of the University of California.

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I also recognize that Zoom is a private company that has the right to set its own terms of service in its contracts with users. In addition to Zoom, UC maintains agreements with other platforms. To the extent any faculty does not want to utilize Zoom for a specific event, they may contact their local Information Technology Department for recommendations as to other vendors that provide similar services.

I want to reiterate that the University takes seriously your concerns regarding censorship, freedom of speech, and academic freedom. Thank you for raising this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael T. Brown, Ph.D.  
Provost and  
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

cc: President Drake  
Academic Council Chair Gauvain  
Academic Council Vice Chair Horwitz  
Chancellors  
Executive Vice Chancellors/Provosts  
Vice Provost Carlson  
Associate Vice Provost Lee  
Executive Director Baxter