

Memo to students and faculty from UC Santa Barbara Vice Chancellor Michael D. Young:

On Behalf of Vice Chancellor Michael Young: Students and Free Speech at UCSB Deans, Department Heads, Management Services Officers, Administrative Assistants: The memo below is being sent to the dlist-I listserv. Thank you for serving as one of the representatives for your department to receive this memo.

Please distribute this message to the colleagues in your department. Thank you.

*****PLEASE GIVE WIDEST DISTRIBUTION*****

March 21, 2014

To: Campus Community

Fr: Michael D. Young Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Re: Students and Free Speech at UCSB

Below you will find an email communication that I sent out earlier this week to all UCSB students expressing my views on free speech. Sincerely, Michael D. Young Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

March 19, 2014

Dear Students:

Over the past several weeks, our campus has been visited by a number of outside groups and individuals coming here to promote an ideology, to promulgate particular beliefs (at times extreme beliefs), or simply to create discord that furthers a certain personal agenda. Some passionately believe in their causes, while others peddle hate and intolerance with less-than-noble aims.

Whatever the motives and goals, the presence of such people and groups on campus can be disruptive and has the potential to draw us into the kind of conflict that puts at risk the quality of exchange of ideas that is fundamental to the mission of our university.

What is happening now is not new: evangelical types have been visiting UCSB and university campuses since time immemorial. What we see at UCSB today is simply the most recent generation of true believers, self-proclaimed prophets, and provocateurs. During the past few weeks, UCSB has been visited by various anti-abortion crusaders. Some have been considerate and thoughtful in promoting their message; others have openly displayed images that many in our community find distressing and offensive. We have also seen earnest and thoughtful religious missionaries, and we have seen proselytizers hawking intolerance in the name of religious belief. As a consequence of interactions with the more extreme of our visitors, students have expressed outrage, pain, embarrassment, fear, hurt, and feelings of harassment. Moreover, I have received requests that the campus prohibit the peddling of "fear," "hate," "intolerance," and "discord" here at UCSB.

Those of you who know me are aware that I have strong views on the matter of intolerance. You also know that I hold equally strong views on the sanctity of free speech. If you have heard me speak at Convocation or at anti-hate events, or if you have seen me officiating at

the Queer Wedding, you know that my message on both counts is clear. Recent events lead me to believe that this message bears repeating.

First, the principle of freedom of expression resides at the very foundation of our society and, most certainly, at the foundation of a world-class university such as UC Santa Barbara. Freedom and rights are not situational: we either have freedom of speech or we do not. We cannot pick and choose which views are allowed to be aired and who is allowed to speak. If that were the case, then only those in charge-those holding power-would determine who gets to speak and whose views are heard.

Second, freedom is not free. The price of freedom for all to speak is that, at times, everyone will be subjected to speech and expression that we, ourselves, find offensive, hateful, vile, hurtful, provocative, and perhaps even evil. So be it! Law and policy ban only an extremely narrow band of speech and expression-"yelling 'fire!' in a crowded theatre," for example, and child pornography. The price we pay to speak our own minds is allowing others to speak theirs, regardless of how oppositional their views are to our own. Our Founding Fathers-all white men of privilege, some even slave owners-got it right when designing the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Having firmly stated my support for freedom of expression, I hasten to follow with a lesson my mother taught me when I was a small child, a lesson that has remained with me the rest of my life and that I relay to our entering students every fall at Convocation. My mother taught me that just because you can say or do something doesn't mean that you should. Civility plays an important role in how we choose to exercise our right to expression. We all have the right to say odious things, to display offensive slogans and placards, and to hurt and disrespect groups and individuals that disagree with us. The question is: should we? Should we engage in these behaviors just because we can or because they serve our political, religious, or personal agendas?

At UCSB, our students have proven that we are better than this. While it has not always been easy, time and again UCSB students have demonstrated that they can disagree about the critical issues of our time-fundamentally and passionately but within a framework of humanity and civility, respecting the dignity of those whose views they oppose. Time and time again, UCSB students have demonstrated that they understand their role in defining the character and quality of this campus community-revealing their unwillingness to lower themselves to the tactics of those whose agenda comes wrapped in intolerance and extremism.

And now we are tested once again, outsiders coming into our midst to provoke us, to taunt us and attempt to turn us against one another as they promote personal causes and agendas. If we take the bait, if we adopt negative tactics and engage in name calling, confrontation, provocation, and offensive behavior, then they win and our community loses. While urging you to engage with differing ideas and opinions in a civil manner, I also want to remind you that you have the option not to engage at all. You do not have to listen to, look at, or even acknowledge speech or expression that you find provocative or offensive. The Arbor Mall is a free speech area, as is the area in front of the University Center. If you do not want to be confronted by certain materials or expressions, you should avoid the free-speech areas when you expect that you might encounter them, or simply ignore them. I promise you the visitors will hate that.

*And, finally, if you think demonstrators, activists, or proselytizers are violating the law, report them to the UC Police Department. If you think they are violating campus policies, report them to the Office of Student Life (OSL). Similarly, if you feel harassed or think you are being subjected to offensive speech or material as an involuntary audience, please contact the Office of Student Life immediately. Katya Armistead, Associate Dean of Student Life and Activities, can be reached at 805-893-8912. If you do not reach her, someone at the general OSL number (805-893-4550) will be able to relay your message to her. The campus regulations address UCSB's free speech policies further:
http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/Regulations/campus_activities.aspx<http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/Regulations/campus_activities.aspx> .*

What I am suggesting may not be easy, and it may feel more satisfying (at least for the moment) to lash out. (My mom often reminded me that doing the right thing is difficult.) If you feel that you must respond, hold a peaceful, thoughtful, civil, and dignified counter-demonstration, and show how students engage intellectually and politically at UCSB.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Young Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs