



March 10, 2016

Janet Napolitano, President
University of California
1111 Franklin St,
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Ms. Napolitano:

The California Legislative Women's Caucus has a longstanding commitment to keeping women safe where they live, work, and learn and of speaking out against behaviors and policies that demean and denigrate women. On behalf of the Women's Caucus, we are writing to express our deep concern at recent allegations of sexual harassment by so-called pillars in our public education system and the consistently abysmal responses from the institutions where this behavior occurs.

Given the ever-increasing exposes of lawsuits against the University of California, we have serious concerns regarding the inadequacy of the responses by UC leaders to sexual harassment complaints at several campuses. Most recently, according to media reports, UC Berkeley failed to appropriately handle an employee's sexual harassment complaint against UC Berkeley's Law School Dean, Sujit Choudry, whom we understand has resigned today. The media also reported that UCLA not only failed to protect two graduate students from the alleged gross mistreatment they suffered at the hands of Professor Gabriel Piterberg, but also ignored the students' persistent complaints about his behavior.

Insufficient responses and inadequate sanctions not only send a message to students and staff that UC protects perpetrators and their careers over the rights of victims, it also creates a culture where bad behavior is tolerated and harassment and assault go unchecked.

As President of the University of California system, a system considered by many as the flagship of public higher education in the nation, we urge you to take swift and strong action. At a minimum, further meaningful discipline needs to be administered to these individuals and any others who are found to engage in sexual harassment. It is hard to believe that in 2016 we would need to request education and training about appropriate workplace conduct and sexual harassment abatement. But clearly, deans, professors, and other supervisors need additional victim-centered education in order to prevent such demeaning, marginalizing, and unlawful behavior in the future.

Finally, and most importantly, the Women's Caucus urges you to institute a new policy in which UCOP reviews and approves the resolution and proposed

disciplinary action of any allegations of sexual harassment in the future. We hope that you will also consider creating an independent office that is tasked with this responsibility. The UCOP can show leadership by overseeing how campuses address misconduct by UC faculty and administration, making sure that resolutions are fair to the victim and strong enough to communicate that this behavior is unacceptable at our state's great universities.

The Women's Caucus stood firm in its support for an affirmative consent standard at all California colleges and universities. The UC was also supportive of that concept. Sadly, it appears that this important cultural shift did not trickle up to those in positions of authority.

Neither the state nor the country's premiere higher education system should tolerate sexual harassment. We also cannot afford to be perceived as condoning the bad behavior of those in positions of power at the helm of our universities.

We understand a task force, prompted by the UC Berkeley case, has been reviewing sexual harassment policy at the UC and will be releasing a report of their findings in April. The State Auditor found in 2014 that UC Berkeley and UCLA had failed to "ensure that all faculty and staff are sufficiently trained on responding to and reporting student incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence," Sadly, actions taken in April 2016 and beyond come too late for many of the victims.

We urge you to take immediate action and move forward with the necessary steps to create a safe environment where students, faculty, and staff can thrive.

Sincerely



HANNAH-BETH JACKSON, Chair
Legislative Women's Caucus
Senate District 19



CRISTINA GARCIA, Vice-Chair
Legislative Women's Caucus
Assembly District 58