



July 7, 2020

Dear Chancellor Block and EVCP Carter:

We write in response to your Bruinpost of June 30, 2020, “Rising to the Challenge.” We appreciate your intention to promote racial justice at UCLA and your commitment to provide resources that support Black studies and Black life at UCLA. However, we find that the actions you propose fail to adequately address that goal and threaten to entrench racialized harm. As this extraordinary national moment of uprising, and the paradigm shift it has wrought in the national commonsense, have made clear: to get serious about racial justice, institutions must defund police and divest from policing. We, the DIVEST/INVEST UCLA Faculty Collective, have repeatedly raised this matter with you.

In particular, we write to express concern about the specific items in the June 30th communication that perpetuate a pro-policing and anti-Black agenda under the guise of public safety.

Your Bruinpost includes the following:

- “We will expand the role of the Public Safety Advisory Council that is already in the process of being created, and ensure that its members represent a diverse cross section of voices on our campus, including our own faculty experts. As a first set of tasks, the new council’s work will include reviewing our relationships with external police forces and examining the responsibilities resting with our UC police force to see what work may appropriately be taken on by others and what must stay with UCPD to ensure campus safety. We commit to continuing our improvement in policing, both on campus and off, including how we can further address issues like racial bias and racial profiling, effective de-escalation techniques, data transparency and other pressing racial equity matters to ensure that we protect the safety of all in our community, including Black Bruins and other Bruins of color.”
- “UCLA will employ trained mental health professionals who can respond to mental health emergencies, either to support police officers on these calls or — if appropriate — to respond in place of officers. This approach has worked successfully in other communities and we expect it will better serve our campus, allowing police to focus on their public safety mission.”
- “UCLA PD already has banned use of carotid holds, a practice not used in more than 15 years. We will work with the police and the campus community to identify additional use of force policy changes to ensure that our policies conform to our principles of serving our community.”

In our [Juneteenth letter](#) to you, we stated our categorical objection to the Public Safety Advisory Council noting that it signals “a renewed commitment to policing, with even greater investment in

the policing enterprise, this time under the guise of reform.” We once again categorically reject your proposal as a meaningful response to the demand for investment.

We do not recognize the legitimacy of the Public Safety Advisory Council and refuse to participate in its proceedings. Below, we provide an **alternative model for a Divestment/Investment Council** that will truly further racial justice.

We will publicly advocate this position to faculty, students, staff, and all other workers at UCLA as well as to alumni and community organizations, urging them to join us in our boycott of the Public Safety Advisory Council, its processes, and its recommendations. We take this position because the mandate of the Public Safety Advisory Council is aligned with a pro-policing agenda and does not attend to the urgent matter of state-sanctioned violence against Black lives and the ways that institutions, like this one, participate in and condone it. We maintain that divestment from policing is the most direct and effective way to achieve a thriving space for Black life and Black studies and a meaningful agenda for generative campus life for Black, Brown, and Indigenous people at UCLA and in Los Angeles.

This national moment of uprising seeks transformative change in all institutions of American society, from schools and universities to foundations and corporations, exposing and challenging their complicity in white supremacy and racialized violence. As the Black Lives Matter movement and the Movement for Black Lives have made crystal-clear, such transformative change requires divestment from policing, not simply the reform of policing. This is one step in a larger process of ending systemic racism and making reparations to begin reversing the harms of history. Prominent national coalitions such as Scholars for Social Justice have emphasized the central place of higher education in reparations, a charge that must be taken up at leading public universities such as UCLA.

If you are indeed committed to ensuring an anti-racist university, then you must commit to the endeavor of defunding UCLA PD and severing ties with other police and security forces. These demands are already being made UC-wide as well as throughout LA County. Here, we refer you to the [recent letter by the UC Academic Council to UC President Janet Napolitano on the matter of policing](#) as well as to the actions undertaken by the LA City Council and the LA Unified School District to defund police. Your assertion that you are foreclosed from making any commitment to even seriously consider divestment because of your “responsibility to make the campus as safe a place as possible” invoked mass shooting and other crimes to justify continued collaboration with LAPD and other police forces. No university needs contracts with outside police forces in order to respond to such incidents. Nor does it require ever-expanding funding and growth of a UC-based police force. The example you invoke of mass shooting cannot be solved through more policing; it requires gun control. Accordingly, such arguments are distractions, and reflect a failure to address the substantive issue of the entanglement of the university with the apparatus of policing which on this campus and beyond has not only failed to serve and protect Black bodies but has actively harmed them.

Moreover, we are boycotting the Public Safety Advisory Council and proposing an alternative model because it places the review and oversight of policing at UCLA as well as that of UCLA’s collaborations and contracts with various police forces solely in the realm of administrative decision-making and advisory processes, when such review and oversight properly rests with faculty governance and community oversight, not with the administration. Envisioning a campus without police speaks to the very character of this public university and directly impacts the academic enterprise of teaching, research, and public service in which the faculty have a central

role and the broader LA community is materially affected. Here we once again refer you to the recent [UC Academic Council communication with UC President Napolitano](#). Those recommendations on policing at the University of California are the outcome of careful deliberation by a governing faculty body and their 15-2 vote indicates overwhelming faculty support for “restructuring the University’s security and safety infrastructure.”

Instead of the current Public Safety Advisory Council, **we demand the establishment of a Divestment/Investment Council led by the faculty and committed to divestment.** Let us be clear: we do not mean a Council that will study *whether* divestment and investment are possible. We mean a Council with a clear mandate to ensure that such transformative change takes place at UCLA as it is taking place in other institutions.

Globally, as a result of both recent uprisings in defense of Black lives and generations of movement efforts, universities must finally contend with their role in racial capitalism. Our call for divestment from policing and reinvestment in the life-affirming institutions and infrastructures of racial justice is part of this broader endeavor for reparative public goods with higher education as a cornerstone of such public goods.

Equally important is the matter of who serves on, and leads, such a Council.

Not only does your Public Safety Advisory Council not represent a commitment to divestment, it does not provide any assurance that there will be a fair opportunity to advocate for it. The commitment to include “diverse voices” does not guarantee that key voices and those with the requisite expertise will serve on such a body. Your various communications on the matter of the Public Safety Advisory Council include no existing UCLA faculty who work on racial violence and policing. Nor do they cede governance to those community members and groups who are asymmetrically impacted and who are experts in the matter of Black life and Black study. Review and oversight of campus policing and the envisioning of divestment/investment must be put under the direction of such faculty experts as well as the community members, students, staff, and workers disproportionately impacted by policing.

This is the time, across the country and here in Los Angeles, to reimagine our structures of representation and to consider if they can do the necessary work of racial justice and reparations. We envision a Divestment/Investment Council that is made up of faculty as well as community members, students, staff, and workers. But here we provide further guidance on the role of faculty expertise and guidance. We expect the Council to be led by faculty, with a majority of the seats drawn from the institutional units on campus that have expertise and long standing commitments to racial and gender justice. This would include the centers that are part of the Institute of American Cultures, as well as the Center for the Study of Women, the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy, and the Critical Race Studies Program and Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA Law.

In order to build a structure of faculty governance, we expect that each of these centers and programs be asked to nominate two faculty experts. It is no coincidence that many of UCLA’s leading faculty experts on racial violence and policing as well as those who direct many of these centers are also members of this growing DIVEST/ INVEST UCLA Faculty Collective. But this Faculty Collective also represents a wide swath of faculty concerned with racial violence and policing who are not necessarily part of these centers. With this in mind, we recommend that an additional two faculty experts be nominated by the DIVEST/ INVEST UCLA Faculty Collective.

Equally important is the matter of resources, recognition and compensation.

We are concerned that the present moment can easily become one of extraction rather than of the administration's ongoing investment in racial justice and reparations. The faculty and university units that will be part of the Divestment/Investment Council must receive adequate resources, recognition, and compensation for the complex work that it will entail. The centers, programs, and faculty who have the expertise to contribute to this important effort must not be expected to do so in addition to the heavy lifting that they already do on racial justice at and beyond the university.

Equally important is the matter of effectiveness.

The Council must be empowered to effect meaningful divestment, chart a path for reparations, and bring about effective changes in campus policies and practices towards racial justice.

It is necessary for UCLA to act promptly on this matter. **We ask that you inform us of the disbanding of the Public Safety Advisory Council by July 31, 2020.** This would give us time to work together on the formation of the alternative we have outlined prior to the start of the Fall quarter. If, instead, you intend to proceed with the Public Safety Advisory Council, we will consider this a commitment to the harm of policing and the fortification of anti-Blackness and we will continue our position of boycott. We will, in turn, create our own councils and processes of accountability and justice-seeking in the name of reparations. We will continue to organize towards the goal of dismantling police power at UCLA and reallocating a substantial amount of UCPD funds into investments in Black lives and to a more holistic and just approach to ensuring safety on campus.

Sincerely,

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