

February 16, 2012

We are writing in response to concerns that have been raised about the appearance on our respective campuses of Ilan Pappé, Professor of History, Director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies, and Co-Director for the Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies at Exeter University.

The individuals who invited Professor Pappé to our respective campuses have acted within their rights to invite speakers they feel bring a perspective to an issue. Our universities do not endorse any particular position, but emphatically support the rights of people to express and hear all points of view. For these reasons, it is not appropriate for our universities, as public institutions, to decide whether speakers are permitted to appear on campus based on the ideas they hold. Others are always welcome to invite speakers and create events that offer opposing views.

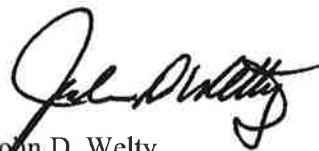
Universities are places where debate, discussion, and the free exchange of ideas are welcome and encouraged. As such, it is a university's responsibility to tolerate a wide range of views on issues, even if they are unpopular or minority opinions. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are not hollow ideals but rather hallowed cornerstones of higher education and a functioning democracy.

Universities are charged with teaching students how to think for themselves. This includes accessing and processing knowledge and ideas and considering, discussing, and debating them. We seek to instill in students the tools to fairly and intelligently assess all data and views, as well as the personal integrity and values to come to a rational and reasonable conclusion.

There is no danger to a free society in allowing opposing views to be heard. The danger, instead, is in censoring them. It is easy to support free speech when we agree with what is being said. The real test is when we are asked to defend the expression of views with which we disagree.



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cc: Charles B. Reed, Chancellor, The California State University