

March 8th 2018

Dear UC Merced community and UC Office of the President,

The UC Merced Graduate Student Association (GSA) is deeply disturbed by the sentiments and actions of the UC Merced College Republicans on [March 6th 2018](#). During an on-campus demonstration, this organization encouraged students to report their undocumented peers to immigration authorities and actively promoted hostile messages to intimidate their undocumented colleagues. The GSA respects the diversity of opinions on this campus and the rights of free speech. However, we have major concerns about this belligerent behavior.

Freedom of speech and diverse viewpoints contribute to a vibrant campus and a wholesome learning experience. However, threatening and encouraging the endangerment of students' rights to education crosses a line. Furthermore, comparing firearms, which result in over 30,000 deaths per year¹, to undocumented immigrants, who are integral members of our community and exceptionally law-abiding² is not only blatantly disrespectful, but simply erroneous. This false equivalency and malevolence has no place in civil debates. It erodes our healthy, vibrant, and educational community we seek to create and it also corrodes the importance and trust in the first amendment. While members of the College Republicans argue these actions have sparked discussion, we decry the aggressive and hostile manner with which this discussion was initiated. We believe the frank lack of responsibility exemplified by the College Republicans has curtailed healthy discussion on the subject. Therefore, we urge the UC Merced College Republicans to publically apologize for their actions on March 6th 2018 and propose that they reconsider future actions based on tactics using harmful messages targeted at undocumented students. Furthermore, we urge the College Republicans to seek and engage in nonaggressive discussion that does not demean, dehumanize, or discriminate.

Undocumented immigrants and particularly undocumented students on our campus meaningful contribute to our community in the face of unimaginable adversity. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients know no other country besides the US and are American in every sense except for their birth certificate, and those who have come to the US in search of a better life at any age show amazing courage, fortitude, and bravery. Thus, the GSA urges the UC Office of the President (UCOP) to designate all UC campuses as "Sanctuary Campuses" and pledge noncooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) officials in support of this vulnerable population.

While we recognize that UCOP [supports undocumented students](#) and has enacted many programs for their support, UCOP has thus far hesitated to make UC campuses sanctuary campuses, citing fear over withheld federal funding. We as the GSA point out the legal grounds for withholding federal aid based on political disagreements are shaky at best and are in violation of the academic freedom of the University of California. Eight other colleges and universities in the US are already sanctuary campuses and have pledged noncooperation with deporters³. As an institution that is a known leader in equity and inclusion in higher education, we believe the UC system should join these other campuses in protecting undocumented students.

To students who were personally affected by this insulting display of dehumanization, the GSA stands firmly with you.

In solidarity,

The University of California, Merced Graduate Student Association

¹https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm

²Ewing et al. (2015) The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States. American Immigration Council

³Portland State University, Reed College, Wesleyan University, Pitzer College, Santa Fe Community College, University of Pennsylvania, Connecticut College, Drake University, and Swarthmore College