



Kum-Kum Bhavnani
Telephone: (510) 987-9303
Email: kum-kum.bhavnani@ucop.edu

*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

June 29, 2020

**JANET NAPOLITANO, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Recommendations for UC Policing

Dear Janet,

At its June 24, 2020 meeting, the Academic Council endorsed the attached set of recommendations for restructuring the University's security and safety infrastructure. The recommendations build on the work of the Academic Senate's Public Safety Task Force and the Presidential Task Force on Universitywide Policing. The statement offers a visionary and transformative approach to address the enduring concerns from campus communities about distressing interactions between campus police and students and faculty of color, the militarization of campus police, and the excessive and potentially lethal uses of force during campus protests. It offers a guide for rethinking the role of police on UC campuses.

You will see that the recommendations are substantial. They represent our solidarity with the current protests against racialized police violence, and we believe that the University must respond to this watershed historical moment by reassessing the role and presence of police on campuses. We were proud to see the [May 31 statement](#) from you and Chair Pérez:

... silence is complicity: [we have] a sense of urgency and unwavering commitment to end these unnecessary race-based killings and violence... [The UC will] take immediate action to re-examine our own practice...

We look forward to opening a dialogue with you and your successor on the future of policing at UC campuses and the implementation of the recommendations over the suggested three-year timeline. We offer the recommendations to revitalize essential and longstanding conversations within and between all University constituencies. UC could be a leader within Higher Education by creating structures that balance safety and justice, and which undermine legacies of structural racism and police violence.

Thank you for your commitment to an anti-racist University of California.

Sincerely,

Kum-Kum Bhavnani

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

Encl:

cc: Provost Brown
Vice Provost Gullatt
Chief of Staff to the President Kao
Chief of Staff to the Provost Peterson
Academic Council
Senate Directors

Recommendations for UC Policing

As interdisciplinary scholars, [historians](#), and [social scientists](#) have documented, the very foundation of modern American policing is structured in anti-Black repression and criminalization. This legacy remains embedded in mainstream police culture, wherein police power and authority to enforce laws and restore “order” is regularly mobilized to maintain racial hierarchies. Scholars of modern policing have identified a number of tactics and strategies used to do so, including through violent exclusion and intimidation of “undesirable” people in wealthy or [gentrifying](#) areas, fatal and maiming force disproportionately used against [Black people and other people of color](#), as well as through [concentrated](#) and [aggressive interventionist tactics](#) within communities of color. Moreover, the standard policing model in the U.S. is one reliant upon militarization and the state sanctioned use of potentially deadly force. Officers are armed with lethal and “less-than-lethal” weapons and are authorized to use them in a wide array of circumstances, all of which rest on the officers’ perceptions of threat, docility, and disobedience.

The consequence of concentrated police power coupled with racialized patterns of enforcement, has resulted in exceptionally high rates of police violence against persons of color in the U.S. And while this violence is the most dramatic and dangerous consequence of racialized policing, it also has more mundane but still damaging effects on people of color who must endure disrespectful treatment (e.g. being stopped or questioned for being perceived as “out of place” in particular neighborhoods or areas) and the psychological burden of constantly having to fear bodily harm from agents of the state who are nominally charged with their protection. Decades of efforts at police reform, including various forms of “community policing,” police advisory and review boards, de-escalation and implicit bias training, body-worn cameras, and federal intervention via consent decrees, have failed to address the underlying legacies of racialized violence that lie at the heart of American policing.

Our campus police agencies are not exempt from these legacies and imperatives. Not only are campus police equipped with weapons and authorized to use force in a manner similar to non-campus agencies, they have also have demonstrated troubling patterns of racially selective enforcement. Students of color, particularly Black students, across our campuses report numerous problematic encounters with campus police, as do many visitors and staff. We are all also profoundly impacted by the ongoing police violence around the country, and feel it is imperative to radically reassess the role and existence of police in the UC in response to this moment. Clearly any plan to rethink the security and safety infrastructure in the UC system should be informed by the thoughtful, practical work of [abolitionist scholars](#), organizers, and practitioners to ensure we adequately address institutionalized anti-Blackness and racism.¹ There is a large and growing body of pedagogical, practical, and scholarly work on abolitionist models for community safety and security that demystifies the university’s contemporary reliance on a militarized police force as the unquestioned basis for protecting campus communities from harm. We acknowledge the well-intentioned work done by the [Senate Systemwide Public Safety Task Force](#) as well as the [Presidential Task Force on Universitywide Policing](#). Ultimately, however, both of these recent reports fell into the category of narrow-bore and technocratic reforms that have failed to address the underlying roots of racialized policing. To that end, we have gathered and reviewed statements by students and faculty across the UC system about anti-Black police violence, and draw from them to make the following recommendations to guide the future of policing at UC:

¹ This [petition](#) from Harvard alumni may provide further context for such an abolitionist discussion.

- 1) Substantially defund general campus police and redistribute those resources to the study and development of alternative modes of campus safety that minimize and/or abolish the reliance on policing and other criminalizing responses.
- 2) Invest in resources that promote mental and physical wellbeing of the campus community, specifically support services for Black students as well as for other marginalized student groups who have been historically targeted by police violence.
- 3) Ban firearms as standard equipment for police on the general campus.
- 4) Dissolve any existing partnership or cooperation agreements with non-UC law enforcement agencies and terminate any agreements to allow non-UC law enforcement agencies access to campus facilities or property.
- 5) Assemble groups at both the campus and systemwide level to discuss these recommendations and how to begin implementing them within a three-year period. In doing so, these groups should prioritize the participation of those who have traditionally experienced violence and mistreatment at the hands of police. Similar steps should also be considered at the health campuses to address the policing issues identified above, recognizing the higher security needs in these environments.