A MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS JANINA MONTERO

As you are very likely aware, last week several offensive and hurtful ethnic slurs were scrawled on the door of an off-campus apartment occupied by three UCLA students. While police are investigating and it is still unknown who was responsible, the incident is upsetting to the entire Bruin community and painful for all faculty, staff and students who have worked so hard to establish a respectful, welcoming environment at UCLA.

In the days since, Chancellor Block and I have joined the campus community in condemning this deplorable incident. We are dedicated to continuing our work with students to send the message that ignorance and bigotry have no place at UCLA. On Wednesday, I met with representatives of MEChA, who shared several other troublesome incidents that have occurred on- and off-campus over the past year.

Despite our hard work, the unfortunate reality is that these types of incidents can occur at any time, targeted at any number of religious, ethnic or other groups. No matter how hard we work to establish an enlightened environment, we can never be fully insulated from disrespect and bigotry. But we are constantly working to minimize these incidents and enhance existing resources that support our students when they do happen.

Over the past several years, our campus has developed numerous initiatives aimed at expanding education, breaking down biases and encouraging direct reporting of acts of disrespect, bias and intolerance. At UCLA, our goal is to be proactive, not reactive. We are here to provide for students under any circumstance, but we are always looking for ways to improve.

Students from MEChA and other groups recently have come forward with a list of proposed strategies aimed at further improving campus climate. Chancellor Block and I welcome their ideas and applaud their initiative. We are committed to continuing our dialogue with them and looking closely at how we can work together on our shared goals.

Earlier today, Chancellor Block sent a videotaped message to the entire campus community reaffirming our commitment to maintain a welcoming environment for all students. The chancellor and I will continue to meet regularly with a variety of student groups about these issues and possible solutions. He is also teaching a Fiat Lux seminar this coming quarter on diversity and leadership – and is encouraging other faculty to teach similar courses.

Be assured, as leaders and as concerned members of our community, that our work is constant and ongoing. UCLA’s Principles of Community is a vital part of this institution. We must work together to defend and enhance these principles. We owe it to ourselves and each other. And we owe it to the UCLA community.