

October 26th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Topic: Free Speech on Campus

Meeting Called to Order: 6:00PM

Items for the Good of the Order:

- The Alumni Secretary reminds the Order about the elections:
 - Nominations are due to the Warden no later than 11:59 pm on Tuesday, November 15th, 2022, either in a hard copy or electronically (sent to warden@ogb.berkeley.edu).
 - Keep in mind to nominate people who have the capacity to serve. The past couple semesters, the Order has seen a low retention rate where participation drops off after candidates are nominated.
- A fellow requests the Order to consider waiving bylaws that insure nominees have had a year of experience before being initiated. The intention behind this is to expand the time that transfer student nominees can participate as student fellows and have a chance at fellow leadership.
 - If the Order Council wants to proceed, an announcement needs to go out right away that the students will consider the issue at the next meeting (11/8/22) such that a decision, yea or nay, can be announced to the list before the 11/15 nomination submission deadline.
- Next Order Council Meeting: November 1st 6:00pm
- Topic of next discussion: November 8th 6:00pm (Berkeley's Hypercompetitive Club Culture)

Items for the Good of the University:

On the Topic of: Free Speech on Campus

- A fellow recalls controversial speakers that came to speak on campus during their Freshman year (2019). These speakers (Ann Coulter) were faced with protest. With the rich history of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, *"how has the idea of free speech on campus changed over the years?"*
- A fellow recalls their experience of being a student during the Free Speech movement.
 - The FSM was unique in that it was about "how we conduct ourselves as a community" and the full spectrum of the campus were engaged in this conversation. It's important to recognize that the definition of the words "Free Speech" has shifted over time. What it means in 1964 is very different to what it means today.
 - This campus is both an institution and a community - this is more true now than in the 60/70s. The FSM was the first step in the split between Berkeley as a "community" and as an "institution".
 - *"Who? Can say what? When?"* – the discussion was on whether this is a community discussion or an institutional decision.
- A fellow recalls their experiences regarding free speech on campus over the years.
 - FSM, 60's
 - "1964 was more different to 1963, than 64 was to 46"

- The movement started from students, it started in the Summer of 1964 and heated up during the fall. There were sit-ins happening during early December. That's when it became National news.
- Students first tried to make changes within the existing structures. There were 6 months of petitioning. The response from the Academic Senate was inadequate. Not much was done to address the student's concerns. Because of this lack of inaction, the methods of protest became more extreme.
- The precedent that was set was: "If we try to make change in the usual way, then nothing gets done. If we break the law, then we get what we want overnight."
- 2014
 - Bill Maher was invited to speak on campus at Berkeley's Graduation in December (50th anniversary of the FSM).
 - Some students lead the charge in disinviting Maher, there was a creation of an online petition.
 - Chancellor Dirks overruled the students and continued the invitation.
 - [Bill Maher Responds to UC Berkeley Petition](#)
 - [Bill Maher @ Berkeley 2014 Winter Commencement Speech](#)
 - This fellow poses the question – "What is the reality of Free Speech on campus, now?"
 - Seems like there's intimidation of speakers.
 - Seems like there are splits of ethnic and religious lines
 - A fellow references recent issue regarding the Berkeley Law School – the bylaws of certain student organizations specifically excluded Zionist speakers.
 - Multiple fellows agree with previous speaker's statements regarding the division along ethnic and religious lines. There is agreement that the reality experienced at Berkeley is drastically different from what they expected based on the University's brand of "progressivism".
 - A fellow describes their observations as an international student – Berkeley seems like a progressive institution with political leaning heavily towards one side. The side is loud and vocal and is silencing proper discourse of different ideologies. The fellow asks: "How did we get here?"
 - A fellow suggests that modern social media has led to increased polarization. The negative and more provocative tends to be amplified. The fellow agrees that certain political ideologies on campus are silenced and censored. It's tough to have political conversations due to "cancel culture." People are unable to be respectful with people that they disagree with. Social media allows the customization of what they see and it creates an echo chamber.
 - A fellow believes that people are proud of the "progressive" brand of Berkeley – they feel the need to protect certain identities. However, some identities are protected, while others are not.
 - Jewish students don't feel safe due to anti-semitism sentiments occurring due the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
 - A fellow feels that responses towards speakers are becoming more extreme. Recall reading a comment online, where someone threatened violence and the destruction of property if a certain speaker came to speak on campus.
 - A fellow mentions that the response to the speakers pose a great risk to the campus. The financial costs are great. The University paid 1.2 Million dollars in terms of security for the Ann Coulter event.
 - The campus's choices in these issues is also a statement in itself.

- A fellow feels like in this campus environment/culture:
 - Students are leaving this campus more polarized than they came in. Students are unable to engage respectfully with people that they disagree with.
 - Is a reflection of the general modern age phenomenon of “cancel culture.”
 - It’s more important than ever for students to protect marginalized communities, while also being open-minded to people who have differing views than that of your own.
- A fellow wonders:
 - “How can the university prepare students to participate in public discourse?”
 - “What can the university do to shape this culture of discussion?”
- A fellow described the hostility that they observed during Milo Yiannopoulos’s event while serving as University staff for community service in 2016-2017.
 - Someone came up to bancroft yelling “Build the Wall” and spat on this fellow’s face.
 - Experienced tons of hateful messages coming from anonymous people all over the internet
 - Someone wrote an email threatening violence to staff.
 - People were calling and trying to trick staff into saying something controversial.
- A fellow comments:
 - Conflict can build a relationship, it doesn't have to break it.
 - We have to prepare our students for democracy
 - We have to be at the edge of what is safe to talk about
 - People choose to be outraged - we must get used to the friction, it's natural - we should run towards it. It's not what we say but how we say it. Speaking to issues, not to individuals

Discussion Adjourned at 7:30 PM.

The Meeting closed with Song, and notes were compiled by the Chronicler