

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE* **Current**

February 26, 2001

Joan Magruder

## **Chancellor's Open Letter to the Community Regarding the Isla Vista Tragedy**

A Letter to the Campus Community

I know that all members of our university community join me in sorrow following the tragic events of last weekend, when four young lives were lost and a fifth person was critically injured and remains hospitalized. This terrible tragedy leaves us all stunned and saddened. Our hearts go out to the families of all of the victims - Ruth Levy, a student at Santa Barbara City College, and a family friend, Elie Israel, and our two UCSB students, Nicholas Bourdakos and Christopher Divis - and to their friends and classmates.

Our sense of tragedy is compounded by the fact that the alleged driver of the vehicle involved in this incident is a UCSB freshman.

As soon as we received reports of this incident, my wife, Dilling, and I rushed to the scene to do what we could to console and comfort students, and to grieve with them. We were soon joined by many administrative colleagues and staff members. We immediately asked members of the university's medical and counseling staffs to provide services on site. Stepped-up counseling activities continue, both on campus and in Isla Vista, and will continue for as long as needed. We want to offer all members of our community the opportunity to obtain any such professional

assistance.

This tragedy has affected hundreds of students directly, and, indirectly, our entire university family. The recent deaths of two other UCSB students, Miyaka Geh and Patrick Hsu, add to the sense of loss that our campus is now experiencing.

On the streets of Isla Vista in those early morning hours of Saturday, we witnessed some extraordinary examples of courage, compassion, and humanity. We had reports of how students working as emergency medical technicians tried to provide assistance to the victims. We saw the students from our Community Service Organization providing information and comfort to their classmates and neighbors. And, in the days since, we have been moved by a tremendous outpouring of heartfelt emotion. Our faculty members have been pillars of strength in providing understanding and support to their students. We have had many calls from the Office of the President of the University of California, members of the Board of Regents, elected officials, our alumni, and our friends - all expressing profound sadness and sorrow. They have promised to keep our university community, the families of those we have lost, and Albert Levy, Ruth's brother, now hospitalized in critical condition - in their thoughts.

These emotions are widely shared. Our students have dedicated this a "Week of Remembrance," and are working diligently on various memorial activities to honor these lost young lives. On Thursday starting at 4:30 p.m., a special memorial observance will be held in Storke Plaza, followed by a procession to Acorn Park in Isla Vista. Vice Chancellor Michael Young and Dean of Students Yonie Harris and their colleagues are providing support and assistance in the organization of all these activities. The flag on our campus will remain at half staff all week to honor the memory of all those who died Friday night.

Many important questions about this accident remain unanswered. As the police investigation continues, we are confident that those questions will be answered.

These tragedies have been devastating. And we are in mourning. We ask all members of the university community to be mindful of the impact of the events of the past two weeks, and to honor the memory of all the young lives we have lost.

Sincerely,

Henry T. YangChancellor

---

## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.