



August 1, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you have had a restful and rejuvenating summer.

As we begin to prepare for the new school year, I wanted to address recent news articles you may have seen regarding a federal investigation into the university's response to Rose Ritch's resignation from Undergraduate Student Government in 2020. I am writing to you specifically because all of you care deeply about our Jewish community, and I have appreciated your strong support and encouragement as we have worked to address antisemitism and anti-Jewish hatred.

First, I want to emphasize that this is not new news. This complaint was filed by the Louis D. Brandeis Center in November of 2020, and is coming out now because the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is only now beginning to review it – two years later. It also does not imply any wrongdoing on the part of USC. As the Department of Education states in its letter, opening an “allegation for investigation in no way implies that OCR has made a determination with regard to its merits.”

At the time these events occurred, I shared with you our response to both the impeachment hearings against Rose Ritch – which our then-Vice President of Student Affairs, Winston Crisp, stopped immediately – as well as the bullying on social media that Rose experienced. We worked with Undergraduate Student Government (USG) to make important revisions to policy, resulting in changes to the student government bylaws for impeachment. I met with Rose personally, and Provost Chip Zukoski and VPSA Crisp both continued to speak with and support her during that time. All of this took place proactively, before the Brandeis Center filed its OCR complaint in November, and already was in progress when we received an initial letter from them in July 2020. It was our priority to do all of this without being told, because it was the right thing to do.

While this OCR complaint is nothing new, there is so much new on our campuses. Over the last two years, with your help and participation, we have held numerous conversations with leaders across the Jewish community, and made significant progress on our initiatives. Our many efforts and communications can be found on our [Addressing Antisemitism webpage](#), which I have shared with you previously since its launch in December 2021. Past communications from [me](#) and [then-VPSA Crisp](#) were also publicly accessible as soon as they were published.

I am confident we have become a leader in the fight against antisemitism. Some of our most impactful efforts include:

- In January 2022, I convened the Advisory Committee on Jewish Life at USC, which worked throughout the spring semester to develop a robust set of concrete recommendations to support Jewish life and combat antisemitism on our campuses. I look forward to sharing their recommendations with you soon.
- Our Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life, Varun Soni, and I have partnered closely to proactively develop strong relationships with national organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Federation, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the Academic Engagement Network (AEN). In fact, the Jewish Federation of LA [published a tweet](#) this week lauding our efforts in response to this OCR complaint.
- In April, Provost Zukoski and Dean Soni attended the University President's Summit on Campus Antisemitism, hosted by Hillel International, the AJC, and the AEN.
- In August 2020, we launched the [Stronger than Hate initiative](#), hosted by the USC Shoah Foundation.

Our team is working with OCR to answer every question and provide a full account of our actions during that time. I am confident in the way we responded, and proud of the actions we have taken since then to continue building a welcoming environment for our Jewish community across our campuses.

As we have in the past, we will continue to communicate the university's support for our Jewish community publicly and unequivocally. Though the events in this complaint occurred two years ago, we will continue to address the important issues it raises. I look forward to sharing more about our progress with you, and appreciate your unwavering support, dedication, and partnership.

Sincerely,



Carol L. Folt
President