

University Senate Chair Report March 2, 2026

Hi Folks,

I hope you are well, given the events over the weekend with the building occupation. I messaged the Senate on Friday afternoon with an update on the free speech activities that transpired on the quad, which led to the occupation of Nelson Hall. I am providing a snippet of those updates here, for the historical record.

On the University Quad, at 8 AM, Mike Fisher and Steve Karp presented information describing our investment portfolio. They described that most of our investments are in environmental and socially responsible funds, approaching the maximum allowable amount. They also described that a small amount of our investments is in the form of mutual funds, which we do not control directly. For example, our fiduciaries may invest in a company like Samsung or Boeing, which serve civilian/commercial purposes but also have defense contracts. We made the point that many companies out there have these dual roles, and that does not mean we are wholesale giving money to support war. I attempted to describe the complexity of owning a device like a smartphone, which overall is not an ethical purchase due to the way minerals, such as lithium and nickel, are mined, the way unethical labor practices are used in the mining process, and how much waste is generated - a complex juxtaposition of the modern world. Steve described student-led investment initiatives, such as the "Social and Environmentally Responsible Offset and Mitigation Policy" (SEROP) in 2014, making it the first U.S. state university to pledge to divest from fossil fuels. The policy focused on shifting endowment investments toward socially and environmentally conscious, indirect, and mutual fund holdings.

This information was not well-received, and many protestors heckled these arguments. A previous Associated Students President (whose name I did not catch) attempted to describe to the protestors what the Associated Students have done on this campus to improve student life, things they have advocated for, and that the administration was very supportive of these student-led initiatives, like ethical investment, enhancing campus well-being, creating a student center for commuters on campus to have a place to rest and study, and so forth. The protestors did not appear very receptive to this information, despite the fact that it was coming from a student.

We attempted to describe to students what we are doing to be prepared for ICE; however, they continued to boo, heckle, jeer, etc., and said what we are doing is not good enough. They were disappointed that we are not a "sanctuary campus" and are concerned that university officials, including campus police, will not support them if ICE were to show up on our campus. The more I attempted to describe to students that these are not true statements, and that we have been working on ICE preparedness, and that we are working with University Police to enhance campus safety against such an event, the more negative feedback and criticism I received.

Around 8:50 AM, I walked away from the event, realizing that the protestors were not interested in having a dialogue (in my opinion) and recognizing that I was starting to lose my composure. This ends the details of my personal accounts. The remainder of the events, beginning with a peaceful sit-in on the quad, following the peaceful occupation of Nelson Hall, have all been documented through various news outlets, and I encourage you to find that information.

I noted in my message to the Senate that this was a very challenging event for me. I recognize that for some, this may have been relatively "tame" compared to the April '24 events, where folks were arrested, some were injured, and some faced serious disciplinary actions (including faculty). All of the same, I am not normally the

type of person to get involved in large events like these. A large, chanting, masked crowd makes me extremely nervous, and I tip my hat to anyone who revels in this space of free speech and activism. I also want to give my sincerest appreciation to the staff, faculty, students, campus police, and administrators who remained calm and bore witness to Friday's events. I'm grateful that nobody was hurt, none were arrested, and campus life continued as usual through the weekend. This is how the April '24 events should have transpired, and I think we should all take a moment to recognize the efforts that were made, as a result of those past events, which had a direct impact on why this weekend's events were largely peaceful.

Thanks for your support. I think it is quite clear that we have a lot of work to do around education, outreach, and communication on the things we are doing in the Senate related to issues raised by the protestors. Much of what was demanded, we are already doing, but there is always room for improvement in any endeavour we take on.

CH