



United Academics Condemns Antisemitism in All Its Forms

United Academics is UVM's faculty union, and as such has a mandate to defend and protect the working environment of faculty. When our contract does not give us the tools via grievances to resist what we are being told is a hostile climate, we also have a responsibility to speak truth to power and stand in solidarity with our colleagues. To this end, United Academics (UA) shares former UA President Felicia Kornbluh's reaction to UVM President Suresh Garimella's response to the federal investigation into complaints that UVM did not respond adequately to allegations of antisemitism raised by students (<https://vtdigger.org/2022/09/26/felicia-kornbluh-on-uvm-presidents-response-to-charges-ofantisemitism/>). Rather than welcome an investigation that might improve the climate at UVM with the humility necessary to benefit from such an investigation, UVM's President sought to dismiss it as an unfounded and unnecessary annoyance and to thus gaslight the complainants. We see this as a reprehensible response.

What is particularly important to our union at this point of controversy about UVM's response to allegations of antisemitism brought by members of its student body is for us to not just condemn antisemitism in all its forms, which we resoundingly do, but also to state clearly that we believe our students when they tell us that they are experiencing specific incidents of antisemitism and a generally hostile environment that is related to their status as Jewish people. As the faculty union, however, it is equally important for us to say that the climate for students is not separate from the climate for faculty, which UVM has not adequately investigated. We believe faculty when they also report being subjected to incidents of antisemitism as well as a lack of respect for, and recognition of, their religious obligations and observances. We believe them when they express fearfulness about calling attention to bureaucratic practices that make them feel like outsiders. We believe them when they say they are demoralized and drained as a result of being uniquely called upon to support and witness for Jewish students who seek them out as sources of wisdom, experience, advice, affirmation, and comfort.

We believe that UVM can do better, as a university that in many ways led the way in its support of scholarship about the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust through its support of the work of the late Raul Hilberg and the work of others on this campus who have followed in his footsteps. We call upon UVM leadership to develop a plan of action that will ensure that it does just that. Our faculty union offers its membership as partners in such an effort; it is consistent with UA's history and values, and it is right and just.

Sincerely,

Your United Academics Executive Council

Eleanor Miller, Professor of Sociology, President

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Yolanda Flores, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Linguistics, Member at Large

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Katherine Elmer, PT Lecturer II, Rubenstein Sch Env & Nat Res, Member at Large

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