

The UCPD Response to the Police Review Board's Report

As Chief of the University of California Police Department, I have the ultimate responsibility for the performance and practices of the officers who report to me, and the decisions we make in support of our mission to serve and protect the campus community. In this context I cannot and will not ignore or evade important findings and reasonable recommendations contained in the Police Review Board's report regarding UCPD's response and actions taken November 20th.

While no one enjoys public criticism, I, and my entire department, understand that scrutiny and demands for adherence to the highest possible standards come with the territory. I wouldn't have it any other way. The very existence of a dedicated campus police force is predicated on the understanding that serving this community requires unique skills, a great deal of sensitivity and respect for a culture that values free speech and tolerates passionate protest. I believe we embrace and demonstrate these characteristics on a daily basis and in our overall responses to protest activities. At the same time, we are sworn to uphold the law while protecting the rights and ensuring the safety of every individual on this campus.

To a large extent, the board's report confirms much of my own analysis of the department's operations and my leadership on November 20th, and reiterates a number of the conclusions of our internal review. My Command Staff and I could have done a better job managing the events of November 20th. In that regard, we did not live up to our own standards and, in some instances, did not implement the best possible practices. I accept full responsibility for those shortcomings and the steps we must now take to improve our approach to managing large scale events of the type that evolved on November 20th. At the same time, we cannot, as a community, disregard the report's findings regarding the role the protesters played in many of the day's unfortunate incidents. It is my firm belief that they too must accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. I also appreciate the board's support for our obligation to respond to illegal behavior.

With that said, I do not agree with every point or opinion in the report, particularly those that may cast doubt on the integrity of individual officers and the department as a whole. While the turn of events on November 20 were regrettable, I am convinced beyond any doubt that, in the midst of the chaos and confusion, every single one of UCPD's employees did their professional best to both serve and protect our community as they carried out the duties I assigned. The fact that we, at times, fall short is most accurately ascribed to human error, not evil intent. In every instance where the report casts doubt on UCPD's motivations or veracity, I believe that further review would reveal evidence sufficient to support my convictions. We have an incredible group of professional, tolerant, and talented officers on this campus who, day after day, work hard to maintain the safety and security we too often take for granted. I owe them the best possible leadership, and we all owe them a great deal of respect.

However, I see no value in a point-by-point refutation of the report's factual inaccuracies and certain insinuations; that would only distract us from the necessary work we must do to analyze and implement the report's reasonable recommendations. I take to heart the board's desire that we utilize the narrative of the day's events as a source of learning and to let the past inform all we must do in the future. To meet that charge we need not accept or agree with every detail of the document, only its broader conclusions, and that we have most certainly done. In fact, UCPD has already implemented important changes both organizationally and in our practices that will improve our ability to respond to and manage future events. They include:

- Organizational changes to allow for increased police management control and oversight during critical events.
- Application of the Incident Command System approach to manage and respond to critical incident and protest activities.
- Purchased portable public address system to enhance our ability to communicate with crowds and large groups.
- Use of technology to coordinate, manage, and communicate between UCPD and Campus Administration.
- Invested in the Regional East Bay Communication Project to enhance radio interoperability between UCPD officers and Mutual Aid Officers from within the county.
- Improved communication with campus community regarding UCPD policies; time, place and manner rules related to demonstrations; and the proactive provision of guidelines to ensure safety during protest activities.

As the Chancellor and Associate Vice Chancellor Coley noted in their letter, communication will be an essential element as we move forward. No police force can hope to fulfill its mission absent support and understanding from the community it serves. I look forward to communicating, engaging, and working with the faculty, staff, students and greater campus community in the weeks and months ahead as we move to implement recommendations suggested by the PRB report.

Sincerely,

Mitchell J. Celaya, III
Chief of Police