REPORT DETAILS

Report Submission Date
9/26/2019

Reported Company/Branch Information

Location Murphy Hall

City/State/Zip: Los Angeles, CA, 90095, USA

Department/Division
Office of the Chancellor

Building
Murphy Hall

What is your relationship to the University of California?
Student

Please identify the person(s) engaged in this behavior:
Gene Block - Chancellor
Marilyn Alkin - 2018-2019 UCLA SFAC Advisor
Mike Cohn - UCLA SOLE Director
Monroe Gorden - UCLA Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs

When and where did this occur, and what was the duration?
Murphy Hall at UCLA, from at least summer 2017 until present.

How did you become aware of this concern?
I was a member of the UCLA Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC). I first became aware of the facts suggesting potential improper governmental activity around early March of 2019. On March 12th, 2019 I emailed the campus news editor at the Daily Bruin and notified her that myself and a fellow graduate student representative believed that the Chancellor violated the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and that we intended to discuss the matter at that day's UCLA SFAC meeting.

If you have already reported this, to whom and when, and what action was taken?
I have brought this matter before several UCLA Administrators, including 2018-2019 administrative members of the UCLA SFAC. With the sole exception of Deb Geller, every administrator I interacted with (listed as engaged in the behavior) took on a defensive posture and told me, in various ways and to varying degrees, to drop the topic and move on.
For example, when I discussed this matter with SOLE Director Mike Cohn, he told me "What's the big deal?" At a later date after I had been elected Graduate Students Association President, Mike Cohn told me, as a response to my telling him that I think this is a serious matter and that the Chancellor should address it, that "when you meet the Chancellor, I have a feeling you are going to like him."

I have discussed this matter with Chancellor Block himself both through written communication and in person. He consistently invokes "his staff" and does not seem to fully understand the factual record or the implications his actions have on the integrity of the student fee allocation process. When I discussed this matter with him at his on-campus residence in May of 2019, Chancellor Block ended the conversation by becoming upset and walking away from me.

Chancellor Block himself and Monroe Gorden, in person and in writing, have refused to have Chancellor Block speak with the UCLA Graduate Students Association Forum regarding this matter. Both Gorden and Chancellor Block have told me that the Chancellor was willing to meet with the UCLA SFAC to answer questions, but such a meeting has yet to take place despite my frequent requests to Marilyn Alkin, Monroe Gorden, and Mike Cohn.

Are there documents or files which support or are relevant to your allegation?
Yes

Location of files if not uploaded:
I have uploaded relevant minutes and correspondences to a dropbox at

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ju6s7x54f0y5j45/AAA7tFgczgG5cKX2v7iMnsnqa?dl=0

I have other documents, including emails, which are not necessary to establish my claims but provide further context. I am happy to provide any or all of those upon request.

Details
As a graduate student representative of the 2018-2019 Student Fee Advisory Committee ("SFAC"), I became aware of facts that indicate that the Chancellor of UCLA, Gene D. Block, did not follow the Bylaws and Charter of the UCLA SFAC and misled the UCLA SFAC to believe that he had powers explicitly denied to him by the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter, namely the power to disapprove new rules protecting against conflict of interests without following the requirements for disapproval outlined in the UCLA SFAC's Bylaws and Charter.
Chancellor Block sent a letter dated August 29th, 2017 to the members of the UCLA SFAC that indicated his "postponement" of a decision whether or not to authorize a bylaw amendment that had been passed 9-3 by the 2016-2017 SFAC. This letter effectively however amounted to a disapproval because subsequent SFAC's acted as if the bylaw amendment had not been enacted and the UCLA SFAC Bylaws were never updated on the UCLA SFAC's website. Moreover, the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter do not give a Chancellor the power to "postpone" approval or disapproval but rather they outline a specific process by which a Chancellor may effectively disapprove supermajority-approved amendments.

Chancellor Block's letter was invalid and misleading because this action was in direct contradiction to procedures outlined in the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter. Despite being notified of an approved UCLA SFAC Bylaws Amendment on June 6th, 2017, Chancellor Block did not take action within 14 days of the committee’s vote to codify the Bylaws language regarding conflicts of interest. His letter came 84 days (12 weeks) after he received notification that the committee had approved a bylaw amendment regarding conflicts of interest. That language was approved on a 9-3 vote and therefore made valid on May 22, 2017. The Chancellor also did not hold the requisite meeting with at least a quorum of the committee before expressing disapproval, as required by the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter.

The Chancellor's actions in violation of the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter led the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 UCLA SFAC to believe that they need not follow procedures involving conflicts of interest and recusals over such conflicts because these procedures had been disapproved by Chancellor Block. As a consequence the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 UCLA SFAC's process for creating a formal Student Services Fee funding recommendation was not in compliance with conflict of interest regulations that in truth and fact bound the committee by the standard of that committee's own Bylaws and Charter.

As a consequence of the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 UCLA SFAC’s failure to follow duly authorized conflict of interest regulations (as a result of Chancellor Block's actions in contradiction to the UCLA SFAC Bylaws), the allocation process of tens of millions of dollars of UCLA Students' Student Service Fees was tainted.
The 2016-2017 UCLA SFAC's bylaw amendment regarding conflicts of interest was not honored, and, as the UCLA SFAC is the vehicle by which students are to have input regarding the allocation of their student fees, student voices -- and the processes meant to dignify and legitimize student voices -- were dishonored.

I am reporting this to the UC Office of the Director of Investigations because I believe Chancellor Block's conduct, particularly his failure to follow the basic requirements of the UCLA SFAC Bylaws and Charter and to mislead subsequent UCLA SFAC's, potentially amounts to gross negligence, gross incompetence, and/or some other form of improper governmental activity. I believe that Chancellor Block's conduct is an affront to both the letter and the spirit of University of California Regents Policy 3101(B), which states:

"At each campus, the Chancellor or his/her designee annually shall solicit and actively consider student recommendations, with the intent of honoring as much as possible student recommendations on the following: the use of Student Services Fee (SSF) revenue; and the annual SSF to be set by the Regents. Student recommendations shall be provided by each campus' Student Fee Advisory Committee recognized by the systemwide Council on Student Fees."