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May 12, 2016

Joint President Statement from Jimmy Villarreal and President-elect, Austin Hechler to UCSB Students

Dear UCSB Student Body,

This Spring term brought the annual student elections to the student body with active campaigning beginning on April 10th and the results being revealed on April 21st. We write to you now as the outgoing and incoming AS Presidents to address the current state of the association, in the wake of the elections, as well as to remind us all of its strength and resilience.

What Has Occurred?

Over the course of the last three weeks there have been complaints of alleged voter irregularities and this is something that the Association takes very seriously. The Senate and Elections Board first addressed these concerns internally in line with the normal course of their work. To add, it is normal and customary in any election for complaints to arise. These complaints are usually regarding how elections interact with Residence Hall Association (RHA), campus and AS rules. The current allegations are of a different nature and therefore an outside, third party investigator is looking into the potential irregularities of this election.

AS did not want there to be any lingering suspicions that the matter at hand was left unresolved and business as usual was conducted. Therefore, in an effort to ensure transparency and provide clarity, AS requested that the UCSB Department of Audit and Advisory Services conduct the investigation. As outgoing and incoming campus Presidents, we are constructing this letter in an effort to provide as much information about the process as possible.

Moving Forward

On May 11th, the Senate passed two resolutions, at the advice of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, AS Executive Director and President Villarreal. Resolutions are the Senate's way of addressing and dedicating resources on behalf of the student body to itself, to its own staff and to the campus or beyond. The Senate followed this recommendation as the best course of action to address such a unique situation. One resolution extended the term of the current elected and appointed student leaders until those positions are filled. The second resolution created a presidential commission, to be comprised of nonpartisan members coming from all three branches of the Association.

How Are These Resolutions Going to Work?

In the case of extending the term of appointment, the association is asking of each member that is either elected or appointed to extend their own term by a week. Understandably, if this is NOT possible due to other commitments or scholastic reasons, you should contact your chair or your President. President@as.ucsb.edu If it is possible, you will be eligible to receive comparable honoraria

for your effort.

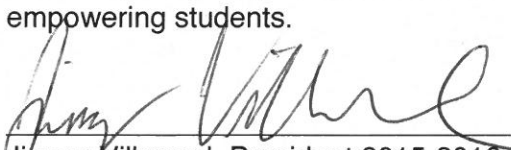
If the investigation goes past the 9th week, the second resolution seeks to create a bridge between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 administration of Associated Students by creating the "Villarreal Elections Commission" which will be responsible for a) receiving the investigatory report, deliberating and rendering a final decision on the Spring 2016 election b) conducting the business of the association over summer until new leadership is in place and c) actually swearing in the new leadership.

Speaking on behalf of the whole association, we both understand that this situation is unprecedented and we don't take our actions lightly. The investigation is currently underway, however there is no set timetable for completion. Seeing as such, President Villarreal has committed to sending out email communications every Monday, updating the Association on the progress of the investigation and the commission.


Conclusion

To conclude, we don't want to only address this one chapter in the association, an association that has done so much good for UCSB. After all, for 60+ years AS has provided a voice for the students, it's created needed and valued entities across the campus, and serves as a bridge into the community beyond UCSB. This is a proud legacy that we are determined to continue. The resilience of the association can be noted throughout its history. For instance, 10 years ago, the Association brought to the students a referendum named the "Students Initiative". The results of the Students' Initiative hugely expanded the resources, services and capabilities of Associated Students. We provided additional departmental support for vital student services such as CLAS and the Recreation Center, as well as AS led groups such as the AS Bike Shop and AS Program Board. Additionally, campus registered organizations have enjoyed continued and expanded funding for their activities and programs.

Students are of the utmost importance to this university and together we can change each other's lives. Hopefully 10 years from now we can look back at all the things we added on to the legacy of empowering students.



Jimmy Villarreal, President 2015-2016,
Associated Students, UCSB



Austin Hechler, President-Elect, 2016-2017
Associated Students, UCSB