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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Students

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Governor Asks California Universities to Review Policies on Hate Crimes

By ELIZABETH F. FARRELL

Gov. Gray Davis of California has asked public universities in the state to review their policies on free speech and hate crimes in the wake of anti-Semitic incidents on some campuses.

In a letter to the president of the University of California system and the chancellor of the California State University System, Governor Davis, a Democrat, wrote that his request was motivated by concern over recent anti-Semitic incidents. He referred to an incident in April, when two Orthodox Jewish men were attacked near the University of California's Berkeley campus, and an altercation that occurred in May between supporters of the Palestinians and a pro-Israel group at San Francisco State University.

"While I respect the fundamental right to free speech, nothing justifies these acts of violence, harassment, and abuse," the governor wrote. "I know you agree. We must put a stop to them and do everything we can to be sure that no more occur."

In addition to requesting reviews of policies concerning demonstrations and First Amendment rights, the governor asked each university to review "official university activities, including course descriptions, to ensure that they are forums for intellectual inquiry and not vehicles of discrimination, intimidation, or hate."

According to Hilary McLean, a spokeswoman for the governor, Mr. Davis expects written assessments from each university system outlining the actions it is taking to promote the objectives specified in the letter. But the governor set no deadline for these responses.

Charles B. Reed, chancellor of the California State system, has already



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responded to the governor's request with a letter detailing the university's strategies for preventing hate crimes. Mr. Reed cited a 38-person panel appointed to improve the "campus climate" at San Francisco State as one example of measures taken by the system.

Reaction to the governor's letter was mixed. Laurie Zoloth, a professor of ethics and Jewish studies at San Francisco State, praised the governor for directing his attention to upholding standards of "responsible activity."

"It's a good step in the right direction on a long road," said Ms. Zoloth. "There needs to be a clear line drawn between free expression of ideas and virulent anti-Semitic attacks that lead to physical intimidation of students and faculty."

Others, like Thor L. Halvorsen, executive director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, said that the governor's letter was troublesome because it did not define what constitutes discrimination or hate within the university setting.

"Instead of outlining point-by-point limits on behavior, universities are trying to dictate attitudes [of their students and faculty members], and that is not the place of the university or the governor," Mr. Halvorsen said.

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