

Napolitano: UC Berkeley must lead change in sex harassment culture

By Jill Tucker | April 7, 2016 | Updated: April 8, 2016 7:35am

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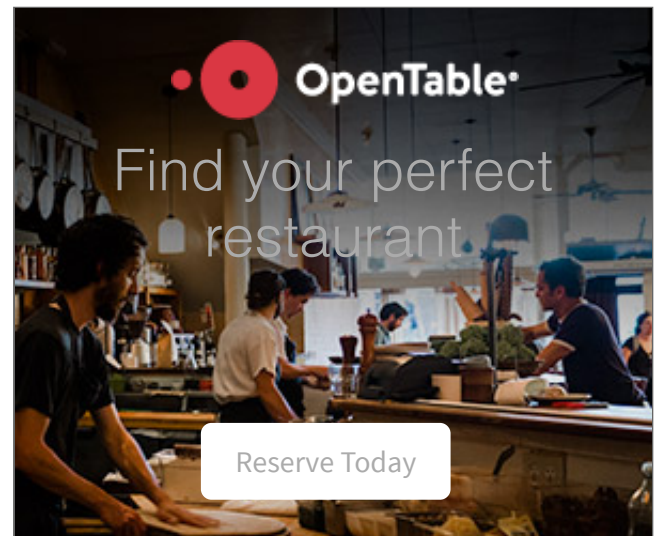
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University of California President Janet Napolitano said Thursday that she was “unhappy” and dissatisfied with the way UC Berkeley has handled some of its recent cases of sexual harassment, adding that investigations take too long and discipline is inconsistent.

In an hourlong meeting with The Chronicle’s editorial board, she also questioned the quality of the investigations into allegations of sexual harassment, and said that although harassment has occurred at other UC campuses, Berkeley is the premier campus and must take the lead role in fixing the problem.



“It’s 2016. Enough is enough,” Napolitano said, in her strongest statements yet regarding the sexual harassment scandals at UC Berkeley.

“The University of California should be leading by example, not mistake,” she said.

Explaining her disappointment in UC Berkeley’s handling of cases, she said that when she learned that the dean of the law school, Sujit Choudhry, was still on the job after a UC Berkeley investigation found he had sexually harassed an office assistant, she worked with the campus to get Choudhry removed.

The university — from administrators to faculty — needs to own this problem, Napolitano said.

“I’m not satisfied with what’s been going on,” she said. “We’re going to address it, fix it and be very transparent about it.”

Napolitano’s comments came just two days after the university released more than 400 public documents related to 17 complaints of sexual harassment involving faculty or staff dating back to 2008 in which investigators found that harassment had definitely or likely

occurred.

Some of the cases fueled ongoing criticism of the university's lenient treatment of offenders — including a diving coach who subjected a coworker to sexual comments over 18 months and offered him \$300 for oral sex. The third-year coach had his pay cut but was not suspended or fired.

Other cases included previously reported cases involving Choudhry, former astronomy Professor Geoffrey Marcy, former head of research Graham Fleming — who investigators found harassed employees or students with unwanted kissing, groping or touching, but were only warned, docked in pay or reassigned.

Addressing lax response

Napolitano said she intervened, working with UC Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas Dirks to address the lax response in individual cases.

Dirks has since appointed a special adviser as well as consultants from outside academia to monitor the university's response, Napolitano added. In addition, two task forces are looking to address lapses in policies and procedures.

Currently, for example, the sexual harassment reporting process isn't clear, Napolitano said. Victims need to know where to go to complain. In addition, she said, the investigations are taking too long and punishment is arbitrary.

Most recently, investigators found, after a seven-month investigation, that Cal's assistant basketball coach, Yann Hufnagel, sexually harassed a reporter. The campus then began termination proceedings, but Hufnagel resigned Thursday, Napolitano said.

She is reviewing recommendations from a systemwide task force on how to improve on preventing and addressing sexual harassment, she said.

It is an issue "throughout academia," she said. "There's way too much of this tolerated."

During the meeting Thursday,

Napolitano also addressed the university’s controversial reliance on out-of-state students to offset budget cuts, which critics contend displaced state residents.

Cost to nonresidents

To address a recessionary budget cut that slashed state revenue by a third, the UC system opted to keep tuition and fees static, maintain enrollment of in-state students and boost the number of nonresidents, who pay \$38,108 compared with \$13,400 for California undergraduates.

Given the other options of raising tuition or cutting enrollment, Napolitano said, the nonresident option was the most logical choice. While disputing the findings in a state audit that indicated nonresident students were admitted with lower qualifications, she also noted that the UC system plans to add 10,000 seats for California residents over the next two years.

The system will also add residential units for 14,000 students to address the high cost and availability of housing.

“We’re a public university of California and we are still a California university ... 85 percent California residents,” she said.

To be sure, the UC system — especially UC Berkeley — has faced challenges and potential lapses in public trust over the last few months related to the state audit on out-of-

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state admissions and the sexual harassment cases, she said.

“We’re not shying away from these issues, we’re acknowledging them, addressing them, fixing them,” Napolitano said. “Californians have a right to be proud of us, and we want to work to maintain that.”

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