UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

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June 1, 2009

Joel Michaelson,
Academic Senate
UC Santa Barabara

Dear Professor Michaelson,

We, the undersigned tenured faculty from the Department of English, are very concerned with the manner in which charges against Professor William Robinson have been handled. If student complaints against curricular materials do not make their through the department first, and if the Academic Senate does not protect faculty from external agencies who can, as in this instance, insist on bypassing internal university procedures, then our work as professors in the humanities who seek to foster critical thinking may indeed be in jeopardy.

English departments have a historical stake in preserving open debate in the classroom. First, for the past three decades or more English departments have strongly encouraged analytic inquiry into how culture plays a role in global affairs. Second, our syllabi are habitually packed with texts that were censured/banned at some point or another; hence we are particularly sensitive to effects of banned speech.

Since we deeply value this university's consistent protection of its faculty, we hope the Academic Senate and the Administration will strongly support academic freedom by observing due process in this particular case, and by clarifying procedures for handling student complaints in the future.

Sincerely,

Alan Liu
Patricia Fumerton
William Warner
Enda Duffy
Rita Raley
Stephanie LeMenager
Carl Gutierrez-Jones
Michael O'Connell
Elizabeth Heckdorn-Cook
Bishnupriya Ghosh