

University of California Los Angeles chancellor to be replaced by pro-Zionist corporate shill

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The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) has been transformed into a battleground. On the one side, students and university workers are determined to continue their protests against the genocide in Gaza. On the other, Los Angeles police and private security forces, invited by university administration and Democratic Party figures at the city, state and national levels, are brutally punishing peaceful protesters.

The repression accelerated after the United Auto Workers union shut down the historic strike by tens of thousands of UC academic workers demanding an end to the police crackdown on university workers and students. The UAW bureaucracy, which is allied with the Biden administration and never wanted the strike in the first place, bowed before a judge's strikebreaking injunction and called off the weeks-long strike on June 9.

The heavy-handed response to the protests led to calls for a vote of no confidence in UCLA Chancellor Gene Block, who has been in that position since 2007. When the student protest encampments first emerged on April 25, Block declared them "unlawful" and promised disciplinary action for students who remained. Scores of students were expelled from the campus thereafter, unable to make use of their own dorms or campus meal services.

The no confidence vote ultimately failed in the academic senate. Block, however, had already announced his plans to retire and is slated to step down from his post next month. UCLA Provost Darnell Hunt will serve as interim chancellor until January 2025, when Julio Frenk, current president of the University of Miami, is scheduled to take over the position.

Frenk was unanimously selected by the UC Board of Regents, a governing body whose members are nominated by Governor Gavin Newsom and his predecessors, and confirmed by the Democratic-controlled California state

Senate. The board members come from ultra-wealthy corporate interests in addition to seven ex-officio members, who either hold high office in Sacramento or in the UC system itself. The board of regents approved a starting base salary of \$978,904 for the new chancellor.

Block's departure is being hailed as a victory by pseudo-left apologists for the UAW bureaucracy, including the UAW Local 4811 Rank and File for a Democratic Union. The appointment of Frenk, however, is an indication that the university administration intends to continue its support for the Israeli government while further escalating brutal attacks on students and workers.

Frenk had previously served as Mexico's Secretary of Health under the right-wing Vicente Fox administration. He was also previously a senior fellow in the global health program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—a major advocate of public school privatization.

UCLA operates one of the largest university hospital systems in the United States with five hospitals and more than 280 clinics. The system has been plagued by dangerous levels of understaffing and overwork by nurses and medical staff, leading to multiple strikes over the course of the past decade.

As president at the University of Miami, Frenk was instrumental in pushing through large scale layoffs during the peak of coronavirus pandemic and can be expected to enact similar "belt-tightening" measures at the Los Angeles campus and the hospital system itself.

At the time of the Miami layoffs in May 2020, he implicitly admitted that the pandemic was being seized upon as a pretext for large-scale job cuts. "If you have some of those worst-case scenarios," he said, "you cannot do this kind of careful analysis of opportunities for furloughs when you already have an emergency upon you.

You have to be one step ahead of the crisis.”

Three years later, Frenk was among the first US university presidents to condemn the October 7 Palestinian uprising. Demonstrating his skills as a political operator, Frenk released the statement of condemnation to preempt inevitable campus outrage over the subsequent Israeli response.

The university president admitted that he had exercised an exception to “institutional restraint” wherein university officials normally do not comment on political events to prevent the possibility that “a space of silence would be filled by other voices.”

Frenk then told the student club, “freedom of expression has clear rules and clear limits. Number one: no hate speech, no incitement to violence, and no public display of support to organizations that have been officially declared by our government as terrorist organizations.” He continued, “The attack and targeting of innocent civilians by a terrorist organization violated a foundational value of universities everywhere to promote knowledge and understanding as a way of resolving complex issues.”

Naturally, the UCLA chancellor-to-be’s supposed commitment to “knowledge and understanding” is not at all bothered by the Israel Defense Forces deliberately targeting universities in the Gaza Strip to the point that they have now all been completely destroyed.

At the same time, American and European universities have been targeted for police state repression and a non-stop propaganda campaign to slander students and silence opposition to the US-backed genocide and American imperialism’s expanding wars for global domination.

The Biden administration and both parties in Congress have repeatedly promoted the big lie that campus protests are “anti-semitic” even though large numbers of students involved in the protests are Jewish.

At the same time, congressional leaders have threatened to utilize the Internal Revenue Service to penalize university finances, to withhold federal student aid, crackdown on immigrant students, and withhold a host of scholarships and research grants to universities that are not aggressive enough against protesters. The message is increasingly clear, “toe the State Department line and suspend, arrest and beat up troublesome students or face the consequences.”

This response is an indication that the ruling class is taking the protests extremely seriously and does not expect them to disappear in the 2024-2025 academic year. Under these circumstances, it is absolutely critical that

workers and student youth adopt a political perspective to successfully fight back.

The struggle against war and state repression is above all a political struggle, which cannot be limited to the campuses. It requires a consistent turn by students to the working class, the social force that has the power to halt the production and shipment of weapons to Israel and other US client states.

But this requires a relentless struggle against the trade union bureaucracy, the Democratic Party and its apologists in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and other pseudo-left organizations. These groups keep young people and workers tied to the Democratic Party by promoting the claim that campus protests will pressure this imperialist party to change its ways.

The lessons of the UC strike are not that political strikes are futile. It is that such struggles cannot be left in the hands of the pro-war and pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy. The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) are building the revolutionary leadership necessary to build a mass anti-war movement based on the working class and the struggle for international socialism.

As the ruling class resorts to ever more brutal forms of repression, it is increasingly urgent that workers and youth break free of the shackles of the union bureaucracy and build new organizations of struggle, controlled by the rank and file and independent of the capitalist parties.

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