SDSU University Senate Resolution in Support of Prompt Revision of Principle Five of the Principles of Community

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2026, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to approve the following action item:

The University Senate proposes that the SDSU Principles of Community should be a formal shared governance document, which will reside on the Senate website under "Guiding Philosophies." As such, all revisions (which will come from the forthcoming Principles of Community Reaffirmation Committee) will be reviewed and approved by the Senate through the regular process for bringing items for consideration to the body.

WHEREAS, this was done to establish the vital role of the Senate, as the one university-wide body comprising elected faculty, staff, and students, in reviewing and revising the Principles of Community.

WHEREAS, the current resolution addresses a problematic revision of Principle five, made in July 2025 by the "Strategic Planning Activity 39 Working Group" **(https://www.sdsu.edu/community-principles)** without Senate review or any broader public consultation consistent with SDSU's commitment to shared governance. The revised Principle five reads as follows: **"**We condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, antisemitism, including anti-Zionism (denying Israel's right to exist), Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination across all our campus communities and remind our campus community that such discrimination goes against SDSU policy."

WHEREAS, the current resolution proposes to largely restore the original version of Principle five of the Principles of Community, which was reviewed and received by the Senate on December 7, 2021, and is currently hosted on the Senate website under its "Guiding Philosophies." https://senate.sdsu.edu/02_principles-of-community. Taking account of post-October 7, 2023, developments, the proposed modification adds antisemitism and Islamophobia to the forms of discrimination specifically condemned.

WHEREAS, the president's office was informed of concerns about the July 2025 revision in October 2025, and the Senate Executive Committee discussed the issue with Chief of Staff Brittany Santos-Derieg at its February 2026 meeting. Yet the July 2025 revised language remains unchanged.

WHEREAS, the foremost problem with the July 2025 revision is its provision "antisemitism, including anti-Zionism (denying Israel's right to exist)," as something to be condemned. Such a formulation both wrongly equates antisemitism with anti-Zionism and presents a confusing definition of anti-Zionism subject to a multitude of interpretations. The formulation potentially condemns most Palestinians as antisemitic. Many, after all, lament the creation of an explicitly Jewish nation-state in 1948 that effectively erased the land's Palestinian heritage and permanently displaced most Palestinians from their longstanding homeland. Similarly, many

Palestinians favor a new political arrangement that grants them equal status to Israeli Jews across Israel-Palestine. To dismiss such views as antisemitic effectively signals to Palestinians that their fundamental rights and aspirations merit no consideration.

WHEREAS, the July 2025 revision also dismisses the growing opposition, among scholars and the public, to equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism. See, for example, the document of the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) (https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/), which was formulated and signed by several hundred scholars in the fields of Holocaust history, Jewish studies, and Middle East studies, most of whom are Jewish. Informed by rigorous scholarship, the JDA draws careful distinctions between antisemitism, on the one hand, and anti-Zionism or harsh criticisms of Israel, on the other.

WHEREAS, the July 2025 revision makes matters worse by attaching the parenthetical of "denying Israel's right to exist" to anti-Zionism. The intent of this attachment is unclear. Does the parenthetical specify the meaning of anti-Zionism in general or simply specify a subcategory of anti-Zionism that is regarded as antisemitic? More fundamentally, what is meant by "denying Israel's right to exist"? Does this include all opposition, past and present, to an explicitly Jewish nation-state? Would any advocacy for a different political order of coexistence among Israeli Jews and Palestinians across Israel-Palestine run afoul of this definition? Consider that a growing number of people throughout the world now support a single democratic and egalitarian state for all residents in Israel-Palestine, be they Jewish, Arab, or of some other heritage. Condemning them as antisemitic would be both unfair and a substantial constraint on political discourse. Moreover, is any questioning of the policies and actions taken in the mid-to-late 1940s to create the state of Israel off-limits? It would be bizarre to label as antisemitic the many principled voices, including prominent Jews like Hannah Arendt and Martin Buber, who warned then of the consequences of partitioning Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

WHEREAS, the chilling potential of the July 2025 revision is considerable. Any group or individual who self-defines as anti-Zionist runs the risk of being formally marked as antisemitic, including such distinguished scholars as Judith Butler, Rashid Khalidi, and the late Edward Said. Simply supporting a single democratic state for Israel-Palestine is now subject to condemnation. The July 2025 revision also renders suspect a wide range of social justice advocacy groups critical of both Israel's oppression of Palestinians and what they view as an enabling ideology of Jewish supremacy as opposed to simple Jewish self-determination.

WHEREAS, the last line of the July 2025 revision is also problematic. It states, "that such discrimination goes against SDSU policy." This sentence contradicts the claim in the Principles of Community that these principles "are not official SDSU policy; nor do they replace existing policies, procedures or codes of conduct." Consequently, the principles could be used to not just condemn presumptive anti-Zionism but to prohibit such expressions and sanction students, faculty members, or organizations.

WHEREAS, it is imperative to undo the July 2025 revision promptly, before it exerts a chilling effect or is used as the basis for university-, state-, or federal-level punitive actions against members of the SDSU community. As shown in actions taken elsewhere, including suspensions and even federal detentions of non-citizens, the negative consequences would fall most heavily on Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims. After all, as observed by Ellen Schrecker, the preeminent historian of academia in the McCarthy era, colleges and universities are more besieged now than during the height of Cold War hysteria.[i] Since returning to power in 2025, the Trump administration has been especially aggressive, often by invoking the need to combat supposedly anti-Zionist-related antisemitism.[ii] To this end, it has recently filed lawsuits charging Harvard University and UCLA with enabling a hostile climate for Jews.[iii] Regrettably, university leaders across the country, including at UCSD, have increasingly cracked down on pro-Palestine activism.[iv] SDSU should not indirectly help such efforts by unilaterally deeming all anti-Zionists as antisemites.

RESOLVED, that the SDSU Senate reaffirms its condemnation of antisemitism and Islamophobia in Senate Resolutions passed in December 2023 and March 2024.

RESOLVED, that the Senate disagrees that “anti-Zionism (denying Israel’s right to exist)” should be included in the Principles of Community.

RESOLVED, that the Senate calls upon the President’s Office to revise Principle five now, before the Principles of Community Reaffirmation Committee is formed and convenes next fall, to read accordingly:

“We condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination across all our campus communities and extend the critical notion of inclusivity towards all cultures and identities.”

The above shall replace the July 2025 version, which reads:

"We condemn racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, antisemitism, including anti-Zionism (denying Israel's right to exist), Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination across all our campus communities and remind our campus community that such discrimination goes against SDSU policy."

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[i] Ellen Schrecker, "Worse Than McCarthyism: Universities in the Age of Trump," *The Nation*, April 3, 2025 https://www.thenation.com/article/society/mccarthyism-universities-trump-attacks/

[ii] John K. Wilson, "A Blueprint for Repression," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 24, 2025 https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/04/24/demands-harvard-are-blueprint-repression-opinion

[iii] Alan Blinder, Mark Arsenault, and Michael C. Bender, "Trump's Contested Campus Antisemitism Fight is Accelerating Again," *New York Times*, March 21, 2026

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/21/us/trump-campus-antisemitism-fight-universities.html; United States of America v. Regents of the University of California, Case No. 2:26-cv-01946, Complaint and Jury Demand, February 24, 2026 https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1428731/dl

[iv] Isabelle Taft, "How Universities Cracked Down on Pro-Palestinian Activism," *New York Times*, November 25, 2024 https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/25/us/university-crackdowns-protests-israel-hamas-war.html; Teri Figueroa and Caleb Lunetta, "UCSD professors face discipline in connection with 2024 pro-Palestinian protest encampment," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 12, 2024 https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2026/04/12/ucsd-professors-face-discipline-in-connection-with-2024-pro-palestinian-protest-encampment/