

President's Update: Racial Intolerance
November 21, 2013 Pat Lopes Harris

President Qayoumi emailed the following statement to all faculty, staff and students regarding alleged hate crimes in SJSU's student housing complex:

Dear Spartans,

As many of you know, the Santa Clara County district attorney's office has filed criminal charges against three San Jose State students accused of recurrent abusive behavior toward a fellow student in their residence hall suite this fall.

Let me be clear: I am outraged and saddened by these allegations. They are utterly inconsistent with our long cherished history of tolerance, respect for diversity and personal civility. The three students suspected of this conduct have been suspended, effective today.

The misdemeanor battery charges include a hate-crime enhancement based on indications that the victim, an African-American freshman, was targeted based on race. I want you to know how San Jose State has responded thus far, and our intentions moving forward.

Our paramount initial concern was the safety of the victimized student. The day our housing staff learned of the situation, the University Police Department launched an investigation. Also that day, two of the accused students were relocated to separate residence halls and not placed with roommates.

A third suite-mate, originally believed to be a bystander, was identified yesterday as an offender. We regret he was not removed from the victim's suite before today.

Parallel internal inquiries, one based on university student conduct policies and another focused on federal anti-discrimination regulations, are ongoing.

We speak very directly to all freshmen about discrimination and harassment during orientation and at hall meetings. We will re-examine our diversity programs and safety measures within campus housing and throughout the university.

Diversity and a commitment to social justice are in SJSU's institutional DNA. Our library is named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; many of us pass daily by the sculpture of Tommie Smith and John Carlos or under the Cesar E. Chavez Arch. This deeply disturbing incident reaffirms that we must protect and steward our values. I am proud of all who marched today in support of them.

I know many of you will have questions and concerns. Please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Mohammad Qayoumi
President