

January 31, 2025

Amanuel Gebru
Office of the President
Los Angeles City College
855 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90029

Sent via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail (gebrua@laccd.edu)

Dear President Gebru:

FIRE, a nonpartisan nonprofit that defends free speech,¹ in partnership with the Journalism Association of Community Colleges,² are concerned by the hostile environment student journalists face at Los Angeles City College. We have recently received evidence of efforts to cut classes and other programs from the journalism department, exacerbating the concerns we outlined in our enclosed previous correspondence with LACC.³

Due to LACC's continued failure to seriously grapple with these concerns, we planned to publicize this matter. But in light of recent changes in leadership, we wanted to make sure you and Chancellor Román understood the full scope of the situation before we launch further public advocacy. We request a meeting with your administration to discuss pursuing remedies to these First Amendment violations, including policy amendments, restoring the *Collegian* to the college website, and stopping cuts that target the journalism program. Furthermore, when students reached out to trustee Nichelle Henderson about their concerns, she chastised them for daring to break the "chain of command" and hid this response from the other trustees. This response flies in the face of not only the press freedom LACCD is obligated to protect but also the First Amendment right to petition.⁴

¹ For more than 20 years, FIRE has defended freedom of expression and other individual rights on America's university campuses. You can learn more about our mission and activities at thefire.org.

² Founded in 1955, the Journalism Association of Community Colleges is a collective of journalism programs—faculty, students and professionals—who aim to further the pursuit of high-quality, ethical, rigorous journalism through supporting journalism education across community colleges. The organization aims to spread awareness of and advocate for journalism programs and their students.

³ See also Melissa Gomez, *At L.A. City College, student reporters decry censorship at public, on-campus events*, LOS ANGELES TIMES, (May 24, 2023), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-05-24/1-a-city-college-student-journalists-face-censorship>.

⁴ See Email from Juan Mendoza, student, to Nichelle Henderson, trustee (Dec. 3, 2024, 10:01 AM) (on file with author).

While we understand that the ongoing and disastrous fires in Los Angeles may be of primary concern right now, LACC has already been severely dilatory in responding to these concerns, and its continued crippling of student media has only made it harder for students to get needed information about the situation.

FIRE and JACC would be pleased to collaborate with your administration to improve its policies and practices (for free, of course, in accordance with our charitable missions). We request a list of dates and times in the coming week when you would be available to meet.

Sincerely,



Dominic Coletti
Program Officer, Campus Rights Advocacy, FIRE



Eleni Gastis
Co-President, JACC



Annie Sciacca
Co-President, JACC

Cc: Alberto J. Román, Interim Chancellor, Los Angeles Community College District
Kelsey Iino, President, Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees

Encl.