

## An Open Letter to Cal Poly President Jeffrey Armstrong About the Investigation of Student Protesters

29 May 2018

Dear President Armstrong:

We were dismayed to learn that the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities is investigating a group of Cal Poly students who conducted a peaceful demonstration to protest the presence of military contractor Raytheon at a recent Cal Poly career fair. These students were clearly exercising their constitutionally protected free speech rights. They did not break any laws or violate any campus policies.

Students at California's public universities have been protesting the presence of military contractors on their campuses since the 1960s. Fifty years of constitutional jurisprudence has established that they are entirely within their rights to do so. Formal university investigations of peaceful student demonstrations have a serious chilling effect on student free speech.

Ironically, Cal Poly has recently gone to great lengths to present itself as a champion of free speech. When a white student appeared in blackface, you characterized that as protected free speech. On two separate occasions, the University has offered maximum free speech protections to Milo Yiannopoulos, a far right ideologue who has no connection to the Cal Poly community. Yet it now seems that Cal Poly is not prepared to extend the same free speech rights to *its own students*.

It appears that Cal Poly uses a double standard when evaluating free speech claims. This apparent double standard will likely cause serious additional damage to Cal Poly's international reputation. Since our University's reputation has already been tarnished by recent events such as the blackface incident, we cannot afford that. We urge you to mitigate the damage to Cal Poly's reputation by dropping the investigation of a peaceful, lawful student protest.

Sincerely,

The CFA SLO Executive Board,  
Lewis Call, President, CFA SLO, and  
Graham Archer, Glen Thorncroft and Rich Saenz, Past Presidents, CFA SLO