

Faculty, Staff and Students:

There have been many questions regarding a quote that was removed last week from the external Torreyson Library sign. As I have been approached directly about this in the last couple of days, I have shared the following information and want you all to have this directly from me.

The issues surrounding the sign's use last week and removal were complicated. It is a core university value that we support our entire community and its diversity. Advocating for our LGBTQ community is not only appropriate but very important. I believe that the intent of the message was to show support for LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff, but it was not okay for the university sign to be used to make a personal statement or advocate for a personal viewpoint. That is the line that the sign itself crossed. Unlike our student groups or other organizations, the library is an official arm of UCA and when it "speaks" on that sign which serves information regarding library hours, it speaks officially. We do have to be very careful that we walk the fine line between individual freedom of speech and institutional voice. This was one of those complicated situations.

I join every other individual on this campus with personal beliefs, values, politics, and causes, but the university messaging and platform cannot be used to advance personal agendas. On an individual level, freedom of speech to advocate for one's position is incredibly important. I frequently get criticism from individuals and groups on campus about issues and ideas raised within the campus, but I remind those same people that my defense of their rights to causes and issues must be matched by a similar defense of that which offends them. But, it is not within university policy to use the university platform to advocate for a personal viewpoint.

Timing of the sign in the summer also was considered. We have to be very mindful of the hundreds of minors that are on campus during the summer which further complicates an environment that is normally programmed for adults and our very meaningful conversations about ourselves and our world. One outgrowth of that perspective on minors has been a start of a good conversation about best practices how to present or represent issues when minors are on the campus.

I am visiting with the team in the library to hear their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. I believe that everyone involved came from a position of love and support. A genuine gesture by our library faculty and staff for members of our community has morphed into a misunderstanding about our core values and matters of freedom of speech versus institutional voice.

Let me be clear. I and the university support all of our students and the diversity of our entire community. Thank you for your time and attention.

Houston Davis