

October 21, 2023

Hon. Paul Krekorian
President, Los Angeles City Council
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street, Room 435
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Council President:

Like President Folt, I am truly sorry for what transpired at USC last month and know how hard this was on so many members of our community. We have conducted a thorough review over the past few weeks in order to learn from what occurred and find answers to the questions raised in your letter.

USC Annenberg's Master of Public Diplomacy is a graduate-level global diplomacy program at the nexus of communications and foreign affairs. It incorporates the critical study of the role of state and non-state actors, global public opinion, and the media ecosystem in the public diplomacy process. This includes long-standing practices of cultural programming and exchanges to address complex challenges in contemporary global affairs.

The Yunus Emre Institute first engaged the masters program in late 2022 to host a graduate student trip to Turkey which took place this past Spring Break. As a follow-up to that trip, the students chose to produce a forum at USC Annenberg designed to explore how another country practices public diplomacy, and scheduled it for September 29th. The institute subsequently suggested the Turkish Ambassador as a speaker and confirmed his attendance a few weeks prior to the event. The event's planning was directly between the program and the institute, and did not include any foreign ministry. The institute paid for some of the event costs. However, no faculty or staff involved with the planning received payments or gifts of any kind, nor were any made directly to the university. No discussions have taken place about creating a center, chair, or any other similar relationship. As President Folt shared with you, USC Annenberg has concluded its relationship with the Yunus Emre Institute.

The September 29 conference planning focused on panel conversations developed by students and faculty in the Master of Public Diplomacy program. There was no involvement from any government or the U.S. State Department in developing the conference topics or themes. As is customary for any campus visit from a senior government official, USC's Department of Public Safety coordinated security for the Ambassador. We were unaware of the Azeri consul general's planned attendance until hours before the event. Conference organizers strongly discouraged his attendance, and no security was provided.

The University's top priority is always the safety and well-being of USC's students. To that end, we have worked with the Provost's Office and the Department of Public Safety to establish additional processes and protocols before events like this are approved to proceed. That includes reviewing the current global situation and timing, along with the overall safety for students and participants. We are committed to doing a better job in assessing these situations in the future.

Our hearts remain with members of the Armenian community who have been impacted by the grave humanitarian crisis and events taking place in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as with the many members of our USC community who we know are hurting, as well. We are committed to the continued healing from this event, and I look forward to visiting with you soon.

Sincerely,



Willow Bay
Dean

Cc: Dr. Carol L. Folt, President, USC
Dr. Andrew Guzman, Provost, USC
Dr. Shushan Karapetian, Director, USC Institute of Armenian Studies