



March 5, 2003

Steven B. Sample

President and
Robert C. Packard
Professor

Faculty of the University of Southern California

Dear Colleagues:

As we all know, the situation in the Middle East has become much graver in recent weeks, and tensions are rising daily. As the situation intensifies, the climate on campus – among students, faculty, and staff alike – may become fraught with fear and apprehension, and may, as a consequence, become more volatile.

What does all this mean for us as members of the Trojan Family? One of the hallmarks of this university is our commitment to the free and unfettered exchange of ideas. All members of our community must be able to engage in open debate and to express their views, no matter how controversial. It is in the crucible of argument and counterargument that understanding and knowledge are forged.

But when passions are deeply felt and strongly expressed, there is always the possibility that dialogue and the open exchange of ideas will degenerate into demagoguery and violence. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us to make certain that our discussions are framed by civility and mutual respect. In order to fulfill our mission as an academic community, we must ensure that everyone respects the rights and dignity of everyone else.

Thank you for your help in maintaining USC as a citadel of rational and peaceful discourse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steven Sample".

Steven B. Sample
President