

Dear Eve Troutt Powell and Laurie Brand,

Thank you for your letter regarding Professor Liora Halperin and the UW's commitment to academic freedom.

Prof. Halperin, supported by the Benaroya endowment, expressed views in a statement that were not shared by the donor, Becky Benaroya. Our mission as a university demands that our scholars have the freedom to pursue their scholarship where it leads them and to freely express their views as academics and as individuals. After several months of good faith conversations between University and Stroum Center leadership, Prof. Halperin and the donor, Mrs. Benaroya requested that her gift be returned, and it was determined that returning the gift was the best path forward.

Mrs. Benaroya initially asked to amend the endowment agreement in several ways, including to prohibit the holder from making political statements or signing agreements seen as hostile to Israel. The UW would not agree to these amendments. Further good-faith discussions did not lead to a resolution. The return of the original \$5 million gift was, in the UW's view, the best way to protect academic freedom, to make clear that endowment agreements cannot limit academic freedom in any way, and to maintain the program free from external influence and pressure to adopt any specific positions.

The original Benaroya endowment had grown to nearly \$11 million through accrued interest, university matching funds of \$2.5 million and other investments that were not returned. Following the return of the \$5 million gift, nearly \$6 million for Israel studies remains in an endowment. Distributions from this new endowment will continue to support Prof. Halperin's new endowed chair, along with additional funds to provide benefits equal to what Prof. Halperin received as the Benaroya chair.

The Benaroya endowed chair was dissolved as part of the return of the gift; **however, again, Prof. Halperin will be the holder of a new endowed chair in Jewish Studies created with the funds that remain in a new endowment. This chair will have the same salary and research benefits as her previous endowed chair.** Prof. Halperin's tenured professorship is in place and fully supported. The implication in the claim that "the university stripped Halperin of her chair position and halted programming related to Israel studies" is thus not accurate.

Furthermore, the Israel Studies program, with Prof. Halperin as its chair, continues as a program within the Stroum Center with dedicated funds allocated to support students, faculty research, language instructions and public programs. This has been made possible through additional investments from the University, and the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies. The Stroum Center, the College of Arts and Sciences and the University are committed to these critical areas and will continue to develop the short-term and long-term path to sustain and continue to build the Israel studies program. The University is committed to supporting Israel Studies, including through additional community fundraising.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with more information about this situation.

Sincerely,

Ana Mari Cauce
President
Professor of Psychology