

UC Davis chancellor must do the right thing – resign

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I was one of the 10 University of California, Davis, students who were pepper-sprayed on Nov. 18 by police acting on behalf of UC Davis Chancellor Linda Katehi. We were peacefully protesting massive UC tuition hikes and never posed a threat to any officers, but the riot police used military grade pepper spray point-blank on us.

I feel strongly that Chancellor Katehi is unfit to represent this community and must resign.

In a town hall meeting with students and faculty last week, Chancellor Katehi refused to answer numerous questions about whether she authorized the use of force, and whether she knew riot police were going to be involved. Just days before, campus police brutally attacked peaceful UC Berkeley students with batons. It is impossible to believe that Chancellor Katehi did not think students would be harmed when she ordered police in riot gear to forcibly remove our small encampment.

A campus spokeswoman is now saying Katehi told police to remove the encampment “without incident,” but in reality Chancellor Katehi and Vice Chancellor John Meyer allowed the use of excessive force against their students. Their intentions were either malicious or negligent and severely misinformed. Both reinforce the calls for her removal.

While it was students who were attacked, it is not just students who are now calling for Katehi’s resignation. A campaign I started on Change.org has more than 96,000 people supporting Katehi’s resignation, thousands of whom come from the Davis community. The UC Davis English and physics departments have powerfully called for her resignation. The Davis Faculty Association, which represents 100 faculty members, has written an open letter asking the chancellor to resign. Davis alumni are organizing and refusing to donate money to the school until she resigns.

Despite the overwhelming clamor for Katehi’s resignation, she blithely blows them off and offers halfhearted apologies instead. During the General Assembly meeting on Monday, Chancellor Katehi spoke for 60 seconds – offering us an apology and telling students she “wanted to get to know us.”

Like many other students I have talked with, I do not find her apology to be sincere, but rather a public relations ploy to keep her job. She never once attempted to speak with the student

protesters peacefully assembled on this campus, and has a history of ignoring the concerns of students on campus.

Chancellor Katehi is using UC Police Chief Annette Spicuzza and Lt. John Pike as scapegoats by placing them on paid administrative leave – something I would equate to vacation. While they, too, should resign, Chancellor Katehi holds the real responsibility here. Even though there are several other investigations into the incident, the so-called “independent” investigation that Katehi trumpets is being paid for by the university system. This investigation is a delay tactic employing a bureaucratic group that will likely be in favor of the university. And we’re not buying it.

On Monday, thousands of peaceful students, faculty and supporters are participating in a general strike protesting outrageous tuition hikes and amping up the call for Chancellor Katehi’s resignation. All students and faculty members across the UC system should join us. Letting Chancellor Katehi off the hook would send the message to all UC chancellors that there are no repercussions for their actions. It would send the message that tuition hikes, police brutality and the blocking of free speech are acceptable on UC campuses.

Chancellor Katehi, it’s time to listen to UC students and faculty. Do the right thing and resign.

David Buscho is a senior studying mechanical engineering at the University of California, Davis.

Photo caption: Wayne Tilcock / Davis Enterprise, Occupy University of California, Davis, protesters including David Buscho, far left, react after being pepper-sprayed Nov. 18 by police on the school’s quad. Buscho is among those who have called for a general strike by students, faculty and supporters on the campus Monday.

David Buscho is helped after being pepper-sprayed at UC Davis. Buscho says more than 96,000 people have signed an online petition calling for Chancellor Linda P.B. Katehi’s resignation.