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November 7, 2003

Dear California Congressional Delegation Members:

We are writing on behalf of the University of California's (UC) ten campuses to express our serious concern about the recently-released list of scientists and NIH-grants that fund research on critically important public health issues including HIV/AIDS, human sexuality, and risk-taking behaviors. We are concerned also that these researchers and their research have been subjected to unusual and inappropriate scrutiny at the request of members of Congress or private advocacy groups who are ideologically opposed to the funding of research in these subject areas. We fear that the circulation of this list within HHS and Congress may have already had a profoundly chilling effect upon the willingness of scientists to undertake certain research. We have learned that the names of 31 UC scientists appear on this list.

All of the NIH-funded studies on the list are subject to a highly competitive and rigorous scientific peer-review system. The NIH peer review system is recognized widely for producing the highest quality science and is a model process used for biomedical research worldwide. The NIH peer review system ensures that federal funds used to support public science are expended for the objective, scientifically sound, and ethical pursuit of knowledge. Attempts by special interest groups to undermine this peer review process are a disservice to the public that threatens the essential role peer review plays in ensuring the integrity of merit-based, scientific oversight.

The University of California urges that you endorse the NIH scientific peer review process that has served our country's public health so well, and that you oppose this apparent effort to undermine good science.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael V. Drake
Vice President for Health Affairs
University of California

/s/

Lawrence B. Coleman
Vice Provost for Research
University of California

cc: President Dynes
Chancellors
Provost King
Vice President Darling
Assistant Vice President Sudduth

bcc: Director Hall
Interim Director Auriti
Director Poulakidas