

Palo Verde Resident's Council  
Verano Resident's Council

April 12, 2010  
RE: Graduate Housing Cat Ban

Delivered in person to Manuel Gomez and emailed to Academic Senate's Graduate Council Chair, Housing Administration and Graduate Student Advisors across campus

ATTN: Coordinated Governance Group

This letter is a PVRC and VRC -sanctioned response to the email of April 1, 2010 sent by Lisa Cornish to the members of the CGG. Lisa Cornish's email stated " Effective April 19, 2010, there will be a two year moratorium during which new clients to Palo Verde and Verano Place Housing will not be allowed to bring cats into the community or acquire them."

The Palo Verde and Verano Resident's Councils do not condone in any way, shape, or form the edict issued from Director Cornish's office. Members of the CGG board have continuously voiced serious concerns about the content, impact, and intent of this policy. During the January 26 meeting to discuss the cat ban issue with the full participation of the CGG, we presented scientific evidence (via empirical articles) about the positive impact of pets on their owners, a poll showing overwhelming support for keeping cats in graduate housing, and personal testimonies/letters by residents of Palo Verde and Verano.

Despite the abundance of evidence we presented, and a promise of compromise, our voices have fallen mute against Director Cornish's edict and it is in this spirit that we reply.

There are three serious issues at hand, the timing of the policy and its impact on recently recruited graduate students, resident recruitment and retention, and the economic impacts of this decision.

1. Graduate student recruitment for most departments at UCI takes place in the early part of the calendar year and for that reason we are deeply concerned about the timing of this policy. UCI is unique in that its cost-of-living is a huge detriment to the competitiveness of the school. (Most ranking systems will tell you this; we are happy to provide those data.) This cost-of-living detriment is however mitigated to some extent as departments can present Palo Verde and Verano as viable alternatives to expensive housing off campus. Critically, the communities were marketed to prospective students as cat-friendly. To force the edict into place within days of the national decision deadline of April 15<sup>th</sup> leads us to believe that the administration is misleading incoming graduate students. With the change in policy being placed on the website April 1<sup>st</sup>, Director Cornish may argue that incoming students had adequate warning of the change, and our argument is null. However, given the current nature of limited graduate positions across the country, many students have already accepted or declined offers, before the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. In addition, the new students would most likely have relied on information about UCI and its housing policies that they discovered online prior to applying or

received at their interviews months before the change in pet policy was placed on the housing website.

2. In Palo Verde this year, it has been noted that occupancy percentages have consistently fallen below expected levels. It is because of this that Palo Verde is taking the step of inviting select undergraduate populations into the community. This under-occupancy issue means that we cannot fill the new graduate community Puerta Del Sol (slated to open this fall) and are offering it post-docs. Further, the under-occupancy issue will continue to be an issue when the Verano Unit IV apartment doubling project is completed. Why then, create a policy that will deter potential residents and potential students? We feel that this cat ban is short-sighted and may in fact end up adversely affecting occupancy rates and costing housing residents.
3. We have been told, in no uncertain terms, that this cat ban is a fiscal move by housing. In short, the time and energy necessary are too much for the staff to handle. We understand that it is no easy task. In fact, we appreciate that there are staff to handle assignments. What we do not understand is the brushing aside of requests for data, and for real economic projections, of what matching residents based on pet status causes in terms of staff hours spent matching residents. We cannot imagine how the extra time spent matching roommates for pets outweighs the income generated by a resident living in graduate housing for 3-7 years. What we do know is that there is a 1.2 million dollar revenue shortfall on the books for fiscal year 09-10 and we cannot understand why housing would seek to drop its revenue further by turning away potential residents with cats. We do not see any fiscal benefit to turning away new residents. Yes, cats can cause damage but that is what additional pet deposits are for and certainly housing can and should bill for any damages to an apartment above and beyond what the security and pet deposits cover. We have come to the table with simple, answerable questions. We have asked the housing director to provide data supporting the claim that the presence of cats in graduate housing has a significant economic cost. As advocates for our constituents, we wonder why the director has not shown us the respect of responding to this request. It is our belief that this decision will result only in greater fiscal losses for Graduate Housing, as it will deter a number of potential residents from choosing to live in graduate housing or choosing to attend UCI at all.

It is because of the above concerns that we suggest a one year moratorium on the cat ban so that housing can better address our requests for data and to allow for incoming students to be appropriately informed about housing policies in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Palo Verde Residents Council

Erin Kelly, Patrick Kennealy, Preston Reed, Liz Shulman, & Ian Tingen

Verano Residents Council

Carrie Carmody, Andrew Hatch, Tia Peterson, *Raphaëlle Rabanes*, & *Ashlie Taggart*