December 5, 2011

In the Spirit of an Inclusive and Welcoming Campus Environment

Dear Pomona College Board of Trustees, Chairman Paul Efron, and President David Oxtoby:

Since Wednesday, November 30, we, a concerned group of Pomona College students, have been holding an extended vigil outside Alexander Hall to express our disappointment with the College’s recent actions and to show solidarity with individuals directly affected by those actions. We wish to address the deficiencies in the current relationship between the Board and the Pomona College community, which have been crystallized in the College’s decision to terminate the contracts of 17 employees who were unable to resolve the deficiencies in their work documents by the administration’s December 1st deadline.

We would like to reaffirm our commitment to maintaining a presence outside of Alexander Hall until our concerns have been addressed in a substantive manner. Prior to the extended vigil, students made repeated attempts to engage the Board of Trustees in conversation. These attempts were met with just one official response—a single e-mail sent to the community at large. Given the Board’s apparent unwillingness to open up lines of communication, we decided to hold an extended vigil in hopes that the Board and the administration would respond to us. After almost a week of sleeping, studying, and working outside of Alexander, we find it troubling that the Board of Trustees—specifically the Executive Committee—has yet to acknowledge our presence or engage in dialogue with us. This raises a question: what types of direct and effective channels of communication are open to students who wish to speak to the Board of Trustees?

In addition to the concerns outlined above, we would like to recognize the intensified climate of fear and distress wrought by the termination of 17 members of our community. Considering that the Board recently reaffirmed its commitment to upholding an inclusive and welcoming campus environment, we ask that steps be taken to prevent such a situation from reoccurring and to rectify the harmful consequences caused by the Board’s actions.

We call for:

1. An audience with the Trustees during their time on campus this semester.

2. A commitment from the Board to never again initiate a document re-verification process, especially now that the College’s hiring practices have been confirmed to be in compliance with the law.

3. The establishment of a permanent position on the Board to be filled by a student representative.

4. The creation of a set of procedures by which the Board reports its actions and recent decisions to students.

5. The development of a process by which students can request the establishment of a comments period regarding prospective Board decisions.
Moving forward, we ask that the Board participate in a two-way exchange of information, thoughts, and ideas for the future. Specifically, we ask that the Board directly respond to the proposals above. While we look to have a formal meeting with the Trustees during their upcoming stay on campus, we want to open conversation beforehand as well. We encourage Trustees, individually or collectively, to respond to us at concerned.pomona.students@gmail.com. Should anyone wish to direct comments to specific student representatives, we can provide the relevant contact information. In the spirit of constructive dialogue, we are open to negotiation.

We remain dedicated to mutual respect and open communication within the College community.

Sincerely,

Concerned Pomona Students