



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY MARCHING BAND

DECEMBER 11, 2016

In the 1970's, President Richard Lyman was presented a check for \$1,000,000 on the stipulation that he denounce the Band. As the story goes, he tore up the check and emphatically declared "We love the Band!" Since then, Band has maintained its irreverent nature, knowing at its core that the University respected and supported this freedom of expression, authenticity and the value of the community the Band created.

How times have changed. Last Friday at 4:00PM, while most students were holed up studying for finals this week, Band members received an email notifying them that the LSJUMB is suspended, effective immediately, through the end of Spring Quarter 2017. During this hiatus it will face serious restructuring, including the proposed end of our current student-based leadership model.

This suspension jeopardizes the vitality and viability of the organization. The Administration's decision to suspend independent student management of the Band also threatens the integrity of one of Stanford's few remaining independent student organizations - and with it the values of free expression and irreverence which we believe are vital to a healthy university culture. **More broadly, this sends the disturbing message to the Stanford student body that the Administration chooses authoritative control and administrative expediency over student freedom.**

On the announcement of sanctions in May of 2015, [we acknowledged](#) a disparity between our ideal vision of Band and the reality. While we used the 2015 investigation as an opportunity to examine this contrast, the process has dragged on - far beyond the original 2011-2012 complaints that generated the investigation. This suspension disregards all of the positive changes in favor of viciously prosecuting alleged minor infractions by a small number of Band members, suggesting a broader institutional failure to work transparently with students towards clearly and mutually defined goals. Instead, we see an inquisition which seeks a pretense to conform an independent group to its own ends. Never before has a pitcher of beer - shared by three of-age band alumni at a friend's farewell dinner - provoked such a drastic response.

For the past two years, Band members have put thousands of hours into satisfying the Administration's requests - all while balancing coursework, research, and trying to enjoy what we're told are the best years of our lives. Band approached issues brought forward in good faith and with real effort, and this work has resulted in genuine and substantial progress in creating a Band that better mirrors the organization we want to be.

We have held hundreds of hours of trainings and discussion, [explicitly formulated our values](#), restructured selection processes for Band roles, evaluated and made appropriate changes to our traditions, and rewritten our founding documents to reflect the present cultural attitudes within the organization. We will publish a more complete summary of our work since the original sanctions after final exams.

Throughout this process, administrators have responded with continually moving targets, incompletely communicated expectations, and a persistent resistance towards viewing the issues from students' perspectives. We are deeply disappointed that the Administration does not recognize the immense amount of effort put in by students, and we hope to demonstrate the degree to which we have evolved and encouraged positive change. **If, as the University now claims, Band has a “systemic cultural problem,” it is that it does not fit into the mold that provides the University a lucrative brand, a well-manicured image, and administrative expedience.**

We sincerely hope that these are not the sentiments of the University, and that this situation can be resolved with clear and open dialogue that both understands the organization's progress and preserves the organization's fundamental character and structure.

To so many people, Band is home. Free from powerful norms of conformity, it is a place where self-expression is not only accepted, but encouraged. On a campus centered around the push for perfection, Band offers a powerful and exuberant counterweight that reminds students that life ought to be enjoyed. The quest for mirth through humor and music has brought students of all backgrounds - musical, cultural, and other - together. **A ‘sanitized’ Band under administrative control can never serve these same roles, and a valuable student community will wither for the sake of perceived threats to the University's image.**

We are grateful for the outpouring of support from the campus community, alumni, and those who appreciate our unique mixture of Rock 'n' Roll and satire. We are touched by the memories and stories that have been shared in the wake of this decision.

We will be submitting an appeal to Provost Etchemendy within the next month in our continuing effort to demonstrate the tremendous amount of change that Band members have affected over the past two years, along with our continued willingness to work with the Administration to preserve the wonderful aspects of the Band that make it a home for many on this campus.

Though the future may be uncertain, we will always fight for students' ability to freely express themselves, question authority, and rock out. **In the days to come, we ask for continued student, alumni, and community support in securing a place for these values at Stanford.**

The funkless still need funk, and who else will bring it?

Sincerely,
The Leland Stanford University Marching Band

For questions, please contact pr@lsjumb.com