

Resolution in Support of Eliminating the Derogatory Use of the Word “Retard(ed)” and Call for Respect for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

WHEREAS, the University of California, Los Angeles holds “respect for the rights and dignity of others” as one of its core values, [1]

WHEREAS, the misuse of the word “retard(ed)” as a derogatory word is common on the UCLA campus,

WHEREAS, the derogatory use of the word, “retard(ed)” works in two ways against our community:

1. Use of the word insults and puts down individuals with disabilities; in the words of Daniel Schwartz-- an adult with a developmental disability, Pathway graduate, and active participant in Best Buddies at UCLA-- “I don’t like when people use the word retarded because I think they’re talking about me. It feels kind of awkward,” [2]
2. Using the word in a derogatory way makes an association between something bad, inconvenient, or worthless and a person with a disability, which is inaccurate and harmful to the paradigm of disability,

WHEREAS, the Pathway program at UCLA Extension accepts 15-20 students each year, all with an intellectual and/or developmental disability and who are active in the UCLA and Westwood community, [3]

WHEREAS, UCLA Landscape and Grounds indirectly employs individuals with developmental disabilities, making people with disabilities a part of our UCLA community and exposing people with disabilities to the language used by undergraduates on a daily basis, [4]

WHEREAS, the Office for Students with Disabilities provides assistance for many undergraduates with learning disabilities, [5]

WHEREAS, on October 5, 2010, President Barack Obama signed Rosa’s Law, which changed the federal terminology from “mental retardation” and “mentally retarded” to “intellectual disability” and “individuals with intellectual disabilities,” [6,7]

WHEREAS, California State Legislature passed a bill on April 12, 2012 to amend the term “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability,” [6]

WHEREAS, passage of these bills reflects how both the federal and California state governments recognize the negative connotation that the word “retard(ed)” has taken on,

WHEREAS, this legal change in terminology has not completely penetrated our community,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, the Undergraduate Student Association Council (USAC) respects individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and acknowledges their contribution to and involvement in the UCLA community.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, the USAC will continue to support the organizations and initiatives, such as Best Buddies, Pathways, Office of Students with Disabilities, and the “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign, that promote respect towards people with disabilities.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, the USAC will encourage the elimination of the word “retard(ed)” as it is used derogatorily.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED, the USAC implores the student body to be aware of the impact their words can have on other people and to respect all members of the community.

[1] <http://www.truebruin.ucla.edu/>

[2] Interview with Daniel Schwartz, participant in Best Buddies at UCLA and an individual living with a developmental disability.

[3] <https://www.uclaextension.edu/pathway/Pages/faq.aspx>

[4] <http://map.ais.ucla.edu/portal/site/UCLA/menuitem.789d0eb6c76e7ef0d66b02ddf848344a/?vgnextoid=d692f3051e1e6110VgnVCM100000e1d76180RCRD>

[5] <http://www.osd.ucla.edu/Index.htm>

[6] <http://www.r-word.org/contact-your-local-government.aspx>

[7] Text of Rosa’s Law, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111s2781enr/pdf/BILLS-111s2781enr.pdf>