

*Formal statement to the Dean of CNR, J. Keith Gilles*

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**From:** Stakeholders of the Oxford Tract (Faculty, Students, Undergraduate Researchers, the Student Organic Garden Association, the Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology - North America Chapter, the Global Food Initiative, the Berkeley Food Institute, the Basic Needs Security Coalition, the Bank of the West, community members and residents of the city of Berkeley, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, Friends of the MST)

**Re:** The current housing development threat to the Oxford Tract land.

Dean Gilles,

In the fall of 2016, two months before the public release of The Housing Task Force's *Development Master Plan* in which the Oxford Tract (henceforth abbreviated as OT) was cited as an ideal location for new student housing, yourself and other powerful voices within the College of Natural Resources (CNR) authored a document regarding the "Impacts of possible re-purposing of Oxford Tract Research Facility."<sup>1</sup> This document was the first in this struggle to create a clear narrative around the impossibility of relocating the OT. In a recent meeting with Chancellor Christ that occurred on October 3rd, 2017 she stated that she "by no means wants to eliminate the functions of the OT, including the Student Organic Garden, but simply relocate them, likely to Smyth-Fernwald"<sup>2</sup>. However, as you and your committee said yourself in September 2016,

"there was unanimous agreement that transfer of these facilities away from the central campus would serve as a serious impediment to recruitment of both faculty and graduate students who would need these facilities to be readily available. Furthermore, there was also the expectation that certain faculty members who had been attracted to Berkeley because of the proximity and

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles, Keith.. CNR Report on Possible Re-Purposing of Oxford Tract Research Facility. 2016. <https://nature.berkeley.edu/oxford-facility/sites/edu.child.oxford-facility/files/%282016.09.25%29%20Impacts%20Of%20Possible%20Re-purposing%20of%20Of%20Oxford%20Tract%20Research%20Facility.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication. Oct 3. 2017

availability of these needed research facilities would move their programs to another institution where the research needs could be better met. This would also impede the efforts of existing faculty to get grants to work on crop plants, which require the use of these facilities and frequent monitoring of the experimentation. For these reasons, there was grave concern that replacement of these facilities solely at a remote site, even with high-quality installations reflecting state-of-the-art features expected in a new facility, would not prove to be an acceptable alternative to the existing ones at the Oxford Tract for most campus researchers”<sup>3</sup>.

We, as the collective of stakeholders, are aligned with your statement and initial insistence that relocation of the OT is highly infeasible. However, a year has passed since this statement was released and the narrative that prevails today is that of Chancellor Christ’s: that while not temporally imminent, development is nonetheless inevitable.

In furthering the deconstruction of her and related Administration's flawed perspective, we believe that you as the Dean of the College of Natural Resources are obligated to release a statement again firmly opposing Chancellor Carol Christ and her insistence on the development and/or relocation of any component of the Oxford Tract, now or ever. We, as the unified collective of stakeholders listed above, ask for your support, your voice, and your explicit public alignment with your statement from Fall 2016 and the manifesto we have presented to you today.

We thank you for your commitment to preserving the last fragment of land available for research near campus, upholding our mission as a Land Grant University, and maintaining your commitment to “civil and inclusive dialogue”<sup>4</sup> by standing in solidarity with the voices of the many who are calling for permanent preservation of the Oxford Tract where it resides.

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<sup>3</sup> Gillless, Keith. CNR Report on Possible Re-Purposing of Oxford Tract Research Facility. 2016. <https://nature.berkeley.edu/oxford-facility/sites/edu.child.oxford-facility/files/%282016.09.25%29%20Impacts%20Of%20Possible%20Re-purposing%20of%20Of%20Oxford%20Tract%20Research%20Facility.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.berkeley.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Dean-Gilless-email.pdf>

**Please respond to the following:**

In supporting both the historic land of the OT and the community that relies on it,

1. Do you Dean Gilless: agree with your published statement from 2016 affirming that “[the committee is] vehemently of the opinion that the facilities and functions currently located at the Oxford Tract must continue to be provided by UC Berkeley” and that it is “deemed essential that these facilities remain available to our faculty.”? [2]
2. Do you Dean Gilless: agree with your statement from 2016 that the invaluable research and education that occurs at the OT must exist no farther from campus than its current location, that a “transfer of these facilities away from the central campus would serve as a serious impediment” and that “the research laboratories currently located at the Oxford Tract, totaling 5,520 ft<sup>2</sup> could not be moved to an off-site location without seriously impacting the research program of the many faculty involved”? [2]
3. Will you Dean Gilless: pledge to maintain support (as you once stated) of metropolitan agricultural research and practice on Oxford Tract, SOGA, and Gill Tract farm?
4. Will you Dean Gilless: as our direct representative, push for the economic analysis and Oxford Tract Committee report to be completed by Vice Provost Tsu-Jae King Liu?
5. Will you Dean Gilless: put undergraduate student representation from Defend the Oxford Tract and other student groups on the Dean Search Committee?
6. Will you Dean Gilless: issue a public statement to Chancellor Christ that you support OT remaining undeveloped?