

Oumelbanine Zhiri, Literature Department

Chair of the Building Committee

To

Marye Anne Fox, Chancellor and Paul Drake, Vice-Chancellor

January 14, 2009

Requests from the Literature Department concerning the building

The faculty, staff, lecturers and graduate students of the Literature Department respectfully present the following requests to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, in preparation to their coming meeting with the Department.

We have met several times at different levels, including three plenary Department meetings, to discuss our long-standing and deep concerns about the safety of our building, and to explore possible solutions. We have carefully read Dr. Garland's report where he presents the results of his epidemiological study of the cancer cluster in our building; in particular, he calculated that "the observed incidence of invasive breast cancer in the Literature Building was about 4-5 times the expected incidence in the California general population". We have been very impressed by the great care and caution the highly respected Dr. Garland has used in conducting his studies and in interpreting its results.

The study concludes that there is “a possibility of a mild to modest increase in risk of breast cancer associated with a very small area of the first floor building in very close proximity to the electrical and elevator equipment rooms”, that “importantly such [EMF] exposure could interfere with treatment using tamoxifen”, and notes “concerns regarding growth of mold and fungus”.

We need to see some action to address these issues taken as soon as possible, in accordance with Chancellor Fox’s promise to us on December 8, 2008, that a solution would be implemented in a matter of weeks rather than months. We understand that there are some additional studies underway initiated by the Department of Environment, Health and Safety in agreement with the office of the Chancellor. We do not believe that we should wait for these studies to be completed to begin the necessary changes to ensure safe and even optimal conditions for the health of the University’s employees. We think that the University needs to take public ownership of the issue.

We were particularly persuaded by Dr. Garland’s insistence on the public health principle of prudent avoidance of close-range exposure to high electrical current configurations. We think it would be wise to follow the recommendations made at the end of the report, in particular “replacing the existing hydraulic elevators” by “low-EMF traction elevators [with motors] located approximately 20 feet above the existing roof level”.

It is our opinion that the following changes have to take place in the very near future:

- 1- Replace the elevators, as mentioned earlier
- 2- Install air conditioning for the whole building to control constant mold problems
- 3- Re-roof the building to prevent constant leakage problems
- 4- Conduct a full review of the pipes and the water system
- 5- Shut down one elevator immediately
- 6- Put the following sign at every floor near the elevators: "DANGER. Due to high electro-magnetic field, use of this elevator is reserved for deliveries and less able-bodied persons only"
- 7- Make a number of moves on the first floor, related to the elevators and copy-machines, in order to put employees at greater safety
- 8- Exercise on-going medical surveillance of the building after the changes in the elevator and ventilation systems, in order to determine that the new conditions no longer subject the workers to cancer and other health hazards

Concerning the first 4 high priority tasks, we request a time-line as to when they are going to be performed, and we think reasonable to expect work on this to begin in less than a month. We hope the Chancellor's office will fund all the internal moves as we need to request help from the Moving Services, and will reimburse the Department for all the expenses already incurred in relation to this issue.

We understand that some of these necessary changes will create a serious disruption of our work environment. For this reason we believe it will be necessary

to immediately offer to the Department a safe and desirable building to relocate temporarily the whole Department awaiting the completion of the overhauling of the building.

Sincerely,

Oumelbanine Zhiri