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February 6, 2013

Dr. Karen L. Gould, President  
Brooklyn College  
2900 Bedford Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11210

Dear President Gould:

I write as President of the American Association of University Professors to commend your courageous defense of the principles of academic freedom at Brooklyn College by supporting the political science department's right to co-sponsor the BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel) forum.

Since its founding in 1915, the AAUP has been concerned with violations of academic freedom that occur when educational institutions, often under pressure from external political forces, interfere with invited speakers. It has long been the position of the AAUP that it is educationally desirable for students to be confronted with diverse opinions and that any person who is invited by a recognized student or faculty organization should be allowed to speak on a college or university campus.

Because academic freedom requires the liberty to learn as well as to teach, colleges and universities should respect the prerogatives of campus organizations to select outside speakers whom they wish to hear. The AAUP articulated this principle in 1967 in its Fifty-third Annual Meeting, when it affirmed "its belief that the freedom to hear is an essential condition of a university community and an inseparable part of academic freedom" and that "the right to examine issues and seek truth is prejudiced to the extent that the university is open to some but not to others whom members of the university also judge desirable to hear."

I applaud your decision to support the political science department and to affirm the commitment of Brooklyn College to the basic principles of academic freedom. The AAUP firmly believes that there can be no more appropriate site for the discussion of controversial ideas than a college or university campus.

Sincerely,

Rudy Fichtenbaum  
President

Cc: Barbara Bowen, President, PSC