

Dean of Students Karen Kenney Resigns

After 27 Years of Service, Link Between Students and Administration Will Direct Nonprofit Group

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After nearly 27 years of serving the UC Berkeley campus, Dean of Students Karen Kenney is stepping down from her post as an advocate for student concerns.

Kenney, who served as a link between students and the administration, is leaving the campus to take on a new position as executive director of Girls Inc. of the Island City in Alameda, a nonprofit organization and youth group for middle school and high school girls.

Kenney said that aside from being able to spend more time with her daughter, she elected to resign and direct the group because of the intimate nature of working in a small nonprofit environment.

"Though I've had the good fortune to work directly with student leaders ... a large balance of my job is administrative and managerial," she said. "And in the executive director position, in any small setting, especially a small nonprofit, you're able to be more intimately involved."

During her 15 years as the recognizable face of the university for students, Kenney, who arrived nearly 29 years ago as a graduate student in sociocultural history, spent her time on campus working with various student organizations and groups and facilitating projects between students and the administration.

Kenney also concentrated on tackling hate crimes and worked to support political activism among students, often helping students speak on Sproul Plaza.

Apart from concrete projects, Kenney also



Dean of Students Karen Kenney pictured in her Sproul Hall office Monday, has announced her resignation. She will leave her post at the end of September.

served on behalf of the chancellor in reaching out to students' families who had suffered personal crises and served as a mediator in conflict resolutions between various student groups.

"Whether the work was done with Muslim and Jewish students, or conservative and progressive students, one of the most enjoyable things is being able to bring people together and have a meaningful conversation about their differences and to work through those and gain mutual understanding," Kenney said.

Kenney's colleagues say she had a unique ability to stay a constant presence in students' lives, particularly because of the tedious nature of addressing all students' concerns.

"Dean Kenney is the only administrator who came to almost every senate meeting," said Adnan Iqbal, an ASUC Senator from 2002 to 2004. "One thing about her—and I don't know any other administrator like this—is that her door is always open for any student, regardless of whether they're an ASUC Senate member or engineering major," he said.

Still, Kenney's most recent role in UC Berkeley's alcohol moratorium on campus fraternities and sororities provoked some criticism.

Greek leaders, who called it a move to protect the university from liability, said that the ban would only push drinking underground and may unintentionally increase irresponsible drinking.

Though some student leaders said they disagreed with the proposed solution, her actions were well respected.

"She was always in dialogue with the Greek community, whether we agree or not with the dialogue. She did more than just lip service," said ASUC Senator Ben Narodick.

Colleagues said she displayed objectivity in carrying out an unpopular but necessary action.

"Being dean of students is a very difficult job, there's no question about it," said John Cummins, chief of staff to the chancellor. "Sometimes she's got to do what appear to be unpleasant things. That just comes with the job, and I think she's done that very well."

Kenney will remain at her post until the end of September, after which campus administrators will select an acting dean.