# Sonoma State University President Placed on Leave Over Israel Academic Boycott



Ming-Tung “Mike” Lee, the president of Sonoma State University in California, was placed on administrative leave after agreeing to student demands for an academic boycott of Israel. This decision, announced on Tuesday, made Sonoma State University the first U.S. university to refuse to work with Israeli academic institutions, a response to demands from Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

Lee notified students about the boycott, stating that Sonoma State would not pursue any study abroad programs or faculty exchanges with Israeli institutions, though he clarified that Sonoma State had no existing collaborations with Israeli universities. He also mentioned a review of the university's investments and the establishment of a Palestine studies program.

The announcement was met with immediate backlash from pro-Israel groups and the California State University (CSU) system. Following accusations of insubordination for not seeking appropriate approvals, CSU Chancellor Mildred Garcia placed Lee on administrative leave. Lee later apologized to the student body, acknowledging that his actions marginalized other members of the community and caused harm.

This incident occurs amid increasing demands from pro-Palestinian students across the U.S. for universities to sever ties with Israeli institutions, linked to the wider Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Critics of the movement argue it aims to delegitimize Israel and is discriminatory, while supporters cite ongoing human rights concerns and suppression of Palestinian universities by Israeli authorities.