To: Each KSU Trustee

From: George Urban

Subject: Statement by President of Kent State University

Addressing further the May 4 issue, President Brage Golding has prepared and just released to the press--and generally--a statement of intent "...to pursue the basic course...recommended by the ad hoc May 4th Commemoration Committee chaired by Professor Basi, a course now being coordinated by a special University-Community May 4th Observance Committee..."

A copy of the statement is enclosed. Thank you.

Respectfully,

George Urban

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cc: President Brage Golding
STATEMENT
BY
PRESIDENT OF
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

Despite the fact that the University's good faith efforts to find a way to observe appropriately the May 4th anniversary have been rejected in word and in act by a former proponent of recognition, the May 4th Task Force, we intend to pursue the basic course of acknowledgement recommended by the ad hoc May 4th Commemoration Committee chaired by Professor Basi, a course now being coordinated by a special University-Community May 4th Observance Committee. We intend to pursue this course because it is reasonable and right, not because it has been insisted upon by this or that group as one of this or that week's list of demands.

It is a shame that this fine academic institution and its host community have both been so long polarized upon so many sharp philosophical, sociological, and psychological lines of force. Nothing I can say can be expected to reduce these tensions significantly until there is some recognition by parties at both ends that the vast majority of us in between wish them to abandon the idea of victory and join us instead in resolution.

It is clear that the speakers invited to the campus by the May 4th Task Force desire to advance a cause other than that of Kent State University. Some people, including some students and faculty and several seasoned non-Kent State dissidents, value that cause more than they do a peaceful campus pursuing freely the many differing examinations into truth appropriate to an institution of higher education; others, including many townspersons and some students, faculty, and staff, wish all protesters to be barred from the campus. I am convinced that the vast majority of the students, faculty, and staff--and many townspersons--mostly share the frustration I feel. They are tired of being bullied and harangued, scorned of dissidents who demean the First Amendment by using it as an agency of disruption, deeply concerned that Kent State degrees may be devalued through dimly-understood prejudice fostered by carefully orchestrated "media events" on the campus.

Even though we are frustrated by these continuing
shrill displays and with the media's dutiful distillation of them into bold and inaccurate headlines and twenty-second definitive blurs on television, our best recourse seems to be to allow this process the room and the time to pass into history. I urge all who care for the future of this University 1) to continue to pursue vigorously and intensely the primary goals of the University: education, research, and public service; and 2) to follow your individual conscience in the matter of observing the anniversary of the events of the first four days of May 1970.

There is a tendency even among the vast majority in the middle to regard the University with indifference if not hostility. So what if it is "ripped off"? It has no rights, no feelings. But a University does have rights and feelings because a University is composed of people engaged in a shared enterprise. Everyone associated with Kent State University, not just the Trustees or the administration, has a stake in preserving its life, its reputation and its property. Our efforts should be concentrated on making it better, more responsive; instead, our energies and our resources are consumed by an abusive few, who apparently give no thought to the damage being suffered, not by the University, but by their peers.

Speaking out affirmatively for the University and for the ideals of higher education does not require speaking out against any one or any persuasion, not even those who mock the dead in their rhetoric or who insist upon rights guaranteed by a country some of them may wish to overthrow. I hope to hear from more groups, such as that recently organized by Professor Earle Roberts, and more individuals, such as Guy Guzzo and Paul Shinkle, whose recent letters to the Editor of the Stater were properly assertive of their rights in this recurring issue.

Meanwhile, even though I personally do not believe that most of the program proposed by the May 4th Task Force for this year's anniversary is relevant or appropriate to the University on this occasion, it has been recommended for scheduling by the University-Community May 4th Observance Committee and I will accept the Committee's recommendation.

The Committee also asked that I declare May 4, 1978, a day of observance and that I cancel classes for at least a portion of the day. Even though I cannot endorse the program planned for the day as being truly appropriate to a University Day of Observance, I believe the events being recalled do
justify such a recommendation, and I hereby declare that May 4, 1978 is an official day of observance on the Kent Campus of the University and that classes will be cancelled for the entire day. Offices will remain open as usual, but supervisors are encouraged to permit individual adjustments of employees' schedules so that they may be allowed to participate as they wish.

Finally, I hope the planning may begin soon, perhaps in the collective reflections of us all on this year's anniversary date, so that we may approach May 4, 1979 with a spirit, not of dread and apprehension, but of unity and purposefulness, of balance and dignity, with the preservation of the University and its ideals foremost in our minds.

Braqe Golding
President
April 12, 1978