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Andrew Szeri  
Graduate Dean  
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Dear Dean Szeri:<sup>1</sup>

I write today to request your assistance in ensuring UC Berkeley students can easily file dissertations and theses using Creative Commons licenses.

Creative Commons is an organization that aims to make generous licensing of content more ubiquitous; instead of the rote "All Rights Reserved" being default, Creative Commons urges people to share widely and only restrict reuse of their creative output to the degree they feel necessary. For most of my intellectual output, I specify a simple Attribution license; anyone may make use of my work, in whole or part, with or without profit, as long as I get credit.<sup>2</sup>

I recently successfully completed my PhD from the UC Berkeley School of Information.<sup>3</sup> As you are aware, the final step in that process is to file one's dissertation. When students file their thesis or dissertation, it is carefully checked by Graduate Division: Degrees staff to verify it complies with various formatting requirements specified in the document "Instructions for Preparing and Filing your Thesis or Dissertation".<sup>4</sup> As part of this process, the form of the copyright page is checked to ensure it meets the appropriate specifications.

<sup>1</sup>I have a joint affiliation split between Berkeley and Princeton. The NSF grant that funds my work is administered at Berkeley. Please use the Princeton address as my physical and postal address.

<sup>2</sup>I chose a different, more restrictive, license for my dissertation for personal reasons that are out of scope for this letter.

<sup>3</sup>See: <http://josephhall.org/papers/jhall-phd.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>See: <http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/pdf/disguide.pdf>.

For my dissertation, I recently obtained approval from your office to modify the standard text to change the wording from “All Rights Reserved” to “Some Rights Reserved (See Appendix F)”, where Appendix F of my dissertation is the full legal license corresponding to the current version of Creative Commons’ Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs license.<sup>5</sup>

This is all fine and well, and I thank you and your office for working with me to make my dissertation everything I wanted it to be.

However, there is one wrinkle: UC Berkeley students have contacted me who would like to generously license their thesis or dissertation but 1) may not know how to do this or 2) may be working with Graduate Division: Degrees staff who don’t know of the exception I received to modify the copyright page. For example, the other PhD student in my cohort, danah boyd, faced these issues when she submitted her dissertation in December. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] She called me [REDACTED] and I was able to give her the name of the wonderfully helpful Graduate Division staff member, [REDACTED], who marshaled my thesis through the process of getting an exception for the non-standard copyright page. Presumably, [REDACTED] was able to clear things up for danah because danah faced no further complications and walked out of the office with her submission certificate (and sucker!). I have since received other requests for information from people that are expecting to file their thesis or dissertation soon.

Creative Commons is a mature effort; perhaps its most visible current use is by the incoming Presidential Administration.<sup>6</sup> With the growing prevalence of new media in education and on the UC Berkeley campus specifically—in units such as the School of Information and Center for New Media, Graduate Division should expect to receive increasing requests for support of Creative Commons’ Licenses for academic works, including theses and dissertations.

I would hope that in the short term, Graduate Division staff working in the Degrees office would be made aware of the ability for students to generously license their work for re-use using a Creative Commons license. In the long term, the Dissertation Guide (*See*: footnote 4) should be amended to include the option of Creative Commons licensing.

Sincerely,

Joseph Lorenzo Hall

CC: Lila Bailey, Counsel for ccLearn, Creative Commons  
AnnaLee Saxenian, Dean, UC Berkeley School of Information  
Ken Goldberg, Director, UC Berkeley Center for New Media

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>.

<sup>6</sup> The new Whitehouse copyright notice reads, in part: “Except where otherwise noted, third-party content on this site is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. Visitors to this website agree to grant a non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free license to the rest of the world for their submissions to Whitehouse.gov under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.” See: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/copyright/>.