



May 9, 2024

Sent Via U.S. Mail

Offices of the President & the Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: Opportunities to Support Campus Law Enforcement in Maintaining Public Safety Amidst Protests that Turn Violent

Dear President Drake and Honorable Members of the University of California Board of Regents,

As a partner in advocating for and maintaining the safety of California university campuses, we are alarmed by the deterioration of peacefully organized protests into violence in recent days. We fully support and defend every American's First Amendment right to peacefully protest but note that the First Amendment does not sanction actions such as property destruction, intimidation, or violence, which compromise safety, undermine the integrity of the protests themselves and interfere with the rights of other students choosing not to participate in the demonstrations.

Because university police departments across the state are charged with the safety of thousands of students, faculty members, and the public during all campus events, including protests, we are calling on the University of California Board of Regents and campus leadership to work collaboratively with us to develop solutions and responses that both prevent violence from sparking and effectively address unrest if it occurs, ensuring California universities continue to be productive learning environments.

When protests and demonstrations occur on campus, our training and expertise equip us to effectively manage crowd dynamics and recognize when peacefully organized protests begin to turn into potentially dangerous situations, both for the assembling students as well as the officers called on to maintain public safety.

Unfortunately, there are systematic and cultural constraints that make it more difficult for university police to respond to on-campus protests that become violent, like university policies that impede their ability to act quickly. Additionally, a culture of anti-police bias by faculty members, as evidenced by the [overtly politicized and frankly offensive statement made by the California Faculty Association](#) calling police "violence workers" and suggesting faculty can and should avoid contact with campus police, unfortunately makes the job of motivating compliance to achieve safer outcomes on campus that much harder.

Campus police officers are not political. They do not opine, they do not take sides, and they do not act unilaterally. Their only goal is maintaining the safety of everyone on campus, and they do so at the direction of and in concert with school administrators.

In addition, university police departments are not immune to the staffing shortages impacting departments nationwide, leading to a culture of solo shifts, where there are so few officers available, only one officer is on duty and able to respond at a time. This lack of resources is so pervasive that even if the one on-duty

university officer needs to call the local police department for backup, they will likely not be able to provide support immediately.

As public safety experts, we believe there are several ways that colleges and universities can allow individuals to practice their right to peacefully protest while ensuring California universities achieve their mission of safely educating their students:

Protest Response Plans

Ten years ago, the UC system created a [comprehensive guide](#) of roles, responsibilities, and planning for the UC system and individual campuses to follow in responding to civil disobedience on campuses. These guidelines remain in effect to this day.

The lengthy 2014 plan resulted from eighteen months of deliberation by the UC system. It established “a viable and fair set of best practices that preserve and promote the rights and responsibilities of free speech on the campuses, respond fairly and reasonably to civil disobedience when it occurs, and also provide safety and security to all the students, faculty, staff, and visitors on our campuses.”

However, this plan is not adequate to deal with the challenges we are seeing today across our campuses. Each college and university must have a stronger plan in place, detailing how the university police and administration will respond to student protests and providing pre-authorization for law enforcement responses to certain actions on campus.

For example, the erection of make-shift structures, tent encampments, or other barriers on campus grounds inherently creates a fortified and physically defensible position that increases the risk of harm to both students and officers when officers are finally authorized to intervene. It should be campus policy that these actions are impermissible and campus police officers should have pre-approved authority and discretion to politely ask that they be removed, to arrest any individual refusing to comply with the campus policy, and to remove any such barriers or structures from campus grounds.

The current guide provides a solid foundation we can build on. We need a more robust, actionable set of guidelines that all campus police officers and school administrators can follow moving forward. Updating the guide is absolutely necessary and also not enough.

Training for Law Enforcement & Administration

Once a school has developed a plan, all parties who are expected to respond, including campus police and administrators, should be trained in best practices in preparation for when action is needed.

Additional Resources for University Police Departments

Response plans can only be effective when university police departments have the resources they need to respond quickly and in accordance with school policies – these resources are critical to ensuring campus law enforcement is fully-staffed and prepared to respond to potential threats.

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of American democracy and the right to peacefully protest has deep roots in our nation’s history, particularly on college campuses. By engaging with campus communities and leadership, we can create an environment that allows the tradition of peaceful protest to continue and respects the rights and well-being of all individuals, including students, faculty, as well as non-students choosing to exercise their First Amendment rights on campus.

Very Truly Yours,

Brian R. Marvel



President
Peace Officers Research Association of California

Wade Stern



President
Federated University Police Officers' Association

CC The Honorable Gavin Newson, Governor, State of California
The Honorable Eleni Kounalakis, Lieutenant Governor, State of California
The Honorable Mike McGuire, President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
The Honorable Robert Rivas, Speaker, California State Assembly

Brian R. Marvel
President

Damon Kurtz
Vice President

Nick Odenath
Treasurer

Randy Beintema
Secretary
