

Oregon State University

University Procedure and Practice for Supporting and Responding to Protest

Updated: March 21, 2024

The purpose of this guide is to inform and assist university leaders in responding to knowledge of a potential protest, and to help ensure adherence to standards of practice when managing free speech activities.

Roles:

University Protest Manager: The University Procedure and Practice for Supporting and Responding to Protest is led and managed by the Office of the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students is considered the owner of the procedure and all management activities associated. The Dean of Students, or member of the Protest Protocol Team that has been designed by the Dean of Students, is the single designated University Protest Manager, and is empowered to direct university response activity to protest, except in cases of imminent harm to life or property.

Protest Response Team: Functional leaders, content experts primary space operators, and key responders charged with scenario planning and process refinement, early community engagement, planning and response.

Observer: A university staff member designated by the Protest Response Team who is an observer. They are not participants, nor involved in resolving the concerns of the demonstrators. Their only role is to observe the situation and report what they see and hear and to provide an additional perspective of the event to members of the Protest Response Team.

Responder: A trained university staff member who responds to a protest with the intention of ensuring the safety of the university community and responding to the protest. This person takes an active role in communicating with demonstrators, acts on direction from the Protest Response Team, and serves as a liaison between demonstrators and police, if needed and appropriate.

Event Owner: Point of contact for the event that has the potential of being disrupted by a protest.

Event Speaker: Speakers, presenters, emcee, etc. of the event that has the potential of being disrupted.

Protest Leader: Individual among the protesters who is either formally or informally leading the protest. Point of contact for the University Protest Manager.

First Responder: A trained professional who is called to a scene for imminent life, safety, or property threats. These typically include firefighters, EMTs, and other certified pre-hospital medical professionals.

Law Enforcement: Oregon State University Department of Public Safety are the professionals who respond to needs for law enforcement and consultation on Oregon State University's Corvallis campus. Cascades and Hatfield campuses should consult local law enforcement, along with Oregon State University Department of Public Safety, as needed.

Notes:

Safety: In this document, being unsafe does not equate to being uncomfortable or being emotionally impacted. Safety in these circumstances means physical safety from violence or harm, or safety from specific, imminent, and targeted threat of physical harm. Additionally, disruptive behavior or speech is usually not, in and of itself, enough to constitute a specific, imminent, and targeted threat of physical harm.

Steps for University Engagement in Protest:

The activation of these procedures begins when a university leader becomes aware of a potential protest.

Foundation:

Regular engagement with students and community groups allows OSU the opportunity to understand their interests, concerns, motives and intended outcomes of activism. Relationships with known advocacy groups are essential in minimizing risks to safety, and or disruption to university business. Positive community relations are foundational to effectively supporting free speech activity.

When university officials are notified of or suspect that individuals or advocacy groups intend to engage in protest, they should talk through the considerations in the pre-activism toolkit and any relevant policies. This helps to create clarity and ensure that the students or community groups are informed of their options, choices, responsibilities, and any possible consequences that could arise due to their actions.

All university officials should act as proactive educators and listen and engage with the intent to learn more about the issues at hand. We are then responsible to provide students with information and sound advising, but not plan protests for, with, or on behalf of students.

Students should be encouraged to share ideas toward the goal of minimizing the risk of safety concerns and policy violations for all involved. If students are interested in seeking advice or making asks of the University, they can contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 541-737-8748 for help and support.

Students and community groups are not, however, required to consult with any university employee before engaging in protest.

Activating the Protest Protocol:

Scenario 1: Anticipating Protest at an Event or Meeting: While large scale or highly public events involving leadership (university, government, industry, etc.) have the potential for individuals and/or advocacy groups to use the event to amplify their message, access leadership and/or disrupt business – regardless of the event’s planned topic(s), any program or event may be protested. If deemed necessary, Event Owners should initiate a protest consultation with the University Protest Manager well in advance of their planned event.

Scenario 1 Process:

Step 1: Initial Consultation

- a. Event Owner contacts Dean of Students (University Protest Manager)
- b. University Protest Manager conducts initial intake.
 - Type of event, expected attendees, topics, venue, etc.
- c. University Protest Manager develops high-level impact analysis.
 - Analysis to include university climate, current events, history of program, etc.
- d. University Protest Manager determines if there is opportunity to engage potential Protest Leaders to learn of intentions.

Step 2: Plan Development

- a. University Protest Manager convenes Protest Response Team and Event Owner for plan development.
- b. Scenarios developed with roles and responsibilities assigned.
 - Observers, Responders, Law Enforcement, External Security Teams (if relevant for visiting dignitaries), etc.
- c. Guidance and talking points for potentially Disrupted Speakers are developed by University Protest Manager.
- d. Guidance and talking points for potential university leader(s) called by protesters to speak are developed by University Protest Manager.
- e. Discuss need/role of security/law enforcement.
- f. Announcement (if determined appropriate) for audience developed by Event Owner.
 - Alternative program delivery plans developed (e.g. Relocate, cancel, move online).
- g. University Protest Manager drafts plan.
- h. Plan reviewed and approved by Protest Response Team and Event Owner.

Step 3: Communicate the Plan

- a. University Protest Manager provides Event and Protest Plan brief to appropriate leaders at least 5 days, if possible, prior to event. University leaders are expected to have reviewed the plan and strictly defer to the assigned roles identified in the plan.
- b. If protest topic is known, brief to include topic of protest, background information and talking points.
- c. University Protest Manager notifies appropriate building managers of potential disruption and provides necessary guidance.
- d. Event Owner contacts event speakers and provides guidance and talking points for use if disrupted.

Step 4: Early Engagement with Potential Protesters

- a. If identity of potential protester(s) is known, members of the Protest Response Team conducts outreach and offers guidance and support to improve safety, understand their desired outcomes, reaffirm their rights and responsibilities as stated within university policy, etc.

Step 5: Day of Event – Final Check in

- a. University Protest Manager, the Protest Response Team, Event Owner, speakers, and leaders meet 30 minutes prior to start of event.
- b. Review talking points and confirm roles and responsibilities.
- c. Confirm role of security/law enforcement.
- d. Engage with protestors.

Step 6: Accountability

- a. Observers and Responders provide the University Protest Manager with names (if known) of individuals who allegedly violated university policy during protest.
- b. Responsible offices initiate their process.

Step 7: After Action Review

- a. University Protest Manager conducts review of plan, effectiveness of protocol procedure and incorporates lessons learned.

Scenario 2: Confirmed Protest: University officials may become aware of a potential protest through space reservations, membership in community groups, notices on social media, etc. Regardless of the potential protest is intended to disrupt a planned event or university business, or is intended to be a peaceful demonstration, the University Protest Manager should be notified.

Scenario 2 Process:

Step 1: Initial Consultation

- a. University Official with knowledge of a potential protest contacts the Dean of Students (University Protest Manager).
- b. University Protest Manager conducts initial intake.
 - Type of event, expected attendees, topics, venue, etc.
- c. University Protest Manager develops high-level impact analysis.
- d. University Protest Manager determines if there is opportunity to engage potential Protest Leaders to learn of intentions.

Step 2: Early Engagement with Potential Protesters

- a. If identity of potential protester(s) is known, members of the Protest Response Team conduct outreach and offers guidance and support to improve safety, understand their desired outcomes, reaffirm their rights and responsibilities as stated within university policy, etc.

Step 3: Plan Development

- a. University Protest Manager convenes Protest Response Team for plan development.
- b. Scenarios developed with roles and responsibilities assigned.
 - Observers, Responders, Law Enforcement, External Security Teams (if appropriate), etc.

- c. Guidance and talking points for potentially Disrupted Speakers developed by University Protest Manager.
- d. Guidance and talking points for university leader(s) called by protesters to speak are developed by University Protest Manager.
- e. Discuss need/role of security law enforcement.
- f. Announcement (if determined appropriate) for audience developed by Event Owner.
 - Alternative program delivery plans developed (e.g. Relocate, cancel, move online)
- g. University Protest Manager drafts plan
- h. Plan reviewed and approved by Protest Response Team and Event Owner

Step 4: Communicate the Plan

- a. University Protest Manager provides Event and Protest Plan brief to appropriate leaders at least 5 days, if possible, prior to event. University leaders are expected to have reviewed the plan and strictly defer to the assigned roles identified in the plan.
- b. University Protest Manager notifies appropriate building managers of potential disruption and provides necessary guidance.

Step 5: Day of Event – Final Check in

- a. University Protest Manager, the Protest Response Team, Event Owner, speakers, and leaders met prior to start of event.
- b. Review talking points and confirm roles and responsibilities.
- c. Confirm role of security/law enforcement.
- d. Engage with protesters.

Step 6: Accountability

- a. Observers and Responders provide the University Protest Manager with names (if known) of individuals who allegedly violated university policy during protest.
- b. Responsible offices initiate their process.

Step 7: After Action Review

- a. University Protest Manager conducts review of plan, effectiveness of protocol procedure and incorporates lessons learned.

Scenario 3: Unanticipated Protest in Progress: Protests can happen at any time without prior knowledge or awareness. It is important to remain calm, flexible, and understanding that freedom of speech is welcomed as long as it does not interfere with the university's ability to fulfill its mission, infringe upon the rights and interests of others, or disrupts university operations.

Scenario 3 Process:

Step 1: Notify the Department of Public Safety – Activate Protest Response Team

- a. University employee with knowledge of current protest happening contacts the Department of Public Safety non-emergency line.
- b. DPS will notify the Office of Dean of Students (University Protest Manager).
- c. University Protest Manager will inform the Protest Response to gauge availability if attendance is needed.

Step 2: University employee - Observer Role

- a. University employee assumes responsibility of being an observer to report what they are seeing and hearing to provide perspective.
- b. University Protest Manager and/or Protest Response Team member responds to the scene and learns information from University Official.

Step 3: Protest Manager/Response Team Engagement with Protesters

- a. University Protest Manager and/or Protest Response Team determines if there is opportunity to engage potential Protest Leaders to learn of intentions, discuss if university policies are allegedly being violated, assisting with safety, etc.
- b. University Protest Manager and/or Protest Response Team determines if an “official” response is needed in the moment. Guided talking points to be provided.
- c. University Protest Manager and/or Protest Response Team advises university leadership on response, location to meet protestors, etc.

Step 4: Accountability

- a. Observers and Responders provide the University Protest Manager with names (if known) of individuals who allegedly violated university policy during protest.
- b. Responsible offices initiate their process.

Step 5: After Action Review

- a. University Protest Manager conducts review of plan, effectiveness of protocol procedure and incorporates lessons learned.