

Oregon State University

Purpose, priorities, & philosophy of campus response to assembly

Purpose

This guide is intended to assist Oregon State University in knowing what to do when an active protest is imminent or underway. The intent is to preserve the rights of those participating in the activities, as well as those impacted by them. When a protest contrasts with our institutional values, the University reserves the right to engage in counter speech. For all protests falling under this policy, staff will choose the lowest possible level of response to de-escalate and resolve the situation, in accordance with the following policy.

This work ties directly to the University strategic plan and the first goal of the University, to provide a transformative educational experience for all learners. This policy will assist the University in engaging students in high-impact learning around social change and protest, preparing them for responsible citizenship as alumni.

Priorities

Our priorities when managing a protest on campus are as follows.

1. Ensuring the safety of demonstrators and the campus community
2. Engaging with demonstrators when they bring voice to issues of concern
3. Commitment to work with demonstrators and follow up on any issues of concern that were identified through the protest resolution

Philosophy

As a land grant institution, Oregon State University is an incubator of innovative thought and perspectives as diverse as our state. We embrace our diversity as a foundation from which to build our campus community. Our university mission calls us to promote economic, social, cultural and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world. This mission is advanced by ensuring a pursuit of learning and exchange of ideas that extends to every corner of our diverse human experience.

Oregon State endeavors to create responsible citizens of the world who exercise critical thinking. We commit to nurture a campus environment where differences of opinion and experience will be a part of our community. And at times, our community may assemble for reasons central to our institutional mission including but not limited to: expression of differing opinions, communication of dissent, education of community members, and requests for action.

Demonstrations and protest are an important vehicle for community members to assemble in order to petition the University regarding grievances and to freely express their opinions. Protecting and promoting freedom of speech and expression is not only a fundamental human right, it is the very bedrock of learning and should be at the center of university experience. Generating and exploring innovative ideas and realities requires us to advance multiple perspectives at once and engage in dynamic discourse.

We commit to being content neutral in our respect for freedom of speech and expression, while also advancing our values of equity for all community members. In instances where the content of a protest

contrasts with our institutional values, a response from the university may be appropriate. As an institution, we reserve the right to speak against messages that are contrary to our educational mission and values, encourage more dialogue, and continue to provide opportunities for learning. Oregon State University commits to the following values when responding to campus protests:

We commit to a safe campus environment: Our foremost duty as an institution is to ensure the safety of our community members. Our goal will be peaceful de-escalation of situations that may be deemed unsafe to our community. A situation will be deemed unsafe if there is physical harm, or viable threat of physical harm, to people within our community. Additionally, any emergency situation must be responded to quickly and decisively by our first responders, regardless of the protest at hand. We will work in collaboration with our campus first responders to assess each situation and determine the best campus response.

We believe every voice matters: We affirm the right of every student, faculty, and staff member to share their voice on our campus community. We support the right of every individual to express themselves and to join in assembly of that expression.

We commit to engage first with demonstrators and as university representatives, unless an emergency situation demands otherwise. Any law enforcement engagement, outside of emergencies, will be determined by the Protest Management Team.

We acknowledge our history, present and future: Campus activism has been a vehicle for institutional and community progress throughout the history of higher education. We stand in gratitude of such activism, which made significant strides toward equity in higher education and created educational opportunities that exist today. We acknowledge that campus protest is a vehicle of campus activism and support the right of our community members to engage in public action.

We seek to understand: We will seek to understand the issues that lead people to protest both in the moment of protest and beyond. We believe understanding and maintaining lines of communication with campus leaders may help build relationship and trust. We believe extending opportunities for communication with campus leaders may offer additional avenues to voicing concerns and working in collaboration toward solving larger issues.

We communicate and engage people in protest: We will always strive to create and maintain active communication with demonstrators and protest organizers during a protest and may call upon campus leaders to help in this endeavor. We believe creating and maintaining lines of communication before, during, and after protest gives us the best opportunity to ensure safety and find opportunities for common understanding.

We make decisions with care: We understand that people in protest sometimes aim to create disruption as a call to action and to advance their message. We will work to balance this call to action with the necessity to maintain safety and reduce disruption to our campus community and allow the business of the university to continue, including teaching, operations, and research. Any response by the institution to campus protest will take these factors into account, acknowledging that context can evolve quickly and that a response may also need to evolve. Any response to campus protest will always remain content neutral.