

Title: Resolution in support of nonviolent protest on college and university campuses
Revised May 3, 2024

Whereas freedom of speech is of high value and protected within institutions of higher education, and at Rutgers particularly, as reaffirmed by President Jonathan Holloway in his statement, “On Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech” (<https://www.rutgers.edu/president/academic-freedom-free-speech>^{1 2}); and

Whereas Rutgers University maintains clear existing policies governing the safe and appropriate handling of free speech and protest actions across its campuses (e.g., <https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=12005&PageId=459329>); and

Whereas protest is “a vitally important form of free expression in our democracy and universities long have been recognized as particularly important sites of protest, especially at times when our nation is struggling to reconcile disparate interpretations of global conflicts and shape public policies that can help restore peace and promote healing” (Rutgers-Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor, May 1, 2024, <https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/news/message-rutgers-newark-chancellor-nancy-cantor-about-peaceful-protest>); and

Whereas non-violent protests are a form of protected free speech³:

Be it resolved that the Rutgers Senate condemns the use of force by police and other security forces against nonviolent protests that have recently arisen on campuses across the country; denounces the sanctioning of nonviolent protesters by their educational institutions; and deplores the threat of force as a means to suppress protected free speech.

Be it further resolved that the Rutgers Senate appreciates the successful resolution of protest activity on the New Brunswick campus, without the use of force by police or other security forces, that resulted in creating a safer environment for all Rutgers students; and the fact that no force has been leveraged or threatened against protestors on the Newark campus.

Be it further resolved that the Rutgers Senate implores Rutgers University President Jonathan Holloway to affirm that Rutgers will never invite law enforcement entities or those acting in the same capacity to deploy force against members of the Rutgers community who engage in nonviolent protest.

Be it further resolved that the Rutgers Senate firmly asserts the need to ensure that agreements reached between Rutgers administration and campus protest organizers are honored in full, including the agreement executed on 5/2/24 for the New Brunswick campus (https://newbrunswick.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/2024-05/response_05022024_2.pdf), and requests a report from the Office of the President regarding progress on these agreements on or before September 1, 2024.

¹ “[A]ll members of our community—our faculty members, students, alumni, and staff—are free to express their viewpoints in public forums as private citizens, including viewpoints that the University itself may not share. And we do not restrict the activities of recognized university organizations, including the speakers they invite to campus, as long as these organizations follow University policy and guidelines.”

² “While Rutgers will not defend the content of every opinion expressed by every member of our academic community, or of speakers who we invite to our campus, it will defend their right to speak freely. That freedom is fundamental to our University, our society, and our nation.”

³ <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>, on “the right of the people peaceably to assemble.”