

Restoring the Academic Quad for Commencement

presidential-all-request@elist.tufts.edu <presidential-all-request@elist.tufts.edu>

on behalf of

OfficeOfThePresident@tufts.edu <OfficeOfThePresident@tufts.edu>

Sun 4/28/2024 5:32 PM

To:presidential-all@elist.tufts.edu <presidential-all@elist.tufts.edu>

April 28, 2024

Dear members of the Tufts community,

Tufts has a time-honored tradition of civil protest. Consistent with that tradition, and throughout this academic year, we have balanced our students' right to protest with enforcing our conduct policies. Students have been sanctioned when protests affected public safety, were a clear violation of our conduct policies, or interfered with normal university operations.

Over the past two weeks, we have respected our community members' right to advocate for their beliefs through a small camp site on the academic quad on our Medford/Somerville campus. Our staff have tried to maintain open lines of communication with the goals of ensuring safety, enforcing our policies, and avoiding the escalation we have seen at other universities across the nation. We have even delayed some preparations for Commencement as much as possible to allow the protest to resolve peacefully. But now the encampment must end, ideally peacefully and voluntarily, so we can prepare the campus for Commencement. Student Life staff will be reaching out to the protesters

tomorrow morning to plan for the end of the encampment in the next few days.

The class of 2024 deserves to be celebrated. Many of this year's graduates experienced the restrictions and losses of the pandemic and missed out on important life events including the opportunity to participate in their high school graduations. Commencement is the moment to celebrate their accomplishments with their family and friends and for us to honor their achievements as a community.

Unfortunately, at this moment when we should be coming together as a community, we have seen behavior that clearly is trying to escalate the situation. Protesters, including some who are unaffiliated with Tufts, have created conditions that have caused multiple community members and guests to lodge formal complaints. While much of Friday's demonstration was peaceful, there were many actions that violated university policies. Demonstrators entered a classroom, blocked paths, and defaced, stickered, and scrawled obscene language on buildings throughout the campus. Even beloved spaces such as Alex's Place on the Tisch Library roof and the Jumbo statue were marred.

Additional actions from the protestors throughout Friday and Saturday made multiple visitors at Friday's Jumbo Days and Saturday's admissions tours feel afraid and unwelcome, resulting in numerous complaints. These included harassment, intimidation, disruption of Jumbo Days sessions, and aggressive tactics. We will investigate every single complaint and hold those responsible fully accountable.

Since the protests on campus began in October, Student Life staff have tried to keep open lines of communication with the protesters. These conversations have focused on requests intended to keep the campus operating and to keep the entire community safe and have been largely productive. But recent exchanges have been markedly different as the

protesters have sought to escalate and disrupt normal university activity. Exchanges with Student Life staff are often now followed by false claims of threats and intimidation on the protesters' social media accounts. Let us be perfectly clear: these claims are simply inaccurate and can only be seen as an attempt to further inflame the community by deliberately misrepresenting the situation.

Following Friday's demonstration, student organizers requested a meeting with university leadership. While we have always felt that dialogue is the best approach to resolving differences, it would not be appropriate to discuss a meeting with the student organizers until they clear the academic quad. Their request, which includes a threat to continue disruption, only comes after they have escalated their actions, caused intentional and malicious harm to our community and campus, broken multiple university policies and, most importantly, violated the values and norms of the institution. The protesters' actions increasingly come at the expense of their fellow students' rights and a meeting cannot be a reward for such behavior.

We have met with multiple students, student groups, faculty members, and others throughout the academic year to discuss ways in which the university may be able to help people in Gaza and those affected by the war in our community in the ways an educational institution can, including by supporting Scholars at Risk, helping rebuild the educational infrastructure in Gaza when the time comes, fostering dialogue and training programs on our campus, creating gathering spaces for affected Tufts community members, and funding social gatherings and meals. As we have said before, we are deeply troubled by the tremendous loss of Palestinian life, and we desire to work with all members of our community to support both the Palestinian and the Israeli people.

It is time to celebrate the class of 2024. We are committed to maintaining an environment that will allow our students to finish the academic year

strong and for the entire community to celebrate the class of 2024 at Commencement without disruptions. Our students and their families and friends deserve nothing less. We invite the entire community to join us in this endeavor peacefully and responsibly.

Sincerely,

Sunil Kumar
President

Caroline Attardo Genco
Provost and Senior Vice President

Michael W. Howard
Executive Vice President

James M. Glaser
Dean, School of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Political Science

Kyongbum Lee
Dean, School of Engineering and Karol Family Professor

[Office of the President](#)
[Tufts University](#)
[Ballou Hall, 2nd Floor](#)
[Medford, MA 02155](#)
president.tufts.edu