



June 7, 2024

APSA Statement on Academic Freedom and the Right to Campus Protest

The American Political Science Association (APSA) is troubled by the responses of many college and university leaders to the ongoing protests occurring at institutions of higher education. These protests have been met with a wide range of responses by campus administrators, with some administrators resorting to calling on state or local police forces to arrest and forcibly break up the protests, even those that have reportedly been non-violent. To the extent that the protests have been non-violent, the use of force against peaceful protesters on campus constitutes a clear violation of the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression. The consequences levied against faculty and students – both undergraduate and graduate – involved in the protests jeopardizes the ability of scholars to teach and students to learn, the fundamental goal of institutions of higher education.

Campus safety should always be a priority for campus administrators, and it is wholly appropriate for them to be alert regarding potential threats to the safety and security of the greater student body. Hate speech and threats of violence against other members of the campus community are condemnable acts that should have no place anywhere in higher education, and allegations of these acts should be taken seriously by campus administrators. However, it is also crucial that campuses uphold the freedom of students and faculty to freely express uncomfortable ideas so long as that expression does not constitute a credible threat to the safety of another member or group within the campus community.

We understand that leaders of institutions are currently placed in a challenging position to make decisions in response to contentious issues. With those challenges in mind, we call on campus administrators to protect their students and faculty, seek alternatives to forcibly breaking up non-violent protests, and reaffirm the principles of academic freedom.

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