

## Faculty Council of the University Senate

### Resolution on the Handling of April 2024 Protests on The Ohio State University Columbus Campus

*Passed May 17, 2024 (36 Yes, 11 No, 8 Abstain)*

SYNOPSIS: In accordance with the Faculty Rules, on May 2, 2024, the Faculty Council met in a special session as requested by two Faculty Senators and agreed to by majority vote of the Faculty Council's Executive Committee. During this session, the Faculty Council discussed the management of the April 2024 protests and related context. This discussion included perspectives from non-senator Ohio State faculty, who had also been invited to attend the meeting. The Faculty Council agreed to form a writing committee to explore the development of a resolution and bring it to a potential vote of the Faculty Council. The outgoing and incoming Faculty Council chairs sought feedback from the broader faculty community. The writing committee studied this feedback alongside policy documents and records of events to frame the resolution. A draft of this resolution was provided to Faculty Senators on May 10, 2024. This final resolution documents the Faculty Council's concerns surrounding the university leadership's response to the April 2024 protests. The resolution rejects the use of the current "Space Rules" as a primary justification for arrests and disciplinary actions. It also calls for affirmative steps to resolve conflict and improve the administration and operation of shared university spaces.

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**WHEREAS** the events occurring on The Ohio State University's campus on the dates of April 23, 2024, and April 25, 2024, are documented in various media, the appendix provides representative sources, and we encourage individual readers to further research events; and

**WHEREAS** per the Ohio Revised Code [Section 3345.0215](#), state institutions of higher education are charged with "giving students broad latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, learn, and discuss any issue" and are charged with informing the community of "the policies, regulations, and duties of the institution regarding free expression on campus," including policies governing time, place, and manner of expression; and

**WHEREAS** [“Ohio State approves, issues, and maintains all university-wide policies using a consistent process and format”](#); and

**WHEREAS** [the existing process for creating university-wide policies](#) includes collaboration and input from members of the Ohio State community throughout the development, approval, and implementation of said policies; and

**WHEREAS** university policy documents are structured to facilitate clear communication to the university community; identify the responsible office; communicate the purpose of the policy; define important terms; detail relevant procedures, roles, and responsibilities; identify important resources and points of contact for further understanding; and establish a clear history of publication and revision; and

**WHEREAS** it is a vital function of the university to manage space in relation to free speech, *and* such management meets all the qualifications for the formation of a university policy; and

**WHEREAS** the university has an obligation, through well-defined and consistently administered policies, to ensure the safety of Ohio State’s diverse community; and

**WHEREAS** [the “Space Rules” document](#) utilized to govern the response to peaceful protests during April 2024 was *not* developed through the official process for creating [university-wide policies](#), lacks documentation of its development or publication date, and is not housed with other university policies; and

**WHEREAS** on the afternoon of April 23, 2024, the “Space Rules” document was used to justify the arrest of two students from a group of about 50 peaceful protestors outside Meiling Hall on Ohio State’s Columbus campus; and

**WHEREAS** on the morning of April 25, 2024, the “Space Rules” document was used to justify clearing about 25 peaceful protestors from the South Oval. Three people were arrested for criminal trespassing after the clearing of the protest, including a staff research scientist and a graduate student, both unaffiliated with the morning’s protest; and

**WHEREAS** on the afternoon and evening of April 25, 2024, the “Space Rules” document was again used to justify the arrests of 36 protestors on criminal trespass charges at approximately 10 pm. Hundreds of peaceful protestors had gathered on the South Oval, surrounding a smaller group and approximately ten tents. OSUPD and other requested external law enforcement were at the scene; and

**WHEREAS** this operation to manage a peaceful protest included dozens of officers in riot gear, leading to a climate of hostility and escalation; and

**WHEREAS** the administration's decisions led to multiple instances of the physical removal of protestors, risking injury to students, staff, faculty, and other community members in the vicinity; and

**WHEREAS** administrative and disciplinary responses to student activities on campus should be proportional and should engage with peaceful students as learners rather than as threats to safety and security; and

**WHEREAS** we as the Faculty Council strongly affirm the right of our students to peacefully act on their principles and navigate deep differences in the public sphere as citizen leaders, and to be emotionally, physically, and psychologically safe while doing so; and

**WHEREAS** in that spirit, the establishment of an official Space Policy is needed to uphold this right; and

**WHEREAS** current events call on our university to reject aggression and violence, opting instead for fostering knowledge, respectful discourse, and forward-thinking dialogue to address conflict

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that:

We strongly reject the use of force as a response to the peaceful protests of April 2024 on The Ohio State University's campus.

We call on the administration to fully embrace student leadership and civic education as what we, as a university, value.

We demand the creation of a space Policy in accordance with the formal standards and processes by which the University creates Policies.

We call on the university to take every action possible to see dropped and expunged all criminal charges related to the peaceful protests that occurred during April 2024 on Ohio State's campus.

We call on the university to drop and expunge all disciplinary charges related to the peaceful protests that occurred during April 2024 on Ohio State's campus.

We urge that going forward, there be no disciplinary actions—including reprimand or penalty—with respect to peaceful protests on campus in the absence of an official Policy to manage space use.

We call for an accounting to the Faculty Council, and the entire University Senate, of the administration's past efforts—in the interest of lessons to be learned—and future plans to be in dialogue with Ohio State's community groups, especially our students.

We call for an accounting to, and ongoing dialogue with, the University Senate regarding the administration's immediate and long-term plans to:

- more fully support ongoing, robust, and respectful dialogue on controversial issues within The Ohio State University community;
- foster the recognition of deep differences as normal and healthy; and
- promote these conversations as part of a holistic commitment to all community members' safety, well-being, belonging, intellectual growth, and mutual respect.

We call on the administration to collaborate with the Faculty Council and individual faculty members, recognizing us as experts in student learning and in fostering a university environment that supports the free and full exchange of ideas.

## Appendix

- April 23:
  - <https://www.wosu.org/politics-government/2024-04-24/two-ohio-state-students-charged-with-criminal-trespassing-at-palestinian-protest>
- April 25 AM:
  - <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/crime/2024/04/25/palestine-hamas-gaza-war-protest-ohio-state-students-faculty-arrested/73453334007/>
  - <https://www.thelantern.com/2024/04/third-student-arrested-on-campus/>
- April 25 PM:
  - <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/education/2024/04/26/ohio-state-students-anti-israel-protest-arrests-campus-police/73468400007/>
  - <https://www.thelantern.com/2024/04/students-and-community-members-arrested-while-protesting-the-war-in-gaza-and-student-arrests/>