

United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board Stands in Defense of the Right to Free Speech and Peaceful Protest on University Campuses

WHEREAS, SUNY campuses are places of free and open expression, inquiry, and debate. Even in sharp disagreement, our goal is communication in service of learning and understanding; and,

WHEREAS, we believe that the critical evaluation of different points of view and the questioning of even the most deeply held beliefs are essential to learning. So too is our students' right to protest and to express their political convictions. And,

WHEREAS, in a democratic society based on the fundamental value of free speech, it is unacceptable to respond to demonstrations with violent repression; and

WHEREAS, these actions continue an alarming trend of undermining the shared governance, academic freedom and independence that have made American higher education globally preeminent; and

WHEREAS, some SUNY leaders are responding to largely peaceful, outdoor protests by inviting law enforcement in riot gear to campus and condoning violent arrests, failing in their duty to their institutions, their faculty, their students, and their central obligation to our democratic society; and

WHEREAS, insisting that harsh discipline and violent repression are necessary to combat hate on a college campus is a pretext to suppress protest and silence speech that endangers the safety of students, faculty, and staff; And

WHEREAS, many labor unions, and organizations such as the Association of American University Professors, and the American Federation of Teachers have issued statements affirming the rights of free speech on college campuses,

NOW THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that the United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board condemns the militarized response by SUNY leaders to these activities, and;

RESOLVED, that the United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board calls on SUNY campuses to instead make use of the carefully developed policies and procedures based on due process to address instances of harassment and hate, as these instances have no place on a college campus or anywhere; and

RESOLVED, that the United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board stands with our union brothers and sisters statewide who are defending free speech, the right of assembly, and associational rights for students because we believe that the way forward is through education and dialogue, not through intimidation and force via zip-ties and police dogs; and

RESOLVED, that the United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board calls on SUNY leadership to drop disciplinary charges against peaceful protesters, to observe due process in disciplinary actions, to keep external armed law enforcement off campuses in response to peaceful protests, and to uphold fundamental freedoms for students and faculty; and

RESOLVED, that the United University Professions System Administration Chapter Executive Board communicates this resolution to the the SUNY Chancellor, the SUNY Board of Trustees and the United University Professions statewide Executive Board.