

# DRU Demonstration Workshop

Findings and insights from an interactive discussion event co-hosted by  
the Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network®,  
University of Oregon and University of Massachusetts Amherst

September 9, 2024



UNIVERSITY OF  
OREGON

**Institute for Resilient  
Organizations, Communities,  
and Environments**



University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst

## Executive Summary

To promote the exchange of ideas and perspectives from campuses across the county, the Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network, the University of Oregon and the University of Massachusetts Amherst co-hosted two national interactive virtual national demonstration workshops in August 2024 for institutions of higher education (IHEs). This document details the findings and insights from the August 13, 2024 workshop in which 44 IHEs gathered to share how they managed and responded to demonstrations, protests, encampments, arrests, and related activities that took place on or near many of their campuses during spring 2024.

Data from the Crowd Counting Consortium, a collaboration between Harvard University and the University of Connecticut, indicates more than 3,700 days with protest activity at over 500 U.S. schools between October 7, 2023, and May 29, 2024, including encampments at more than 130 campuses.<sup>1</sup>

The workshop included two break-out sessions. During the first session, participants discussed how their campuses responded to demonstrations and protests in spring 2024. During the second session, participants shared their policies and procedures related to demonstrations and protests. They also described which ones worked well in spring 2024 and which ones needed improvement. Additionally, participants shared resources that may help other campuses manage future demonstration and protest activity.

### **About Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network®**

Established in 2005, the DRU Network facilitates open communication, discussion, and resource-sharing among university and college practitioners in all areas of safety, risk, continuity, and emergency management. The DRU Network provides peer-to-peer information-sharing among members, helping them and others mitigate, prepare for, respond to, operate during, and recover from all types of campus emergencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. "Crowd Counting Consortium: An Empirical Overview of Recent Pro-Palestine Protests at U.S. Schools." May 30, 2024. <https://ash.harvard.edu/articles/crowd-counting-blog-an-empirical-overview-of-recent-pro-palestine-protests-at-u-s-schools/>

## Topic 1: How Campuses Manage Demonstrations and Protests

In the first session of the workshop, participants described who or what groups or teams were charged with leading the response to demonstrations and protests on their campuses during spring 2024. Workshop participants also shared leadership methods and strategies that worked well for them, and they described the methods and strategies that were challenging.

### Leadership and response structures

Workshop participants described who responded to demonstrations and protests on their campuses, as well as how those responders interacted with protestors and with other IHE teams.

### Common elements

Workshop participants frequently said their student affairs, emergency management, or public safety teams were the primary designated leaders of the response to and communication with demonstrators and protesters in spring 2024. One workshop participant said their school designated the president's office and a dean as primary negotiators with protestors.

In some cases, several teams co-managed the response. One large private institution, for example, said its public safety, student life, and communications departments managed the protest response together, along with engagement from the president and provost.

Some workshop participants also said their IHEs developed special systems for regular internal communication. The chief administrative officer at one large public university, for example, was responsible for coordinating and convening daily calls with the student life, academic affairs, facilities, communications, and campus safety departments during the protests.

### Demonstration-response teams

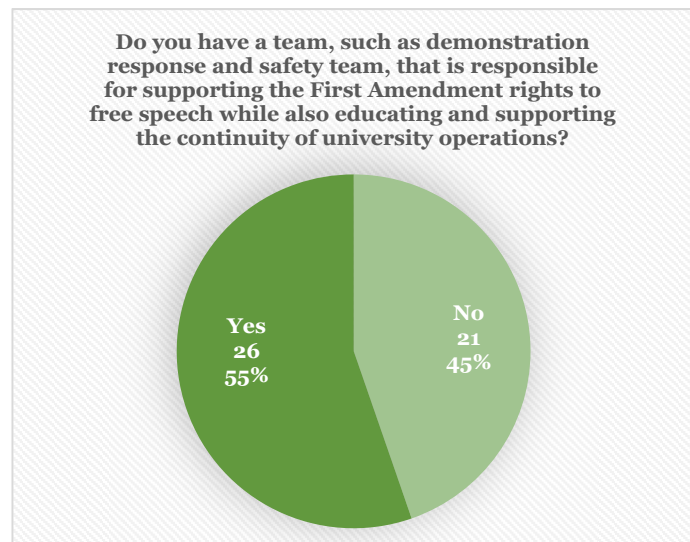
Several schools have demonstration-response teams tasked with ensuring that protests, gatherings, and speech-related events follow specific rules. Some of these teams use a tiered response approach in which they limit interaction with police or campus security only to situations involving immediate threats to physical safety.

The composition of the demonstration-response teams varied among IHEs. A workshop participant from one small private research university, for example, noted that their IHE's team included "familiar faces" on campus, including members of the student affairs department and athletics administrators but not public safety officers. At one large public university, the dean of students and public safety co-chair the demonstration-response team.

### Effective response strategies and tactics

Several workshop participants mentioned several response strategies and tactics that meaningfully helped their IHEs manage demonstrations and protests in spring 2024. They fall into three general categories.

1. **Centralized, proactive outreach.** Several schools touched base with protestors and concerned groups on a regular basis (daily or weekly in some cases) in an effort to maintain communication and prevent escalation. Some schools distributed free-speech guidelines, expression policies, or protest cards that provided information about demonstrators' rights, limits, and expectations on campus. The fire marshal at one large public university also communicated expectations regarding building occupancy to protestors, according to one workshop participant. Additionally, one private university distributed information about the potential long-term consequences of being arrested. The dean of students, the police, and dedicated faculty liaisons were the primary contacts for protestors and encampment leaders at some IHEs. At one school, the primary contacts were part of an engagement strategy team at the IHE.



2. **Strategic crowd monitoring.** Some workshop participants said their IHEs adopted subtle “hands off, eyes on” methods for more effectively supervising protests and encampments. At one small, private research university, disruptors received up to three warnings before being removed by security and a member of the IHE’s demonstration-response team. Workshop participants also reported that one campus deployed plain-clothes officers and installed more cameras rather than making a formal display of uniformed officers. Another hired off-duty and retired police officers for increased overnight monitoring, and one IHE placed undercover officers in an encampment. One large public university was able to intervene before construction materials were allowed into its encampment.
3. **Tracked-entry event management.** Several workshop participants reported that regulating entry to campuses or campus events helped provide more control over protests and encampments. These tactics ranged from ticketing or requiring registration for campus events and demonstrations, requiring campus IDs in order to enter the campus or certain events, or limiting attendance at speaking events.

## Response challenges

Workshop participants discussed experiencing several different challenges in responding to demonstrations and protests in the spring of 2024. Their response challenges fell into four main categories.

1. **External groups infiltrating campuses.** Several workshop participants mentioned that outside parties attended or tried to attend protest and demonstration activities on their campuses, sometimes on a large scale. In some cases, external influencers also attempted to intervene in student protesters’ communications with schools. Workshop participants from two private schools noted, however, that preventing these outsiders from gaining access to campus may have been easier for them than for public institutions. Some participants also noted that protestors remaining anonymous also created fear and apprehension about who was behind the events.
2. **Faculty influence over student groups, events management, or university communications.** Some IHEs reported difficulties with faculty members actively engaging in protest activities, bringing children and other people to join encampments, or acting as primary communicators for their campus.
3. **Not enough security or inconsistent security.** Some campuses had limited resources for law enforcement or low availability of sworn officers and private security. One campus reported an issue of price gauging for private security. Another noted that varying record-keeping methods among area law enforcement agencies sometimes made it difficult to ensure that the IHE had correct information for tracking and accountability.
4. **Lack of relevant policies or plans.** Some workshop participants reported that their institutions didn’t have a cohesive team or appropriate plan for protests and demonstrations, including not having specific policies around tents or camping. One participant from a private IHE also reported confusion among leaders about the delineation between city property and private university property.

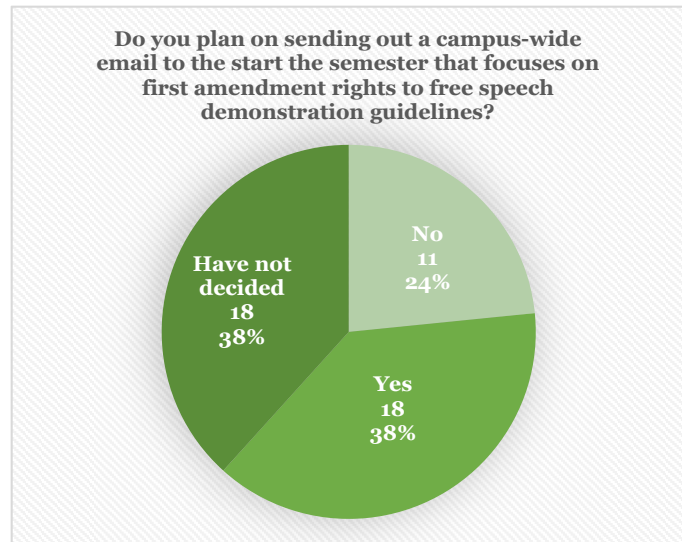
## Topic 2: Policies and training

In this session, campuses shared information about what protest-related policies they had in place, what training they provide on those policies, and ways their policies did and didn't serve their needs during the spring 2024 protests.

### Existing policies and procedures

Workshop participants reported a wide variety of policies and procedures that came into play during the events of spring 2024. These policies and procedures fell into six broad categories.

- 1. Permitting or reservation requirements for events, gatherings, or space use.** Several workshop attendees said their IHEs were able to lean on policies that required reservations for use of campus spaces or ground-use permits for outdoor events. Many also had rules prohibiting tents or erecting structures, as well as "time, place, and manner" policies that allow the IHE to move events in order to minimize disruption.
- 2. Camping policies.** More than one IHE reported having a policy prohibiting camping, though some participants said these policies were often modified or not enforced during certain athletic events.
- 3. ID-check policies.** Some workshop participants mentioned that their IHEs require students to show their student IDs to university officials upon request or in order to gain entrance to campus events. In some cases, this allowed IHEs to identify encampment protestors later.
- 4. Free speech, disruption, and harassment policies.** Several workshop participants had policies in place governing accepted forms of expression and assembly on campus, including policies around public speakers. One medium-size private university has a team of 25 staff members who serve as free speech ambassadors on campus and perform monthly tabletop exercises. One school noted its required compliance with state laws regarding expression and permitting.
- 5. Student code of conduct.** One workshop participant noted that their IHE had no specific policies in place that applied to protesting and demonstrations, other than the student code of conduct.
- 6. Centralized website.** Several workshop participants discussed that having a centralized website to bring all the policies and procedures together enhances clarity, accessibility and understanding across the IHE.



### Existing training efforts

Workshop participants detailed an array of regular and ad hoc trainings associated with protests and demonstrations at their IHEs, such as de-escalation training, building-occupation training, incident command system (ICS) training, and facilitated discussions. Three general types of training came up most often.

- 1. Tabletop exercises.** Tabletop exercises are discussion-based planning sessions in which participants talk through simulated emergencies in order to prepare for the events. Several workshop participants indicated that their IHEs did protest-related tabletop exercises, as well as tabletop exercises intended to help leaders review existing plans and procedures.
- 2. Event-disruption training.** Some workshop participants indicated that their IHEs do trainings in preparation for specific scheduled events such as elections or athletic events. Several also held trainings or made preparations in advance of commencement ceremonies. One large public university did "road show" trainings for its communications and events staff for commencement, including preparing scripts for stage warnings and creating decision rules for determining when to stop or continue the event.
- 3. Student training.** One large private university requires students to complete training that covers a broad range of subjects, including demonstrations and protests; the IHE places a registration hold on students who do not complete the training. Another IHE provides policies-and-procedures training to

student leaders of all campus organizations. Two institutions indicated interest in similar training for students but said they didn't have buy-in from leadership to make it required.

### **Effective policy methods**

Workshop participants discussed the policies and methods they felt were most helpful in managing demonstrations and protests in spring 2024. They fell into two general areas.

1. **Early engagement and decision-making from senior leaders.** A workshop participant from one large public university, for example, said that their IHE's leadership team decided early in the course of events to fully enforce the school's policies, which "set a tone" regarding what the school would and would not allow on campus.
2. **Investment in pre-existing relationships and memoranda of understanding (MOUs).** For example, one mid-size public university reported relying not just on its MOU with city and county law enforcement, but also on its strong existing relationship to get assistance when needed and in a coordinated manner.

### **Policy challenges**

Workshop participants discussed the impact policies played during the events of spring 2024. In general, they reported three types of issues.

1. **Inconsistent policy enforcement.** Multiple workshop participants reported that during spring 2024, their IHEs did not enforce policies consistently — or at all in some cases — which may have created confusion, resentment, or lack of trust in leadership.
2. **Faculty and staff workday conflicts.** A participant from one public university reported difficulty navigating or enforcing human resources, time-off, and payroll policies for staff members who were participating in protest activities during work hours.
3. **Logistics and application of de-escalation policies.** One participant noted that it was difficult to get faculty and staff to engage with de-escalation training or find appropriate facilitators to conduct the training. Another workshop participant noted that some campus protesters appeared to violate policies as part of a goal of being arrested.

## Appendix

Workshop participants shared these resources in an effort to help other campus manage protests, demonstrations, and encampments in the future.

### School policies

- [Auburn University Campus Distribution Policy](#)
- [Auburn University Expression and Demonstration Policy](#)
- [Boston College Student Demonstrations Policy](#)
- [Clemson University Use of Facilities for Speech and Assembly](#)
- [Middlebury Policy on Open Expression](#)
- [Northwest Missouri State University Demonstrations and Picketing](#)
- [Princeton University Peaceful Dissent, Protests, and Demonstrations](#)
- [Princeton University Protecting Free Speech and Open Expression](#)
- [Princeton University Protests and Free Expression](#)
- [Stanford University Campus Disruption Policy](#)
- [Stanford University Fundamental Standard](#)
- [Stony Brook University Freedom of Speech and Expression](#)
- [Stony Brook University Policies & Procedures](#)
- [The Ohio State University Freedom of Expression at Ohio State](#)
- [UC Berkeley How to Protest Safely](#)
- [UC Berkeley Time, Place, and Manner](#)
- [UC Santa Barbara Freedom of Expression & Protests](#)
- [University of Arizona First Amendment](#)
- [University of Arizona Policies](#)
- [University of California Robinson-Edley Report](#)
- [University of Chicago Protests and Demonstrations Policy](#)
- [University of Illinois Chicago Policy on Open Expression](#)
- [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Demonstration Response Plan](#)
- [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Emergency Operation Plan](#)
- [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Expressive Activity on Campus](#)
- [University of Nebraska Safe Activism & Expressive Activities](#)
- [University of Nebraska Use of University Facilities and Grounds](#)
- [University of New Orleans Freedom of Expression](#)
- [University of Oregon Freedom of Speech](#)
- [University of Southern California Freedom of Expression Resources & Polices](#)
- [University of Texas at San Antonio Peaceful Public Assembly](#)
- [University of Texas at San Antonio Prohibition of Camping on University Property](#)
- [University of Wisconsin-Madison Protest Guidelines](#)
- [University of Massachusetts Amherst Free Speech and Expression](#)

### Other

- [IAEM-USA Universities & Colleges Caucus](#)
- [National Association of Colleges and Employers. "NACE Quick Poll on Campus Protests and University Recruiting for Fall 2024"](#)
- [National Policing Institute. "Twenty-First Century Protest Response: Promoting Democracy and Advancing Community and Officer Safety."](#)
- [United States Department of Justice Hate Crime Threat Guide](#)