

# DRU Demonstration Workshop

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

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UNIVERSITY OF  
OREGON

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



## **Executive Summary**

To promote the exchange of ideas and perspectives from campuses across the county, the Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network<sup>®</sup>, the University of Oregon, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst co-hosted two national, interactive, and virtual demonstration workshops in August 2024 for institutions of higher education (IHEs). This document details the findings and insights from the August 28, 2024, workshop in which 21 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 the Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network<sup>®</sup>**

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.

## **Contact Information**

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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 frequently said they had demonstration-response teams. In general, these teams were tasked with ensuring that protests, gatherings, and speech-related events follow specific rules.

### **Demonstration-response team composition**

The composition, leadership, and representation of the demonstration-response teams varied among IHEs, as did participation from law enforcement, public safety, and/or campus police. One large public university offers compensation and stipends for its demonstration-response team.

For student-facing demonstration-response teams, IHEs commonly cited student affairs departments as participants. The following teams we also frequently mentioned participants:

- Academic affairs
- Emergency management
- Facilities
- Policy committees
- Provost
- Union representatives

One participant noted that the provost led faculty-facing response efforts at their IHE, and the human resources department led union-facing or community-facing response efforts.

### **Other notable response team functions**

Some IHEs relied on event management teams or event review teams to assess needs and in some cases communicate with protesters. One workshop participant said their IHE created a temporary position for a constructive engagement manager who monitored protest activity and led education efforts for the community. A crisis assessment team was on hand for emergencies at one IHE, and an incident management assessment team handled risk assessment, communications, and response at another IHE. One public research university activated its emergency operations center (EOC).

### **Effective response strategies and tactics**

Several workshop participants noted that consistent, proactive outreach meaningfully helped their IHEs manage demonstrations and protests in spring 2024. In particular, several schools developed standards and practices for talking with protestors and concerned groups in nontechnical terms on a regular basis (daily or weekly in some cases) in an effort to maintain relationships, communicate policies and guidelines, and prevent escalation. Sometimes this outreach took place via a student affairs team. One IHE delivered a letter discussing policy and rights to the encampment leader every day and posted the letter on its website for transparency. Another workshop participant reported that their IHE created shared documents to distribute information internally about potential demonstrations.

### **Response challenges**

Workshop participants met several different challenges in responding to demonstrations and protests in the spring of 2024. These challenges fell into four main categories.

1. **External groups influencing student events.** Workshop participants mentioned that outside parties directly or indirectly affected the nature of student protest and demonstration activities on and near their campuses. These outside parties often were people or groups not affiliated with the school, as well as members of the media and local politicians. One workshop participant reported that their IHE had difficulties with faculty members actively sympathizing with the protest activities.
2. **Knowing when to act.** Participants discussed uncertainty about appropriate triggers for team activation or escalation, especially when external events move on campus or campus events move off

campus. One participant also mentioned that their IHE had to consider business continuity and how to prevent the protests from disrupting the school's broader operations.

3. **Resource drain.** One workshop participant noted that constantly monitoring and responding to protest and demonstration activities diverted resources away from other efforts and ultimately may be unsustainable for some IHEs with limited resources.
4. **Balancing compliance with multiple laws, policies, or plans.** Some workshop participants reported that their institutions had difficulty balancing protestors' First Amendment rights with the rights of other members of the community. These difficulties manifested in issues with setting deadlines and curfews for certain activities, negotiating with protesters forming encampments, and communicating what IHEs will allow on campus. One participant from a private university described their IHE as trying to move from "making sure people are heard" to "making sure people are heard and not harassed."

## 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 spring 2024. These policies and procedures fell into four broad categories.

1. **Time, place, and manner policies.** Several workshop participants reported having time, place, and manner policies at their IHEs. Some indicated that their IHE policies did not inhibit the protests as long as the protesters followed designated safety guidelines; one participant indicated that their IHE encouraged safe protesting and safe spaces. Many said they were updating and revising their policies.
2. **Space use.** Several workshop participants said their IHEs had space-use policies that allowed their schools to manage where and when protests and demonstrations occurred on campus. A workshop participant mentioned that their IHE required students and guests to show IDs in order to gain entrance.
3. **Camping policies.** More than one workshop participant said their IHE had a policy prohibiting camping on campus, though some participants said these policies were often modified or not enforced during certain events. One public research university noted that their state laws already prohibit camping on public property.
4. **Disruption policies.** Several workshop participants mentioned having policies around amplified sound, disruptions to scheduled events, and lockdown procedures. One workshop participant from a large public university said their IHE has an executive protection division tasked with mitigating risk associated with speakers and celebrities on campus.

### Existing training efforts

Workshop participants detailed an array of regular trainings associated with protests and demonstrations at their IHEs. Three general types of training came up most often.

1. **Event review/scoring.** One IHE created a scoring matrix that evaluates event size, affiliation status of event organizations, specific spaces needed, and other factors to determine the risk profile of any event involving more than 300 people.
2. **Required staff training.** Some workshop participants said their IHEs provide training on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. One IHE also provided de-escalation training for faculty and staff. Another workshop participant noted that their IHE trains "as many people as possible" on the school's time, place, and manner policies.
3. **Required student training.** Some participants said their IHEs provide students with information and training during orientation; sometimes this involves student government. One school uses a seven-minute video about the school's time, place, and manner policy. The video is available on the school's registration platform.

### Policy challenges

Workshop participants discussed the IHE policies they felt needed improvement after the events of spring 2024. In general, they reported five kinds 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 trust issues. One participant from a large state system noted, for example, that their IHE has a trespassing policy for students and nonaffiliates but did not use it.
2. **Disregard for compliance.** A workshop participant from a large public university mentioned that members of a group protesting on their campus stated that they are not interested in observing campus policies. In some cases, protestors demonstrated against particular IHE policies.
3. **Late, last-minute, or incomplete policies.** One participant mentioned that their IHE released a policy right before protests began on their campus. The IHE had to make several revisions to the policy after the events began. One workshop participant said their IHE was reevaluating how their time, place, and manner policies apply to visitors and accessibility; another IHE is clarifying its definition of "lock-out." Setting expectations and consistent policy messaging for the coming Fall 2024 term was a concern for at least one school, as was the time and effort to review and get buy-in for policy changes.

4. **Too many policies.** One workshop participant estimated that their IHE had 10 separate policies related to speakers, event-space use, demonstrations and related student conduct. Another participant from a public university reported having a "hodge-podge" of policies that the school reviewed and consolidated into one policy right before the encampment started. Some members of the campus community perceived that change as the creation of a new policy, however.
5. **Conflicting state or federal policies.** Some workshop participants noted that their IHE's public or private status often affects how open their campuses are to the general public, as well as what type of restrictions and law enforcement resources are available. Others mentioned that local laws on mask use or on requiring reservations for certain spaces created challenges. One workshop participant said that a change in state law overrode one or more of their IHE policies.

## 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](#)
- [State University of New York Rules for the Maintenance of Public Order](#)
- [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 Massachusetts Amherst Free Speech and Expression](#)
- [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 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](#)

### 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 Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement \(NIMAA\)](#)
- [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](#)