Expressive Activities and Assembly: Protests, Demonstrations, Non-University Speakers and Signage on Campus and in University Facilities

Responsible Official:	Assistant/Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor (ACCOS)
Responsible Office:	Chancellor's Office
Issuance Date:	August 14, 2025
Effective Date:	August 14, 2025
Summary:	Describes the University's policy on expressive activities and assembly, including protests, demonstrations, outside speakers and Signage, including time, place and manner procedures implemented pursuant to this Policy.
Scope:	This Policy applies to all University Employees, Students and Non-Affiliates. It applies to all areas of university operations, programs, and facilities, including off-campus locations where university programs and business are conducted.

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I. SUMMARY AND SCOPE

Free and open expression and association, discussion and debate are important aspects of the educational environment and are part of the rich culture and history of the University. The right to free expression and association should be actively protected and encouraged.

The University of California, Merced ("UC Merced") is committed to assuring that all persons may exercise the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, assembly, and

worship. In order to carry out its mission of teaching, research, and public service, the University has an obligation to maintain conditions under which the work of the University can go forward freely, in accordance with the highest standards of quality, institutional integrity, and freedom of expression, with full recognition by all concerned of the rights and privileges, as well as the responsibilities, of those who comprise the University. Each member of the University shares responsibility for maintaining conditions conducive to the achievement of the University's mission of teaching, research, and public service.

This Policy and associated procedures are designed to protect and promote the rights of members of the university community, including the right to freedom of expression, to prevent substantial interference with university functions or activities, to protect university facilities and to assure compliance with all pertinent laws and other applicable University policies. They address the rights and responsibilities of all UC Merced Students, Employees, and Non-Affiliates, including members of the public. This Policy and associated procedures apply to all areas of university operations and programs and to all university facilities, including off-campus locations where university programs and business are conducted.

II. DEFINITIONS

Civil Disobedience: The refusal to comply with certain laws as a peaceful form of protest. Civil disobedience by definition involves a violation of law or regulation and is not protected speech under the state or federal constitutions. Those engaging in Civil Disobedience may be held accountable for violations of law, regulation and/or University policies.

Designated University Official: Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer

Employees: All University staff, faculty, and other academic appointees, including graduate Student Employees, postdoctoral scholars, fellows and visiting scholars.

Freedom of Assembly: The right to hold public meetings and form associations without the interference of the government.

Freedom of Speech: The legal right to express one’s opinions freely. Also referred to as “free speech”.

Grounds Open to the Public: These are grounds generally open to the public and to the University Community for public expression. The outdoor areas of the campus (e.g., lawns, patios, plazas) that are at least 5 feet from: a. university residential facilities; b. buildings, facilities, or areas where such use could impair entrance to or exit from the building, facility or area, or interfere with activities therein; c. parking lots; d. roadways; and e. libraries. Outdoor recreational areas (e.g., playing fields, courts, swimming pools) and grounds adjacent to designated “private residences” (e.g., the residences of the chancellor and faculty/staff, etc.) are excluded from this definition. All other areas of University Property are not generally open to the public.

Merced Irrigation District (MID) Easements: The area extending 75 feet in both directions from the center point of the Fairfield and LeGrand Canals.

Non-Affiliates: Any person who is not a Student, officer, official volunteer, Employee, Regent, or emeritus of the University of California.

Non-University Speaker: Any person or group that proposes to engage in expressive activity on campus, not including speakers participating in programs, meetings, lectures or other events hosted by the University or faculty as part of University business or education or research activities.

Public Areas of Indoor Facilities: Communal areas inside buildings that are routinely open to the public, including lobbies. Excluded from this definition are internal and external stairs and landings, private offices, office hallways, classrooms, and rooms subject to reservations.

Registered Campus Organization (RCO): Any group whose membership is comprised predominantly of UC Merced Students, academic appointees, and/or staff that is registered with the Office of Student Involvement (“OSI”) in order to have access to university facilities and/or resources.

Signage: The display of signs (hand-written, digitally displayed or printed words/images) that do not serve official University business purposes including advertisements, notices, flyers, posters, banners, handbills, placards, literature for noncommercial purposes, or promotion of events/goods/services/causes on University Property, whether fixed, hand-held, or standing.

Student: An individual for whom the University maintains Student records and who: (a) is enrolled in or registered with an academic undergraduate or graduate program of the University; (b) has completed the immediately preceding term, is not presently enrolled, and is eligible for re-enrollment; or (c) is on an approved educational leave or other approved leave status or is on filing-fee status.

University House: The Merced residence of the Chancellor of UC Merced.

University Property: Any university-owned, -operated or –leased property, including all university grounds and structures or such other property as shall be designated as property subject to University policy.

III. POLICY TEXT

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

University Properties shall be used in accordance with federal, state and local laws and shall not be used for the purpose of organizing or carrying out unlawful activity. All persons on University Property are required to abide by university policies and procedures.

B. TIME, PLACE AND MANNER

The time, place and manner of exercising constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, assembly and worship are subject to the procedures below that provide for noninterference with university functions, and provide reasonable protection to persons from practices that would make them involuntary audiences, or place them in reasonable fear, as determined by the university, for their personal safety.

Subject to the procedures implementing this Policy, on University Grounds Open to the Public and in Public Areas of Indoor Facilities, all persons may exercise the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech and assembly. Such activities must not, however, interfere with the right of the university to conduct its affairs in an orderly manner and to maintain its property. Further, no activities may interfere with the university's obligation to protect the rights of all to teach, study and fully exchange ideas. Physical

force, the threat of force, and other coercive activities used to subject anyone to speech of any kind are expressly prohibited.

The University House is a residence and is not open to the public. Activities on the University House grounds, including driveways and lawn areas, other than those sponsored and approved by the Office of the Chancellor are prohibited.

C. NON-UNIVERSITY SPEAKERS

Non-University Speakers or entities (often referred to as “outside speakers”) may be invited to participate in events sponsored in university facilities upon invitation by the administration, academic divisions, departments or individual faculty, and Students, through RCOs. Non-University Speakers or entities may not schedule the use of university facilities directly and may not collect funds on University Property unless sponsored by the administration, academic divisions, departments or individual faculty, or RCOs. The sponsoring division, department, or organization is required to reserve facilities for use by Non-University Speakers through the appropriate room reservation system in advance of issuing an invitation to speak or participate in an event and is required to pay all fees associated with the use of university facilities, including facility and equipment rental fees and security fees, at least 10 days in advance of the scheduled event. Failure to pay all fees may result in the automatic cancellation of the facility reservation. A list of facilities available for use by Non-University Speakers and the associated fee schedules is maintained by Hospitality Services. Estimates of costs related to planned events, including room reservations, security costs, and IT and facilities support are available through Hospitality Services, UC Merced Police Department, the Office of Information Technology and Facilities Management, respectively. Priority for the use of university facilities will be given to academic and administrative departments of the university and other University of California users.

It is the expectation of the university that all speakers and entities will recognize that the essence of the university is to provide for the free exchange of ideas and the expression of a variety of intellectual perspectives. On-campus programs should be designed in the best interests of the educational process, allowing appropriate opportunities for audience

interaction. Non-University Speakers, as well as the audience at speaker events, are expected to comply with all University policies and procedures, and applicable laws.

Campus areas exempt from the sponsorship requirements set forth in this Policy are the outdoor university Grounds Open to the Public and Public Areas of Indoor Facilities, as defined herein. Use of these areas by Non-University Speakers or persons, however, must be at least 5 feet from building entrances and external stairways, may not involve the use of amplified sound unless pre-approved by OSI, and may not interfere with the normal operation of the university, including other events scheduled by RCOs, the administration, Schools, departments and official units. Employee organizations and their representatives are bound by special access procedures pursuant to The Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) of 1979 and the UC Merced Regulations on Employee Organization & Representative Access to University Property, and are not subject to the sponsorship requirements set forth in this Policy.

D. SIGNAGE ON CAMPUS AND IN UNIVERSITY FACILITIES

The university strictly regulates Signage on University Property that does not meet an official university purpose. Note, however, the university will permit display of Signage irrespective of content or viewpoint expressed, except where the content violates University policies, or state or federal law, including but not limited to direct threats and incitement of imminent violence. The University does not endorse the content of posted, distributed or exhibited Signage on campus property. Except as specified below, posted Signage is not permitted on campus or in university facilities without the express approval of the appropriate campus department as defined herein and may be posted only in designated areas.

1. Approval of posting of Signage

   Any Employee seeking approval for posting Signage other than to advertise events sponsored by an administrative or academic department, division or academic appointee, or relating to educational or research activities undertaken by academic appointees, must first obtain the written approval of the Vice Chancellor/School Dean

(or designee) of the Employee's division/school, Individuals should present OSI with a copy of the written approval prior to requesting that the Signage be stamped for display.

Any Student or RCO seeking to post Signage must obtain the approval of OSI. All approved Signage for posting must be no larger than 8.5 inches by 14 inches and stamped by OSI prior to display.

OSI maintains an up-to-date list of all areas designated for posted Signage. Signage posted in areas not designated for posting, Signage past the expiration of the posting dates (24 hours after event/activity has occurred), or Signage that has not been properly approved, may be removed by the university at any time.

Signage to advertise events sponsored by an administrative or academic department, division, or academic appointee relating to educational or research activities undertaken by academic appointees, are not subject to the approval requirements of this Policy but must be displayed only in areas designated for posting or within private offices or cubicles and must be removed promptly after the date of any function or activity for which the Signage was prepared.

2. Anonymous Signage posting

   In addition to the existing policies and procedures for posting Signage on campus, the university provides two specified locations where Students, Employees and Non-Affiliates may post Signage without OSI approval.

   Please note the views and opinions expressed are those of the person(s) posting the material and do not necessarily reflect the position of UC Merced. Accordingly, the university will permit posting irrespective of content or viewpoint, except where the content violates University policies, or state or federal law, including but not limited to direct threats and incitement of imminent violence.

   Content and viewpoint neutral regulations exist for the aforementioned general posting area, including a size limit of 8.5 inches by 14 inches for all material. Furthermore, the posting area will generally be cleared by the end of business every Friday, except

where a legal holiday or other circumstances prevent OSI staff from doing such, at which point all material generally be removed the following business day. The anonymous posting areas serve several purposes including allowing Non-Affiliates (i.e. community members) to post material, allowing a space for material related to electoral politics, and providing an avenue for those wishing to post anonymously.

3. Designated locations for posting Signage

   OSI maintains a current map of designated posting locations for Signage, including the two anonymous posting boards. Generally posting, including chalking, is not allowed on sidewalks, walkways and buildings, trees, bike paths, railings, windows (except as approved by specific departments), fixed poles, lamp poles, fountains, benches, trashcans, shrubbery, on top of other approved announcements/flyers, or automobiles. Posting is prohibited on any structure, item, location that serves a safety purpose (example: blue light towers, traffic signs, ADA devices, etc.). Employees may not post Signage on the inside or outside of doors to private offices, with the exception of materials that are exempt from the requirements of this Policy, as described above.

4. Display of Signage (hand-held and posted) by Employees in the university workplace

   The university has the right to require removal of Signage on University Property if it determines the content has the effect of creating a hostile or disruptive workplace environment. Employees do not have an absolutely unfettered right of freedom of expression in the workplace. Before Signage is removed, however, there will be consultation among administrative units including the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost and appropriate school dean (for academic appointees), the Assistant/Associate Chief of Staff to the Chancellor (for staff) and the Chief Campus Counsel. Signage and any accompanying items, whether posted or held by a person, cannot block access to a space or the free flow of movement.

5. Posted Signage inside private offices

   Subject to the university's right to remove Signage as described above, posted Signage is not restricted within private offices; however, all individuals are encouraged to consider the impact of objectively offensive displays on the university community.

6. Posted Signage on doors to private offices

   Subject to the university's right to remove Signage as described above, individuals with private offices may post Signage related to events sponsored by an administrative or academic department, division, or academic appointees relating to educational or research activities undertaken by academic appointees, on the inside or outside of the door to their office without higher-level approval from relevant Vice Chancellor or Dean as described above.

7. Posted Signage inside open cubicles

   Subject to the university's right to remove Signage as described above, posted Signage is not restricted on the interior walls of single-person dedicated cubicles or workspaces; however, all individuals are encouraged to consider the impact of objectively offensive Signage on the university community.

8. Posted Signage in shared workspaces

   Signage shall not be posted in shared workspaces except with the approval of all Employees sharing the workspace and the direct supervisor(s) of such Employees.

9. Posted Signage related to electoral politics

   Because the university by law does not engage in electoral politics or campaigns and its physical facilities are fundamentally under its control and responsibility, the university generally prohibits on campus and in university facilities the posting of Signage related to electoral politics, including campaign posters, stickers, buttons or other materials. This does not preclude individuals from wearing buttons, hats or clothing relating to electoral politics, and does not preclude academic appointees from utilizing campaign

material in the course of their teaching and research activities, if the material is used for education and research purposes and is not used in a manner intended to influence electoral politics. In addition, anonymous bulletin boards designated within this Policy may be used for posting of Signage related to electoral politics.

10. Unauthorized structures

    Unauthorized structures may pose safety risks and can disrupt the functional integrity of university grounds. No one shall erect, build, construct, set up, establish and/or maintain unauthorized structures on University Property without prior written authorization from the Designated University Official under this Policy. For purposes of this paragraph, a “structure or display” means any object larger than two feet in any dimension that is intended to be placed or displayed in a public area, or is left unattended in a public area. Unauthorized structures may include tents, platforms, benches, tables, buildings, barricades, and other structures. Temporary shading structures during daylight hours are permitted. Unauthorized structures are subject to immediate impoundment and removal from University Property. The university shall not be liable for the loss of, or damage to, any Unauthorized structures placed in University Property.

11. Display of hand-held Signage

    Students, faculty, and staff may display Signage on campus by holding or carrying it by hand or otherwise attaching it to their person. Members of the public may display Signage in the Grounds Open to the Public by holding or carrying it by hand or otherwise attaching it to their person. No advance permission is required.

    a. Hand-held Signage constructed of materials that create a hazard to other people are not permitted. Signage constructed of rigid materials, including sticks, poles, wood, metal, hard plastic, or other materials that could be construed as a hazard are not permitted.

    b. Any person displaying Signage may not bump, hit, or injure any other person with the Signage.

c. Any person displaying Signage at a speech, performance, or other event may not block the view of any other person observing the speech, performance, or event. Depending on the venue, this may mean that Signage may be displayed only around the perimeter of a room or an audience.

d. The University's Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (PACAOS) contain specific regulations and procedures relating to hand-held Signage that must be followed by all university Employees, Students, and RCOs. The size of hand-held Signage on campus displayed by affiliates must not exceed 36" x 36", unless a smaller format is indicated under PACAOS for Signage that is posted. In the event of conflict between this Policy and campus procedures under the PACAOS, the requirements of this Policy shall take precedence.

e. Regulations Governing Conduct of Non-Affiliates in the Buildings and on the Grounds of the University of California contain specific regulations and procedures related to hand-held Signage (§100014) that must be followed by all Non-Affiliates. The size of hand-held Signage on campus displayed by Non-Affiliates must not exceed thirty inches (30" x 30"). The size of the handles or supports for such signs, posters, placards, or banners shall be limited to one-fourth inch (¼") in thickness by three-fourth inch (¾") in width and shall not extend to more than eighteen inches (18") beyond a single exterior edge of such signs, posters, placards or banners.

f. A law enforcement officer, an usher or any other university Employee if authorized by officials responsible for managing the venue, may warn any person that their Signage is inconsistent with Policy. If the violation persists after a clear warning, the law enforcement officer, authorized usher, or other authorized Employee may confiscate the Signage or take other appropriate steps to respond to the violation. A law enforcement officer may take any action necessary to keep the peace by enforcing the law and preventing criminal activities including but not limited to issuing a criminal trespass warning to the violator. It is the university's explicit intention to use the least possible show or use of force or other means of control in enforcing this Policy.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES AND ASSEMBLY

The following “Time, Place and Manner” procedures provide a framework for the conduct of assemblies and expressive activities, including speakers, demonstrations and protests, to protect the rights of all persons (demonstrators and non-demonstrators), to ensure that the activity conforms to all applicable university rules, procedures, and state laws, and to address health and safety and risk management issues.

A. TIME: HOURS

Individuals may conduct their assembly, demonstration and protest activities during normal business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) in the Public Areas of Indoor Facilities, or at any time on Grounds Open to the Public as defined herein.

After-hours activities may be authorized in the Public Areas of Indoor Facilities, after consultation with the appropriate university officials and approval under Section IV.E Advanced Arrangements for Planned Activities. After-hours activities in indoor locations require the presence of campus staff and/or faculty acting as activity monitors.

B. PLACE: GROUNDS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PUBLIC AREAS OF INDOOR FACILITIES

On university Grounds Open to the Public and Public Areas of Indoor Facilities, all persons may exercise the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, assembly, worship and distribution of literature incidental to the exercise of these freedoms; however, these activities:

1. Must not interfere with the safe operation of the campus, and must not prevent others from learning, working or living on campus.

2. Are subject to the time restrictions in Section IV.A. Time: Hours.

3. May not include sales or solicitation without a permit.

4. Are subject to the standard reservation system and fee schedules for university facilities. If the area has been previously reserved for use by a campus organization or University unit, the University shall honor such use and may limit or exclude those without a reservation. A map of spaces that may be reserved on campus by University affiliates may be found here.

5. May not occur on the Merced Irrigation District (MID) easements, except on bridges open to the public (such as the Scholars Lane bridge).

6. May not take place on internal or external stairs or landings and may not occur in outdoor areas of campus within five (5) feet of the following:

    a. university residential facilities;

    b. buildings, facilities, or areas where such use could impair entrance to or exit from the building, facility or area, or interfere with activities therein;

    c. parking lots;

    d. roadways; and

    e. libraries.

    These restrictions apply to all University Property. Exceptions may be considered subject to the approval process set forth in Section IV.E Advanced Arrangements for Planned Activities.

7. Tables or moveable stands may not be placed in areas where passages to any entrance or walkways are blocked, where the free flow of pedestrian traffic is restricted, or where emergency fire lanes are blocked.

    Student groups using moveable tables or stands at any location on the campus must have prior approval of OSI. Authority for approval rests with the Director of OSI or their designee. Employee organizations must gain prior approval from the UC Merced Director of Employee Labor Relations in accordance with the UC Merced Regulations

on Employee Organization & Representative Access to University Property. For Employees and Non-Affiliates, they must seek approval through Hospitality Services.

C. MANNER: RULES OF CONDUCT APPLICABLE TO ALL PERSONS, INCLUDING DEMONSTRATORS AND NON-DEMONSTRATORS, AND THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATING IN ASSEMBLY, PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

All individuals participating in assembly, protests and demonstrations shall have the following rights and responsibilities, subject to the restrictions regarding time, place and manner set forth in these procedures:

To exercise the right to Freedom of Speech and expression in a way that demonstrates commitment to respect toward all, is nonviolent and does not result in harm to people or damage to property.

To respect the rights of other members of the university community to go about the mission and business of the university without substantial interference.

To exercise the right to assemble in a manner consistent with University policies as well as state and federal law, understanding that, while free speech is protected by the First Amendment, Civil Disobedience is not protected speech and may have consequences for those who engage in it.

To promote a safe, non-violent, and constructive environment in which community members may engage their right to assembly, and where the exchange of opinions and ideas from all community members is encouraged.

1. No one may refuse to identify themselves upon request to university officials acting in the performance of their duties.

2. Wearing masks or face coverings is permissible for all persons who are complying with University policies and applicable laws. No one, while on University Property, may conceal their identity or refuse to provide their identification for the purpose of evading

or escaping discovery, recognition, or identification in the commission of violation of applicable University policy or local, state, or federal laws, including acts of unlawful intimidation or harassment of any person or group.

3. No one may intentionally restrict the movement of another person or persons by, among other means, blocking or obstructing their ingress or egress of roadways, walkways, buildings, parking structures, fire lanes, windows, doors or other passageways to University Property, or otherwise denying a person access to spaces on University Property.

4. No one may congregate in front of elevators, or at the top, bottom or on the steps or landings of stairways. Stairways and elevators may be used to move from floor to floor.

5. No one may block or impede access to any emergency alarm system(s).

6. No one may interfere or tamper with any part of any emergency alarm system.

7. No one may engage in any activity which endangers personal safety, which results in damage to personal or University Property, or which violates the privacy and/or confidentiality of sensitive university records.

8. No one may substantially interfere with, or substantially disrupt, normal university business, classes, or any organized and authorized university activity inside or outside a campus building.

   The following factors weigh in favor of a finding that conduct is a substantial disruption of a university activity, but are not exhaustive:

   a. Whether the conduct is inconsistent with UC Merced's Principles of Community.

   b. Whether the conduct unduly interfere with any person's ability to participate in a university activity.

   c. Whether the conduct is violent or involves a threat of violence.

   d. Whether the speech or conduct incites an immediate breach of the peace.

e. Whether the conduct and its effect lasts long enough, either in totality and/or in comparison to any university activity it may have affected, to unduly interfere with that university activity.

f. Whether the conduct stops if and when a request to stop is addressed to the individual or group engaging in the conduct.

g. Whether the conduct causes physical harm or damage to property.

h. Whether the conduct is coordinated with others' conduct in a way that it causes a cumulative effect that unduly interferes with a university activity.

i. Whether the conduct is intentionally aimed at unduly interfering with a university activity.

j. In the case of a university activity that involves a speaker or presenter:

    i. Whether the conduct unduly interferes with the speaker's or presenter's ability to deliver the speaker's or presenter's message.

    ii. Whether the conduct unduly interferes with the audience's ability to receive the speaker's or presenter's message, including whether the conduct is loud enough to unduly interfere with any audience member's ability to hear the speaker or presenter.

9. No one may refuse to follow the lawful directions of a university official or police officer acting in their official capacities.

10. No one may interfere with the ability of vehicles to enter or exit a roadway or with the normal flow of vehicular traffic.

11. Sound amplification equipment may not be used at any indoor or outdoor location without the prior written approval of OSI. Approval by OSI is needed whether the requester is an Employee, Student or Non-Affiliate. Use of sound amplification equipment may only be approved in accordance with Section 304.00 of the UC Merced

Student Handbook. If complaints are received indicating that the amplification sound level is interfering with the normal operations of the campus, the responsible person(s) may be directed to lower the volume by OSI staff. If additional complaints occur, the person(s) in charge of the amplification equipment may be directed to turn off the sound completely. These limitations do not apply to events, such as speakers, concerts, dances, rallies, sports events and other outdoor educational, athletic or entertainment events, formally sponsored by an administrative or academic division or department.

12. No one may camp, set up or erect a campsite, or occupy a tent or other temporary housing structure on University Property, unless specifically pre-approved by the Designated University Official under this Policy and documented in writing.

13. Campfires, open fires and other fires are prohibited on University Property without written permission from the campus fire Marshall. Any torches, flammable outdoor displays or open fires must be approved in writing by the campus fire Marshal and Chief of Police.

D. ENFORCEMENT

Violation of university policies or procedures may subject a person to educational, administrative, legal or other penalties. If the person is a Student or Employee, that person may also be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with university policies, as set forth in the UC Merced Code of Student Conduct (Students), UC Personnel Policies for Staff Members (staff), the Academic Personnel Manual (academic appointees), and any applicable collective bargaining agreements. Non-Affiliates are subject to the Regulations Governing Conduct of Non-Affiliates in the Buildings and on the Grounds of the University of California. Violation of these Regulations by Non-Affiliates is a misdemeanor and may result in arrest, a monetary fine and imprisonment.

E. ADVANCED ARRANGEMENTS FOR PLANNED ACTIVITIES

UC Merced understands that many forms of assembly, protest and demonstration occur spontaneously. For the events that are planned in advance, by either affiliates of the university (Students and Employees) or Non-Affiliates (public members), coordination with

the appropriate offices within the university is encouraged to ensure the success of the event and minimize the potential to disrupt the normal operation of the university.

Although not mandatory, the following procedures are administered by OSI for planned events on campus. OSI will coordinate with other administrative units, including the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost, Facilities Management, Public Safety and the Protest Oversight Group, as necessary.

1. If the assistance of OSI is desired for a planned event, a representative for the event should prepare a proposal in writing and submit it to OSI at least 48 hours in advance of the planned activity when possible. OSI should be provided further advanced notice if possible, depending on the scale of the event.

2. A proposal for a planned event should include the proposed location and date of the event, the proposed start and end time, the purpose/goal of the event, the anticipated participants, such as Students, staff, faculty, campus administration or community members, the estimated number of participants, and any identified security requirements.

3. If the proposed event includes a march, the sponsoring group should attach a proposed route for the march.

4. If the proposed event includes sound amplification equipment, the use of such equipment must be approved by OSI in writing in advance for all events.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

As needed, and if there is enough advanced notice, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Engagement or designee will convene the Protest Oversight Group (POG) to coordinate the university's involvement in assemblies, protests and demonstrations on campus. The POG is responsible for operating in a manner that continually reassesses the event and objectives, and emphasizes teamwork, timely and effective communication and actions that support the university's teaching, research and service missions while protecting and respecting the right to assemble and protest. It is the university's explicit intention to accomplish these goals with the least possible show or use of force or other means of control. In situations where this

objective cannot be met, clear protocols for escalation identified in the Police Operations Plan approved by the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer and provided to the POG will be understood and strictly observed by all law-enforcement personnel. The Chancellor has the ultimate authority over and responsibility for the university's involvement in assemblies, protests and demonstrations, and the POG is expected to continually brief and coordinate with the Chancellor.

In the rare event of an imminent and substantial threat of harm to persons or property, and with no reasonable opportunity to consult with the Chancellor or designee, UC Merced Police will follow the approved Police Operations Plan for responding. The Chief of Police is responsible for exercising sound judgment and appropriate restraint.

VI. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Federal and State Laws and Regulations

- Amendment I of the Constitution of the United States
- California Penal Code § 647c
- California Penal Code § 185
- The Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) of 1979

University of California Policies and Procedures

- Regulations Governing Conduct of Non-Affiliates in the Buildings and on the Grounds of the University of California
- Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students (PACAOS)
    - PACAOS-30: Policy on Speech and Advocacy
    - PACAOS-40: Policy on Use of University Properties
- UC Anti-Discrimination Policy
- UC Personnel Policies for Staff Members (PPSM)
- Academic Personnel Manual (APM)

    - APM-010: Academic Freedom
    - APM-011: Academic Freedom, Protection of Professional Standards, and Responsibilities of Non-Faculty Academic Appointees
    - APM-015: The Faculty Code of Conduct
- UC Community Safety Plan

UC Merced Policies and Resources

- UC Merced Policy on Withdrawal of Consent to Remain on University Property
- UC Merced Regulations on Employee Organization & Representative Access to University Property
- UC Merced Principles of Community
- UC Merced Campus Climate Initiative
- UC Merced Police Department Policies
- UC Merced Code of Student Conduct
- UC Merced Academic Personnel Policies & Procedures (MAPP)
- UC Merced Police Accountability Board
- UC Merced Outdoor Reservable Spaces Map
- UC Merced Office of Student Involvement Policies
    - Demonstration Proposal Form: UC Merced Affiliates
    - Demonstration Proposal Form: Off-Campus Community & Non-Affiliates
    - Posting Regulations
    - Posting Locations
    - Anonymous Posting Areas

VII. REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action/Summary of Changes
August 14, 2025	Interim policy revised and issued in final. Revisions include: • Technical updates to contact information and resources • Clarifications around access to university property, location restrictions, advanced arrangements for planned activities, non-university speakers, masking, signage, use of force, and roles within the Protest Oversight Group. • Multiple terms were replaced with more suitable terms.
September 19, 2024	Policy revised and issued in interim. Revisions include: • Mandatory revisions required by California State Senate Bill 108, SEC. 219, 34 implemented under UC Merced's Campus Climate Initiative • Technical updates to contact information and resources • Clarifications around disruptions of a university activity, proximity of activities, unauthorized structures, and consequences • Updated Policy owner to Assistant Chancellor and COS
May 1, 2024	Policy revised and issued in interim. Revisions include: • Changed Policy owner and POG oversight to VCSA • Clarified and added language around posting/Signage • Added language around camping • Moved POG membership/roles & responsibilities to Appendix
November 20, 2019	Revised to address comments received during interim period. Final Policy Issued
January 9, 2018	Original Interim Policy Issued

VIII. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – PROTEST OVERSIGHT GROUP (POG)

APPENDIX 2 – PROTEST/DEMONSTRATION EVENT PROPOSAL FORM

APPENDIX 1 – PROTEST OVERSIGHT GROUP (POG)

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POG:

The POG shall consist of the senior administrator, or their designee, from each of the divisions identified below. Responsibilities of each member are as outlined. The Academic Senate may appoint an ex officio member to the POG who may attend meetings and liaise with the Academic Senate leadership. The intent of this membership is to bring a faculty perspective to the POG. At UC Merced, the Protest Oversight Group (POG) and Demonstration Response Team (DRT) collaboratively manage campus protests and demonstrations through a tiered response framework. The POG operates with a focus on teamwork, clear communication, and actions that support the university's teaching, research, and service missions while respecting the right to peacefully assemble. The group continually reassesses events and objectives to ensure an appropriate response, guided by the principles of the University of California's "Response Option Framework." In rare cases of imminent and substantial threat, the Chief of Police may act independently, exercising sound judgment and restraint, while adhering to the established protocols for escalation.

The Demonstration Response Team (DRT) led by the Division of Student Affairs is composed of UC Merced staff and provides on-the-ground, real-time support to students during demonstrations and spontaneous protests. DRT members prioritize student well-being and freedom of expression by engaging with students directly and offering guidance to de-escalate conflicts. They undergo regular training on policies, protocols, and the complexities of protest management to ensure preparedness. This team-centric approach emphasizes communication, connection to campus leadership, and alignment with a student-centered framework that prioritizes academic, personal, and professional success. Together, the POG and DRT are committed to fostering a supportive and safe environment for free expression.

A. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs – Acting on Behalf of Chancellor:

Brief Chancellor on all protest activity on University Property

Set expectations for monitoring and managing the event

Establish and ensure training of Demonstration Response Team (DRT)

Designate appropriate individual as Chancellor's representative "on the ground" to event organizers/protest leaders and law enforcement

Ensure appropriate and effective communication between event organizers/protesters, senior administrators, and law enforcement

Appoint or designate mediator as appropriate

Make decisions regarding police action against protesters on the property of UC Merced, except in exigent or emergency situations where the police are required to act immediately to prevent imminent and substantial harm to persons or property

B. Division of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs:

Direct personal communication with Students regarding interpretation of policies, expectations, academics, Student discipline, and general guidance provided by the UC Merced Principles of Community

Monitor mental and physical health of Students

Identify and communicate health, safety, security and academic needs of Students to the POG

Communicate with parents and Student caregivers as appropriate

Appoint Student Affairs spokesperson for media interviews, if appropriate, in consultation with the Division of External Relations

Provide planning guidance to Students proposing assembly, protest or demonstration activities

Designate one or more "on the ground" liaisons through the Demonstration Response Team if Students are primarily involved in the protest

C. Division of Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost

Direct communication with academic appointees regarding all appropriate aspects of their involvement in assemblies or protests, interpretation of policies and academic discipline

Initiate educational opportunities involving academic appointees, when appropriate, around issues of protest

Communicate with the Office of the Chancellor all recommendations to alter daily campus business as usual, to facilitate the immediate needs of the Students and academic appointees regarding the issues of protest or the safety of the campus

Appoint academic spokesperson for media interviews, if appropriate, in consultation with the Division of External Relations

May designate one or more “on the ground” liaisons if academic appointees or instructional staff are primarily involved in the protest

D. Office of Human Resources:

Direct communication with Employees and labor union representatives regarding interpretation of policies, expectations, Employee discipline and general guidance related to assemblies or protests

Monitor mental and physical health of Employees

Identify and communicate health, safety and security needs of Employees to the POG

Designate one or more “on the ground” liaisons if staff are primarily involved in the protest

E. Division of External Relations:

Develop communications/media strategy and news points

Recommend and provide oversight of all media outlets, interviews, releases and press conferences

Monitor news coverage and social media to provide real-time feedback to decision-makers

Designate official event videographer, if appropriate

F. Office of Facilities Management:

Provide facilities support as identified by POG including but not limited to:

Sanitation and trash receptacles and pick up

Lighting

Building-access control

Grounds maintenance and irrigation control

Signage

Facility maintenance

Safety, health and security equipment needs

Transportation and parking needs

G. Offices of Fire and Building Safety & Environmental Health and Safety:

Monitor and provide guidance for meeting the fire, health and safety needs during sustained protests

H. Chancellor's Office – Chief of Staff:

Provide communication to governmental entities as appropriate, in coordination with the Office of University Communications

Identify independent community observers

Provide direct communication with the UC Office of the President

I. Department of Public Safety:

Provide continuous and appropriate levels of security for the safety of all involved people and UC property

Develop Police Operations Plan, approved by the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, and provide to POG

Ensure all on and off-campus responding law-enforcement personnel are thoroughly briefed on the chancellor's authority and the approved Police Operations Plan

Identify one UC Merced police official responsible for giving an order to use force prior to deployment and establish direct line of communication with the Chancellor's on the ground representative

As needed, and upon the directive of the Chancellor or designee, activate the POG Operations Center and provide 24/7 staffing for the center to monitor the event and coordinate communications and response

Provide proactive planning guidance to affiliates if requested

Identify staffing needs and proactively request appropriate levels of staffing from UC campuses, CSU campuses, CHP, local law enforcement agencies, fire and EMS when appropriate for the safety, security and timely response of or to the needs of the community

Provide violence-prevention education and advocacy support as appropriate

Establish, if necessary, field incident command post and communicate the location to the POG

Assist in identifying Non-Affiliates participating in a sustained or encampment protest

AFTER-ACTION REPORTING

The office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will compile an after-action report to be made available to the Chancellor, Protest Oversight Group and UC Office of the President as needed to facilitate process improvement. A summary of observations and recommendations from the neutral observers, if applicable, must be included in the after-action report. Any Student or Employee disciplinary actions arising from assembly/protest activity will be included in the after-action report.

APPENDIX 2 – PROTEST/DEMONSTRATION EVENT PROPOSAL FORM

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Protest/Demonstration Event Proposal Form

Prior to sponsoring a peaceful assembly, the sponsoring organization, whether affiliated or not affiliated with UC Merced, is encouraged to prepare a written proposal for the event at least 48 hours in advance of any activity and submit it to the Office of Student Involvement (OSI). Separate online forms may be completed for affiliates and Non-Affiliates, found on the OSI website under the policy section: https://studentinvolvement.ucmerced.edu/policies. OSI is located in Granite Pass 174 and can be reached by email at: **studentinvolvement@ucmerced.edu**

Sponsoring organizations are encouraged to give OSI notice further in advance where possible, depending on the scale of the event. OSI will coordinate with other campus administrative units, including the Divisions of the Chancellor, the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost, Offices of Facilities Management, Public Safety and the Protest Oversight Group, as necessary. Estimates of costs related to planned events, including room reservations, security costs, and IT and facilities support are available through Hospitality Services, UC Merced Police Department, the Office of Information Technology and Facilities Management, respectively.

The proposal should include the following information to the extent available:

1. Proposed date of the event:
2. Proposed location of the event:
3. Proposed start and end time:
4. Estimated number of participants:
5. Security requirements:
6. Proposed use of sound amplification:
7. Proposed signage:
8. If the proposed event includes a march, the sponsoring group should attach a proposed route.
9. Name of the Representative:
10. Phone Number or email:

Note: Any use of amplified sound on campus must be approved in advance by OSI. Please complete form online, or email this information to studentinvolvement@ucmerced.edu