

Statement on yesterday's events on UNC campus

Town Council members in both Carrboro and Chapel Hill are aware of the arrests of peaceful protestors on UNC's campus yesterday morning. We strongly condemn this overreaction by the UNC administration. Chapel Hill and Carrboro Police were not involved in this action. We, the undersigned, believe that, in taking this unnecessary step, UNC administration created an environment that inevitably resulted in an escalation of force, including the use of pepper spray against its own students. This use of aggressive police tactics against students and community members invites aggressive responses, and only serves to escalate an already tense situation.

Moving forward, we strongly urge UNC to abide by the recently published [guidance](#) from the ACLU to University leaders designed to protect the free speech and academic freedom of all involved. Specifically, the ACLU offered the following guardrails:

1. Schools must not single out particular viewpoints for censorship, discipline, or disproportionate punishment.
2. Schools must protect students from targeted discriminatory harassment and violence, but may not penalize people for taking sides on the war in Gaza, even if expressed in deeply offensive terms.
3. Schools can announce and enforce reasonable content-neutral time, place, or manner policies on protesting activity, but they must leave ample room for students to express themselves. These rules must be applied consistently and without regard to viewpoint.
4. Schools must recognize that armed police on campus can endanger students and are a measure of last resort.
5. Schools must resist the pressures placed on them by politicians seeking to exploit campus tensions.

We stand ready to work with the University to ensure the safety of all students and community members as they exercise their right to free speech and peaceful protest.

We additionally urge DA Nieman to dismiss the charges against all those arrested and to prioritize restorative justice rather than punitive measures. UNC students should not face penalties - or violence - for peacefully engaging in protected free speech.

Signed,

Theo Nollert, Chapel Hill Town Council

Melissa McCullough, Chapel Hill Town Council

Paris Miller-Foushee, Chapel Hill Town Council

Karen Stegman, Chapel Hill Town Council

Danny Nowell, Carrboro Town Council

Jason Merrill, Carrboro Town Council

Catherine Fray, Carrboro Town Council

Eliazar Posada, Carrboro Town Council