

Message to the campus community about 'Occupy Cal'

By [Public Affairs](#) | NOVEMBER 10, 2011



To the Extended UC Berkeley Community:

As you know, yesterday an effort was made to establish an encampment on Sproul Plaza, by the "Occupy Cal" movement. This followed and marred the aftermath of an impressive, peaceful noontime rally on Sproul on behalf of public education, which was attended by some 3,000 participants and observers, including many campus leaders. We compliment the organizers and speakers for setting an example of peaceful protest and mobilization. As we informed the campus community earlier this week, we understand and share the concern of the Occupy movement about the extreme concentration of wealth in US society and the steady disinvestment in public higher education by California and other States.

We want to clarify our position on "no encampments" so you better understand why we do not allow this to occur on our campus. When the no-encampment policy was enacted, it was born out of past experiences that grew beyond our control and ability to manage safely. Past experiences at UC Berkeley, along with the present struggles with entrenched encampments in Oakland, San Francisco, and New York City, led us to conclude that we must uphold our policy.

This decision is largely governed by practical, not philosophical, considerations. We are not equipped to manage the hygiene, safety, space, and conflict issues that emerge when an encampment takes hold and the more intransigent individuals gain control. Our intention in sending out our message early was to alert everyone that these activities would not be permitted. We regret that, in spite of forewarnings, we encountered a situation where, to uphold our policy, we were required to forcibly remove tents and arrest people.

We want to thank our student leaders, faculty, and community members who worked hard to maintain a peaceful context last night. We have been in discussions with the ASUC, Graduate Assembly, and other student leaders who have provided a number of alternative proposals for working with the student protesters. One such

We call on the protesters to observe campus policy or, if they choose to defy the policy, to engage in truly non-violent civil disobedience and to accept the consequences of their decisions.

discussion led last night to our offering protesters the opportunity to use Sproul Plaza 24/7 for one week, as a venue for gathering and discussing the issues. However, we stipulated that no tents, stoves, and sleeping bags would be allowed. They could gather in Sproul for discussion, but not for sleeping. This was rejected by a vote of the mass of the protesters.

It is unfortunate that some protesters chose to obstruct the police by linking arms and forming a human chain to prevent the police from gaining access to the tents. This is not non-violent civil disobedience. By contrast, some of the protesters chose to be arrested peacefully; they were told to leave their tents, informed that they would be arrested if they did not, and indicated their intention to be arrested. They did not resist arrest or try physically to obstruct the police officers' efforts to remove the tent. These protesters were acting in the tradition of peaceful civil disobedience, and we honor them.

We regret that, given the instruction to take down tents and prevent encampment, the police were forced to use their batons to enforce the policy. We regret all injuries, to protesters and police, that resulted from this effort. The campus's Police Review Board will ultimately determine whether police used excessive force under the circumstances.

We call on the protesters to observe campus policy or, if they choose to defy the policy, to engage in truly non-violent civil disobedience and to accept the consequences of their decisions.

We ask supporters of the Occupy movement to consider the interests of the broader community—the tens of thousands who elected not to participate in yesterday's events. We urge you to consider the fact that there are so many time-tested ways to have your voices heard without violating the one condition we have asked you to abide by.

Robert J. Birgeneau, Chancellor

George Breslauer, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

Harry LeGrande, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



Tapping history to make sense of today



Chinese students test the waters of free speech



As nation honors Dr. King, #BlackLivesMatter renews the...



Sociologist dubs police killings ‘the other capital...