



Dear Colleagues,

We acknowledge receipt of your petition and recognize your collective effort in articulating the principles of free speech and academic freedom that are integral to our institution. These are principles that we share.

Your letter underscores the importance of upholding our fundamental values, especially in times of societal upheaval and uncertainty. We commend your dedication to fostering an environment where diverse perspectives can be freely expressed and respectfully debated.

As implied by your letter, it is particularly important to acknowledge the distinction between speech and action.

The thirteen-day encampment, which began in the quad between the Cato College of Education and the College of Health and Human Services before moving in front of Fretwell and Cato Hall, began before any attempt to dialogue with the University and violated multiple reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions designed to enable all of our faculty, students, and staff to share our campus and equally exercise their rights.

We made multiple overtures to individuals associated with the protest to open a conversation about their concerns. We dedicated University personnel from every division to remain near the encampment to ensure protestors were aware of our policies, that protest activities did not infringe on the rights of those who were not protesting, and that they remained safe. And, we exhaustively researched and compiled resources in response to the protestors' written "demands."

In spite of our best efforts, this past weekend the misconduct of the protestors escalated significantly:

- While acknowledging that erecting structures on campus violated law and policy, the protestors established more tents and perimeter fencing.
- Despite being told about noise limits designed to prevent disruption to educational activities, they used megaphones on the steps of Fretwell while final exams were taking place.
- They were reminded not to tamper with or deface campus property, yet they manipulated the irrigation system, hung banners, flags, and signs on buildings and monuments, and spray painted graffiti on the walls in Storrs.
- They were told in writing of building access policies and still students and faculty abused their access privileges and provided unaffiliated, community individuals unfettered entry to locked University buildings after hours, presenting a substantial safety risk to University personnel and property.

These actions are not forms of expression; they are forms of exclusion prohibiting full enjoyment of our campus by the diverse community we serve.

In short, the decision to disperse the encampment was a last resort and was made only after protestors demonstrated through action, not speech, extreme indifference to the rights and safety of the University community. We are grateful the situation was resolved peacefully, with only one detainment. While UNC Charlotte Police removed 32 tents, there were only 14 individuals present, many of whom were not students. The dispersal uncovered various concerning items, including:

- knives,
- box cutters,
- a collection of baseball-sized rocks, and
- a mattress that was used to collect and store feces.

The damage to UNC Charlotte property is estimated in the tens of thousands of dollars, which pales in comparison to the cost of University resources and staff time poured into supporting the encampment over the past two weeks.

With that said, we affirm our commitment to providing a robust intellectual environment that values social and cultural diversity and free expression. We also affirm our commitment to enforce our policies without regard to the content of that expression. By addressing the policy violations committed by the encampment, we have preserved the right to do the same if and when groups with hateful, offensive, or discriminatory messages choose to express themselves on our campus. We will continue to work hard to allow all individuals and groups to express themselves peacefully, and to hold all individuals and groups accountable for actions that infringe upon the rights of others. That includes any actions that unreasonably interfere with the right of our graduating students and their loved ones to fully enjoy our commencement ceremonies.

We appreciate your understanding and support as we navigate these complex issues and work to uphold the principles of free speech and academic freedom while maintaining a safe and inclusive learning environment for all.



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Chancellor



Jennifer Troyer
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic
Affairs