

**Subject:** Upholding a Respectful and Supportive Academic Environment  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at 12:12:43 PM Eastern Standard Time  
**From:** Interim Vice Chancellor and Provost John Liu  
**To:**

## Syracuse University

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to you to provide the latest information regarding the students who, yesterday, began a peaceful demonstration in Crouse-Hinds Hall.

First, I want to provide a factual overview of what has transpired over the last several hours.

- Since 12:30 p.m. yesterday afternoon, several University leaders have been working—in good faith—to engage these students in a productive and respectful manner.
- We communicated to our students that they are welcome to demonstrate in Crouse-Hinds Hall during the building’s hours of operation, which are 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- The students were advised, on multiple occasions, that they would need to move their demonstration to spaces on campus that are open past 9 p.m.
- We let our students know that failure to leave the building at 9 p.m. would result in a verbal warning, then a written warning, and that students who fail to comply with these warnings would be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for conduct charges, which could include an immediate interim suspension because of building occupation violations.
- We offered alternative options to our students so they could continue their protests.
- They were invited to continue their demonstration overnight in Bird Library, which is open 24 hours, and then return to Crouse-Hinds Hall in the morning when the building reopened. We also offered to store their

personal items in the building overnight so they wouldn't have to move it to another space on campus. They declined the invitation.

- Only the students who failed to comply with exiting the building once it closed for the evening were referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for violating the [Campus Disruption Policy](#).
- Students are free to leave the building at any time. In fact, they have been asked, on multiple occasions, to leave the building. Any claim that students are being held against their will is patently false.
- **To be clear: no students are being suspended for protesting, but for violations of the building occupation policy.**
- Students who were issued an interim suspension notice and live in a campus residence hall or South Campus apartment may remain in their campus residence and use campus dining centers.

As Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Keith A. Alford and Vice President for the Student Experience Rob Hradsky shared last night, a concerted effort has been made to address the commitments we made to the University community last semester. Many of you have invested countless hours in this work, despite your teaching loads, scholarly activity and other service to the University. I thank you for the many ways you contribute to our University—inside and outside the classroom. And, I urge you to visit [syracuse.edu/commitments](https://syracuse.edu/commitments) regularly, which lists the tangible action that has been taken to date.

My team and I have been in close contact with your deans, providing them updates in real time. The latest updates were 10:15 p.m. last night, and 8:30 a.m. this morning. They will continue to communicate with you regularly about important developments and offer school/college-specific communications and engagement opportunities. You may have ideas for these opportunities based on your personal experience and academic expertise. I ask that you bring these ideas to your deans or to my office, so that we can all benefit from your knowledge and experience to uphold a respectful and supportive academic environment.

We may experience some challenging moments in the classroom. I have tremendous faith in your ability, as faculty, to navigate these challenges in a manner that demonstrates the values of dialogue, dignity, respect and a positive academic experience for all of our students. I thank you, in

advance, for the work that I know you will be doing as you teach and mentor.

This work will continue in the days, weeks and months ahead, and likely, long after many of us have left this University. I ask for your continued support as we make urgent, tangible and lasting change.

I will continue to provide updates. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions.

Sincerely,

John Liu  
Interim Vice Chancellor and Provost

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**Syracuse University**

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