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Demonstration Guidelines ^[1]



Rights and Responsibilities

All undergraduate and graduate students have a right to demonstrate on university premises. While university policies regarding demonstrations are content-neutral, the university necessarily reserves the right to limit, disallow or disband an event which incites immediate, violent action or represents a clear and present danger to the campus community, or if for any reason of time, place, or manner of behavior, the demonstration materially disrupts classwork or other university business, involves a substantial disorder, or invades of the rights of others.

University Policies and Regulations

Demonstrators entering campus buildings to conduct orderly and peaceful demonstrations may not enter or occupy rooms or offices; obstruct entry, exit, or restrict the free movement of persons; block hallways, doorways, stairs or doors of university facilities; materially interrupt or interfere with university business functions, or remain in buildings after the close of regular hours of operation.

For safety and security reasons, demonstrators are not allowed to enter residence halls; private offices; laboratories; research facilities; spaces where classes or private meetings are being held or immediately scheduled to be held; libraries; facilities or areas containing valuable or sensitive materials, collections, equipment, records protected by law or by existing university policy such as educational records, student-related or personnel-related records, or financial records; emergency facilities or any facilities housing communication systems, security, utilities, or other facilities or services vital to the business functions of the university.

Demonstrators can engage in legal activities that do not violate other's constitutional rights or harm property. Any demonstration that violates any university policy may be discontinued, either at the direction of the administrator (or his/her designee) of the university unit administratively responsible for the space in which the demonstration is occurring or at the direction of the University of Massachusetts Police Department (UMPD). If a Dispersal Order is read by UMPD, demonstrators must comply with instructions and leave the immediate area. Blocking entry to or free exit from buildings, impeding or obstructing others' free movement, engaging in harassing behavior, or inciting immediate, violent action that represents a clear and present danger to the campus community is prohibited under the Code of Student Conduct. Information on the types of behaviors that are considered 'inciting' are found in the [Guidelines for Acceptable Fan Behavior](#) ^[2].

Counter-Demonstrations

A demonstration or event on campus may invite the presence of opposing views. When these occasions arise, all parties have a right to expression that must not be obstructed. In the interest of community safety and protection of rights, the University may designate a separate demonstration area for counter-demonstrators. As with demonstrations, counter-demonstrations must not infringe upon others' rights to engage in peaceful assembly, the free exchange of ideas, or interfere with the rights of others to make use of campus facilities or attend university functions. This includes, but is not limited to, not damaging, defacing, marking, altering, or interfering with signs, tables or exhibits, or other items posted or displayed by others.

Off Campus Student Protests

Students protesting off campus have the same First Amendment rights and are subject to the same laws as everyone else. This means that students may organize, protest, and advocate on off campus public property so long as the speech, expression or conduct is not obscene, lewd, libelous or slanderous, does not incite students to destroy property or inflict injury upon any person, or does not cause substantial disruption to the operations of businesses.

The Code of Student Conduct applies to students on and off campus. Accordingly, conduct such as threats to harm another person, inciting imminent violence, or destruction of property can lead to arrest and/or disciplinary action. The First Amendment also does not protect civil disobedience—nonviolent unlawful conduct undertaken intentionally as a form of protest (e.g. participating in a “die-in” that blocks traffic on a street). Protest actions that violate criminal law (e.g., trespassing or disorderly conduct) and/or the Code of Conduct and be disciplined under either or both systems.

International students with visas, students with green cards, and undocumented students should talk to an immigration attorney or Student Legal Services about their rights and responsibilities prior to engaging in protest actions.

Ensuring a Productive Demonstration

Students planning demonstrations should read key policies and consult with [Student Engagement and Leadership](#) ^[3] staff (413-545-3600). SEL will assist all, students, student groups, and student organizations planning to host demonstrations or rallies. In addition, it is strongly encouraged to include the UMPD early in the planning process. This allows any potential safety issues to be addressed and for organizers to create safety and security procedures. Know Your Rights Training conducted by the [Student Legal Services Office](#) ^[4] (413-545-1995), and the University Police Department can help ensure that organizers and participants have an advanced understanding of their rights and responsibilities. At times, UMPD officers may be present at a demonstration to ensure the safety of all participants and provide a more immediate response in the event of an emergency.

Organizers are strongly encouraged to inform attendees of the Code of Conduct and consequences for failure to adhere to its expectations. To support overall demonstration coordination and safety for participants, organizers should have at least one representative present throughout the demonstration. Be aware that some participants may have physical challenges that require assistance. [Disability Services](#) ^[5] can provide advice on accommodating participants with disabilities or mobility challenges. Contact 413-545-0892 for more information.

Note: Non-university organizations may use campus property for demonstrations only at the discretion of the University. Contact Facilities and Campus Services to request space through the [Land Use Request form](#) ^[6] 413-545-8000.

Center for Education Policy & Advocacy (CEPA) believes that education is essential to effective organizing. Education also allows students to acquire the skills to engage in political organizing on campus. CEPA offers various trainings and workshops for students and to any group on campus that submit a request. Contact CEPA to submit a [CEPA training request form](#) ^[7] 413-545-0355.

The University of Massachusetts Police Department's (UMPD) role is to ensure the campus community's safety. UMPD supports community members to exercise guaranteed rights and is committed to working with students, student groups, and student organizations to provide education and consultation on University policies, applicable laws, and safety and security procedures. The UMPD Community Outreach Officer is available to meet with students to discuss issues and concerns that may arise before or after a demonstration. If there is a complaint regarding an alleged impropriety by UMPD, submit a citizen complaint form. UMPD officers who are exceptionally helpful and supportive can be commended by submitting a commendation form. For more information contact the [UMPD](#) ^[8] 413-545-2121.

Source URL: <https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/guidelines-student-demonstrations>

Links

- [1] <https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/guidelines-student-demonstrations>
- [2] <https://www.umass.edu/stuaf/responsiblefans/index.html>
- [3] https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/get-involved/student_engagement
- [4] <https://www.umass.edu/siso/>
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