

Short Campus Simulations

The following hypothetical situations are adapted from recent events at American universities.

Simulation 1: In November, students at Sandhill University began a sit-in at a campus building after racist graffiti was found. The graffiti sparked larger issues regarding racism and prejudice on campus. In addition, there were reports that a racist manifesto was anonymously sent via “AirDrop” to unsuspecting students. Unclear communication from the administration and campus safety only heightened student fear. The sit-in, in which participants used the online hashtag #NotAgainSU, started with about 50 black students but tripled at times, as increasingly diverse students joined in. In the beginning, the administration took a tough stance, issuing interim suspensions for 30 students after they were warned (suspensions were later rescinded) and campus police blocked food and clothes from entering the building. Protestors have continued to express their frustrations outside of the sit-in, and even shut down a city block in protest. In a protest spanning two city blocks, students chanted “No justice! No peace! No racist police!” In response, the administration has worked with students to meet some of their demands. In one demand, students called for resignations of DPS (the campus police department) officials and formal investigations of DPS. But at the moment, the sit-in continues and #NotAgainSU protestors have started to receive national attention.

Framing question: How should administrators respond to this situation?

Simulation 2: Over the past few weeks, tensions between mainland China and Hong Kong have spilled over to US universities. At one university, a flyer posted in a campus building that raised awareness about Hong Kong protests was defaced with the message “trash teenagers,” a term used by Chinese-government social media. And just a few days ago, 20 student protestors — mostly international students from mainland China — gathered in a lecture that featured pro-democracy activists from Hong Kong. The student protestors held up China’s flag and following the event, two students stood up to sing the Chinese national anthem. In another incident, an international student (from Hong Kong) who expressed pro-Hong Kong views on social media faced threatening comments from Chinese classmates, including a comment that any opponents of China “must be executed.” The student reported the threatening comments to campus administrators. There are further issues with the suppression of free speech on campuses. For example, a recent report from an international NGO has warned that Chinese students may remain silent in their classrooms out of fear their comments will be reported to Chinese authorities by other students. According to the China director of the international NGO, “Schools need to get very clear about these problems and they need to get policies to respond to them.”

Framing question: What policies should schools consider to ensure student safety/well-being and to protect free speech on campus?

Simulation 3: Hundreds of demonstrators occupied a city intersection near the University of San Clemente's main entrance. The protest is the culmination of months of unrest and a strike led by teaching assistants and graduate students who say they can't afford to live in the area on their current union-negotiated wages. According to the university, approximately half of San Clemente's 750 graduate student instructors were involved in the strike. During the third day of the protest, 17 people were arrested by campus police. The university police did not immediately confirm any arrests or citations but instead forwarded all requests to the university's public affairs office. According to a statement from the university spokesperson, "Officers repeatedly tried to de-escalate the situation and made clear that blocking this major roadway had to stop or it would lead to arrest," but "Demonstrators locked arms, sat in the roadway, and refused to move back onto the university field." According to local reporters, one graduate student's face was visibly bloodied and bruised and secondhand reports of student injuries have quickly spread on social media. Several students have blamed campus police for their injuries. In response to allegations of campus police use of force, the UCSC spokesperson said, "We are aware of many unsubstantiated rumors being spread on social media. Anyone who has a complaint about police conduct can submit a report online and the department will review following standard procedures." But the graduate student association president commented that, "Instead of taking our demands seriously and actually delivering on them, campus administrators are spending money busing in police from out of town to brutalize and arrest students."

Framing question: How should campus administrators work with campus police? How should campus administrators "frame" the situation?