LEADING A DIVIDED CAMPUS:
Ideas and Illustrations

An Initiative of the Divided Community Project
The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law
Suggested citation:
Divided Community Project, Leading a Divided Campus: (2nd ed. 2024) Ideas and Illustrations, https://go.osu.edu/campusbridge

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- Symbols and Public Spaces amid Division: Practical Ideas for Community and University Leaders (2021)
- A Practical Guide to Planning Collaborative Initiatives to Advance Racial Equity (2nd ed. 2022)
- Identifying a Community Spirit (2019)
- Divided Communities and Social Media: Strategies for Community Leaders (2nd ed. 2020)
- Key Considerations for Leaders Facing Community Unrest: Effective Problem-Solving Strategies That Have Been Used in Other Communities (2nd ed. 2020)
- Planning in Advance of Community Unrest (2nd ed. 2020)
- A Checklist for Extending Support to Other Students (2023)

Support for this guide was provided by:
The AAA-ICDR Foundation, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, The Ohio State University Mershon Center for International Security Studies, The JAMS Foundation.
INTRODUCTION

Students depend on their leaders to appreciate their viewpoints, support them, and keep them safe, all while engaging in a shared educational enterprise that is designed to present challenging learning experiences. They depend on leaders to set expectations and apply practices that promote learning and engagement but discourage behavior that undermines their sense of safety and well-being. During divisive moments, students especially appreciate this leadership.

A theme of this guide is that it is urgent for college and university leaders to expand their efforts to support students and promote respectful treatment of each other, as they react to the violence occurring in the Middle East. With a series of hate incidents against students, violence has now also arrived closer to home for students sharing an identity with both Gaza and Israel. Students are affected as well by the surge of harassment and hate crimes against Israeli, Jewish, Palestinian, and Arab people nationwide. They have been doxed for speaking out in ways that have led even to canceled employment offers. As they check their phones multiple times a day, they are exposed to the dramatic escalation in the number of angry posts, many of which contain explicitly violent language. In other words, students are mourning, angry, uncertain, and afraid. Most do not believe that their college and university leaders are doing enough to support them.

Still, campus leaders’ decisions will not be easy ones. The violence in the Middle East presents issues that have not arisen on campuses recently. As Chancellor Carol Christ of the University of California – Berkeley said, “This situation is so different from other situations of controversy in that it has really split the student body…. there is deep, deep division on the campus.” While some students seek more protection, others are upset that administrators are interfering with their rights to express themselves through protest. Administrators must often find the narrow thread between institutional values of both a welcoming environment and rigorous free speech and also between legal requirements to protect free speech/assembly and to take action when students’ well-being is in question.

Taking these tensions into account, this guide offers promising ideas for college and university leaders to broaden and deepen their support of students and to reinforce norms of humane behavior in the midst of vigorous disagreements. It begins with an executive summary that can be viewed as an action checklist. The chapters keyed to each number on the summary then develop each element in depth, including sharing illustrations of effective practices by college and university leaders. The appendix includes additional resources, identifying groups that sponsor dialogue, offer trainings for staff, or provide mediating services. Because of the role played by the evolving law on free speech rights and civil rights, campus leaders will want to consult with legal counsel on that as well; this guide does not provide guidance on the legal issues. In addressing these vital challenges, the guide draws on the experience of educators, mediators, and communication experts from across the nation and the direct input of those listed in the Acknowledgments at the end of the guide.
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The steps listed in this executive summary begin when campus administrators become first aware of a concern, conflict, or divisive incident. This summary of steps also addresses responses to hate incidents that deeply affect the campus community. The steps apply whether the incident occurred on campus or unfolded elsewhere but deeply affected students, as with the violence in the Middle East. Leaders, and those working with them, will sometimes need to address the first three tasks below in a few hectic minutes or hours. Otherwise, false narratives may take hold on social media, and students may be frightened, engage in speech or conduct that exacerbates the situation, and begin saying to each other that administrators do not care about them. The applicability of the ideas will vary depending on the moment, as there are times when emotions are too raw for discussions about differences to be productive and times when they are just right.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT: Become engaged right away, once you learn about a divisive issue likely to affect the campus community, such as contested issues on campus, a hate incident, or events in the world outside the university. Ask other campus leaders to do the same (Section 1 contains a checklist for those you ask to help in reaching out). Reach out to learn how each community on campus is affected and responding. Assess the nature and intensity of their differing reactions and needs.

SECTION 2 DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS: Announce to the campus community what has occurred on the campus and the implications—in a tone that is neither routine nor alarmist but rather an expression of heartfelt care for the well-being of students. Include, as pertinent:
- the details that the campus community urgently desires to know as they assess their safety and well-being.
- for hate incidents, a focus on and explanation of the harm caused and violation of norms, but trying to avoid augmenting the perpetrator’s notoriety.
- where students can check to learn new details as they emerge and where they can report hate incidents.
- those you have consulted and their reactions.
- actions to assure safety for members of the campus community.
- affirmation of free speech/assembly while underscoring the university’s core values and behavior expectations, including regard for others’ need to be respected, feel safe, and express themselves, and condemnation of identity-group hate-based targeting.
- how you will let them know further developments and decisions, describing the values and opinions that will be taken into account in making additional decisions.
SECTION 3

SELECT THE MESSENGERS AND MODE FOR COMMUNICATIONS: Ask those persons trusted by each affected campus stakeholder group to add their voices to yours on the content noted just above or quote them. Trust is difficult to achieve in a crisis; reach for those who have developed it over time. Use formats (press conference, town hall, email, social media, etc.) that together connect with multiple audiences. Counsel faculty and staff on how to reach out to students and each other on an individual basis to offer support.

SECTION 4

ENHANCE STUDENT SUPPORT: Form teams of decisionmakers and experts to do the following quickly, implementing each when it fits the climate and emotions:

• Augment resources as necessary to assure that students are and feel safe and are able to participate in their educational programs.
• Encourage and guide students to extend individual support to friends (Section 4 contains a checklist for students to use).
• Make timely suggestions to faculty, staff, residence hall and student leaders, faith leaders, parents, and community groups on how they might reach out to students and each other to extend support.
• Organize vigils in safe locations if students are mourning.
• Provide trusted places for students to vent.
• Create options for students who want to contribute, such as participating in de-escalation teams or preparing humanitarian aid, when feasible.
• Arrange mediators who can interface with those groups likely to ask the university to make changes.
• Take advantage of the “teachable moment” to offer training in skills and knowledge that will be useful in careers and helpful in the moment.
• Let students know what is permitted or prohibited under student codes and laws affecting demonstrations.
• Establish or refer to existing trusted reporting sites, counseling, reports to campus, and condemnation for hate incidents.
• Identify and prepare for likely future flash points that will affect students.
• Listen to students and message about these options constantly.
• Begin preparations to host student discussions of the underlying conflict, to be held when students are ready to listen across their differences, appreciate each other’s experiences, and begin to heal.

SECTION 5

PLAN JOINTLY WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACHES TO CROWD EVENTS AND HATE INCIDENTS: Consider what will be done in each crowd situation. Protocols with law enforcement can reflect shared understandings of what approaches and procedures should be used under various circumstances, should protests, disruptions, and hate incidents occur. Plans for crowd events will vary, depending on the range of goals among participants and the likelihood of violence. Arrange an emergency operations center that includes campus administrators with law enforcement to modify plans as an event unfolds. Do joint planning as well for the possibility of hate incidents. Once volatile events cease, university leaders can usefully organize staff, faculty, students, and other constituencies to take additional steps discussed in this guide, so that they can learn from an after-incident analysis, plan for future divisive situations, and repair fractures in campus communities to encourage reconciliation.
ASSessment

Become engaged right away, once you learn about a divisive issue likely to affect the campus community, such as contested issues on campus, a hate incident, or events in the world outside the university. Ask other campus leaders to do the same. Reach out to learn how each community on campus is affected and responding. Assess the nature and intensity of their differing reactions and needs.

Why Take These Steps?
Checking with those affected, both the persons targeted and those who share an identity group with those persons and therefore might also be affected, as well as others in the community, can be valuable. It helps avoid adopting an understandable, though often erroneous, approach of making educated guesses about how events are impacting stakeholder groups based on your own reactions. Checking in and listening to those affected, and others, allows you to direct your first actions effectively, and it demonstrates that you are genuine in your efforts to understand the needs of affected students.

Prompted by the October 7 attacks and subsequent violence in Israel and Gaza, University of Wisconsin-Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin did an assessment of what students had experienced and the range, nature, and intensity of student emotions. She then incorporated those insights to shape this well-received communication to the campus community. It helped students recognize that she had listened and was committed to promoting understanding among the students:

"In separate conversations I have had over the last several weeks with Palestinian, Arab and Muslim students and Jewish and Israeli students, some have told me that they have experienced fear on our campus, or in Madison, based on their identities. Jewish and Israeli students have told me about having feelings of unease wearing a Star of David necklace or kippah. And Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students have shared similar discomfort with wearing a keffiyeh or hijab. And some in each group told me that they have experienced worse – people calling them names, or, in one instance, throwing things at them. Students have expressed feelings that some of those who disagree with them vehemently about politics have also ceased to see or recognize their fundamental humanity."viii

Careful listening can also lead to university administrators, faculty, and staff taking actions that are responsive to what the students seek and, given the level of emotions and their impact on students’ well-being, are situated to do. In a memo to the Cardozo law faculty, following October 7, Dean Melanie Leslie used what she learned in her ongoing conversations with students to suggest an action that met the students’ expressed need:
"I spoke with a group of students...yesterday. Several mentioned how much it means to them when one of their classmates or a professor shows concern by simply asking how they are doing, but noted that this seldom happens. One student singled out [professor’s name] as a positive example, stating that [this professor] began class this week by taking a moment to acknowledge that students might be in distress and asking them to let her know if they were unprepared on any given day as a result. A few simple sentences had a profoundly positive impact. Please do what you can – very small gestures of kindness and empathy will make a very powerful difference."

**POSSIBLE STRATEGIES**

The personal conversations reflected in the statements by Chancellor Mnookin and Dean Leslie communicated a heartfelt concern for students, but leaders may be forced by the urgency of other duties to delegate the assessment to others. When delegating, it may be helpful to identify to the relevant staff the type of information that would be valued for shaping an informed response. You could begin by customizing the following checklist for those staff doing the assessment:
CHECKLIST FOR LISTENERS

Through an empathic and compassionate conversation, please listen for and report back on the topics listed below. Please take with you a list of campus and community resources that might be helpful to students or follow up with them afterward with these resources.

Listen for and make observations about:

For those who personally experienced an incident or conflict:

☐ Reactions, including feelings
☐ Intensity of their feelings
☐ Whether they feel safe
☐ Whether they feel comfortable continuing to participate in university/college activities
☐ Any support that we can provide
☐ What they are seeking
☐ Comments regarding others who have been affected
☐ What they wish other community members would understand about the situation
☐ How they want to be involved, if at all, in developing the university’s/college’s response to the situation

For those who share an identity group with those who are personally experiencing an incident or conflict:

☐ The same issues as above, plus: What, if any, ways they connect the current situation to something that happened historically on this campus or elsewhere

For those who are trusted by each portion of the campus:

☐ What are they hearing in terms of students’ emotions, support sought, personal and academic plans, requests for support from the college/university
☐ What they think will happen next
☐ Whether they agree with at least some of what the university/college leaders express and will make statements, either publicly or to friends, that reflect that agreement.
☐ If they are willing to speak out also or be quoted by the president on topics of agreement or open to joining with the president in speaking out
A similar checklist might be used for those following social media typically used by students:

**Identify relevant keywords and hashtags:**
Monitor social media platforms for keywords and hashtags related to the community conflict or crisis, as well as general terms related to stress, anxiety, and mental health concerns.

**Track sentiment:**
Analyze the sentiment of social media posts to identify students who may be experiencing negative emotions or distress due to the ongoing conflict.

**Engage with students:**
Reach out to students who are posting about their struggles or concerns, offering support and resources to help them cope with the situation.

**Monitor for warning signs:**
Look for posts that may indicate a student is in need of immediate help or intervention, such as posts expressing thoughts of self-harm or harm to others.

**Collaborate with campus resources:**
Work closely with campus mental health services, counseling centers, and other support services to ensure that students in need are connected with the appropriate resources.

**Provide regular updates:**
Keep students informed about the conflict and the resources available to them through social media and other communication channels.

**Review and update the monitoring strategy:**
Regularly review and update the social media monitoring strategy to ensure that it remains effective and relevant in addressing the needs of students during times of strife and conflict.

It can be useful to monitor changing emotions and reactions, needs, and plans over and over again.

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**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**
Leaders may be torn between conducting an assessment and getting a statement out quickly. By delegating in these urgent situations, they can accomplish both. In fact, it is critical that leaders do both. When time permits, the leader’s engagement in making the assessment will humanize the communications to the campus community.
When a divisive conflict or hate incident occurs, announce to the campus community what occurred and the implications. The tone of the message is significant: hopefully, it is neither routine nor alarmist but rather an expression of heartfelt care for the well-being of students. Include, as pertinent, in initial and subsequent communications:

- the details that the campus community urgently desires to know as they assess their safety and well-being.
- for hate incidents, a focus on and explanation of the harm caused and violation of norms but trying to avoid augmenting the perpetrator’s notoriety.
- where they can check to learn new details as they emerge and where they can report hate incidents.
- those you have consulted and their reactions.
- actions to assure safety for members of the campus community.
- affirming free speech/assembly while underscoring the university’s core values and behavior expectations, including regard for others’ need to be respected, feel safe, and express themselves and condemning identity-group hate based targeting.
- how you will let them know further developments and decisions, describing the values and opinions that will be taken into account in making additional decisions.

WHY TAKE THIS STEP?
Announcing what has occurred often reduces anxiety and increases trust in the administration’s transparency. An early communication may forestall false narratives before they take hold on social media, in class hallways, and dormitory lounges. This is a reasonable strategy even if a hurtful campus event is not yet generally known, for, at some point, it will become publicized campus-wide. At that point, previous nondisclosure risks that some students will interpret that silence as a cover-up attempt. Referencing who has been consulted and their reactions and concerns, all the while focusing on the harm it caused, helps some students feel heard and others understand the reactions of those persons directly affected or those sharing an identity group with them. The statement, importantly, can also frame the situation in terms of college/university values. A letter to the American University community from President Sylvia M. Burwell, as she communicated with her community regarding an incident involving the appearance of Nazi signs and statements in a university building, illustrates (with annotations added) this approach: x

The details that the campus community wants, quickly, even if they have not yet heard:
“Last night, swastikas and a Nazi slogan were graffitied on two room doors and in a bathroom in Letts Hall.”

Framing the situation by connecting campus values to the harm caused, in a tone of heartfelt concern:
“This hateful act of antisemitism is reprehensible. Jewish students live in both rooms where the doors were vandalized. When we are so deeply focused on our community of care — supporting each and every member of our community who is in pain and feeling scared and vulnerable — it is unacceptable that our Jewish community was targeted and harmed through this act. Hate speech will not be tolerated. It violates the values that define our community.”
Who has been consulted and what decisions are being made:
"We are supporting the students in the involved rooms... AUPD (American University Police Department) is thoroughly investigating this incident... Anyone found responsible will be subject to university policies and appropriate disciplinary actions."

How to report and what is being done about safety:
“If any member of the community has any information about the Letts Hall incident, please contact AUPD at 202-885-2999 or with the RAVE Guardian app, where anonymous tips can also be submitted. AUPD is operating with increased awareness across campus to support the safety of the community. Anyone who feels unsafe can call the AUPD emergency number at 202-885-3636, use the blue light emergency telephones on campus, or use the RAVE Guardian app.”

What values will govern and who will be consulted as more decisions are made:
“As we address this incident and the larger issues causing pain in many parts of our community, we are focused on supporting our community members, hearing their concerns, and working to ensure their safety... We will not waver in our focus on safety and support for our community.”

A similar illustration during the violence in the Middle East might reflect that hate incidents are proliferating amid current violence in the Middle East against Palestinian and Arab students as well. A horrifying shooting of three Palestinian-American students identified with the Palestinian cause by clothing and speech left one student paralyzed and their three universities deep in grief.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
Several situations present conflicting values and thus thorny strategy issues.

Which harmful acts should leaders condemn in a public fashion?
The tension on campus that results from actions or speech regularly present complex connections between cherished values that are conflicting: protecting the well-being of students colliding with supporting free speech and assembly. A potential standard for judging when to announce and ameliorate a hate incident might be the one announced in a November 2023 “Dear Colleague” letter from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights:

“Harassing conduct can be verbal or physical and need not be directed at a particular individual. OCR interprets Title VI to mean that the following type of harassment creates a hostile environment: unwelcome conduct based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics that, based on the totality of circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person’s ability to participate in or benefit from the recipient’s education program or activity. Schools must take immediate and effective action to respond to harassment that creates a hostile environment.”

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This standard—subjectively and objectively offensive plus so severe or pervasive that it adversely affects students’ ability to participate in or benefit from their educational program—represents a mandatory floor for engagement by leaders at those colleges and universities that receive federal funding and are thus bound by Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act. And it represents a reasonable approach for other institutions.

What should be included in the statement about the tensions between holding perpetrators accountable and not violating their Constitutionally-protected rights of free speech and assembly?

This tension presents a challenging situation. Sometimes students follow leaders at rallies in voicing a chant without understanding the historical context of the wording. Regrettably, that crowd chanting itself engenders fear among those who understand its context all too well. Leaders can address the fear and explain the reasons to students without necessarily disciplining them for it; the two issues can be distinct.

Some initial statements from leadership to the campus finesse this free speech versus accountability tension by using broad terms such as "unacceptable" rather than stipulating whether the act or speech violates the student code of conduct or the law. Reflecting such an approach, President Burwell, in her statement noted above, says, noncommittally, “Anyone found responsible will be subject to university policies and appropriate disciplinary actions.”

Another generally stated approach appeared in a statement to the Yale University community by President Peter Salovey in December 2023:

“Yale stands resolutely as a place that welcomes many beliefs, identities, views, and cultures, and we are unwavering in our devotion to free expression, open dialogue, and civil debate. Our right to free expression does not obviate our responsibility as colleagues and peers to one another. Yale aims to be a place where all students feel free to express their views inside and outside the classroom. Yale will not tolerate discrimination and harassment, including threats of violence, intimidation, or coercion.”

At some point, someone may ask what this general language means in terms of what conduct or speech will lead to discipline or prosecution or, comparably complex, whether speech will be stopped proactively.

Indiana University Provost Lauren Robel, a constitutional law scholar, faced a similar challenge in 2019 when students demanded the firing of a professor whose posts on his private social media account expressed “racist, sexist, and homophobic views.” She defended both free speech rights and students’ safety and well-being interests with the following statement to the IU community:

“Various officials at Indiana University have been inundated in the last few days with demands that he [the Professor] be fired. We cannot, nor would we, fire [him] for his posts as a private citizen, as vile and stupid as they are, because the First Amendment of the United States Constitution forbids us to do so. That is not a close call. Indiana University has a strong nondiscrimination policy, and as an institution adheres to values that are the opposite of [his] expressed values... If he acted upon his expressed views in the workplace to judge his students or colleagues on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, or race to their detriment, such as in promotion and tenure decisions or in grading, he would be acting both illegally and in violation of our policies and we would investigate and address those allegations... Moreover, in my view, students who are women, gay, or of color could reasonably be concerned that someone with [his] expressed views would not give them
a fair shake in his classes, and that his expressed biases would infect his perceptions of
their work. Given the strength and longstanding nature of his views, these concerns are
reasonable. Therefore, the Kelley School [of Business] is taking a number of steps to ensure
that students not add the baggage of bigotry to their learning experience: No student will
be forced to take [his] class... The Kelley School will provide alternatives... [he] will use
double-blind grading... If other steps are needed... Indiana University will take them. The
First Amendment is strong medicine, and works both ways. All of us are free to condemn
views that we find reprehensive... I condemn, in the strongest terms, [his] views on race,
gender, and sexuality... But my strong disagreement with his views—indeed, the fact that
I find them loathsome—is not reason for Indiana University to violate the Constitution of
the United States.” xv

In this statement, Provost Robel supported the Professor’s free speech rights but used a form of accountability –
public condemnation – that, combined with developing alternative classes or grading procedures, responded to student
interests in their ability to continue to participate in or benefit from their respective education program. Most of the IU
community accepted her approach.

Both parts of this tension between Free Speech and non-harassment are complex and subject to change through
evolving caselaw. Leaders can work with legal counsel, emphasizing in that interaction their desire or imperative to
publicly condemn reprehensible, even if not discipline-worthy, acts or speech and to explain to the campus community
how student interests are protected consistent with supporting robust speech.

Should the university/college take a position on the merits of an off-campus conflict that also divides the
campus community?

There is no easy answer to this compelling question. Considerations vary for public, private, and religion-affiliated
institutions. xvi Many public universities avoided weighing in on the merits of the violence in the Middle East, despite
demands from students and others to take a stand and, in some cases, pressures from donors. Instead, these university
leaders issued statements about the students’ situation – much like those quoted in this section. This institutional
posture became more controversial as student groups took positions on the fighting. Those institutions that have taken
positions on the Middle East violence, often private and some religiously-affiliated, also faced resistance from their communities and demands that they reverse course as casualties mounted. xvii

Kalamazoo College President Jorge Gonzalez explained on November 30, 2023 the decision not to take a position on who was right or wrong in the violence in a letter to the college community:

“In the past several weeks, I have received many conflicting heartfelt requests from members of our community calling on the College to make a statement regarding the horrifying conflict happening in the Middle East. Some are dismayed by the institution's silence, and I want to take a moment to explain why we do not take an institutional position on this, or any other, geopolitical event. Despite the growing expectation that colleges and universities take stands and choose sides in global matters. Kalamazoo College is, by its very nature, not a monolith, but a collection of individuals from across the country and around the globe. On geopolitical matters, it would be disingenuous to presume that the president or the administration of the College can speak to the beliefs and ideologies of every person on our campus and in our extended community. And with so much conflict and tragic loss of life occurring in areas all over the world, we could not possibly touch on them all, nor can we choose to speak out on some and ignore others. Our focus is on the campus community, where we can have the greatest and most meaningful effect – ensuring that our students, faculty and staff who are affected by the tragedies around the world receive support and care. It is also critical to uphold our educational mission, which values academic freedom and freedom of speech in the context of a diverse and complex world. Additionally, we emphasize that our beliefs – however deeply held, however strongly advocated – should never manifest as violence or harassment toward people of differing perspectives or identities...” xviii

Especially when emotions are raw, it may be worthwhile to ask an expert in the underlying conflict to review your potential communications and alert you to words that will lead some students to conclude that you have taken a side in the conflict, even if that was not your intent. Thus, in the midst of the Middle East violence, words such as “occupation” or "oppressor," for example, might be interpreted as mis-identifying or discounting one side.” xix

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Despite the important complexities described above, speaking to the campus community, and doing so quickly and frequently, is still a wise approach. Speaking out has the potential to calm anxieties, promote understanding among students, reinforce norms of humane treatment, communicate care when people are hurting, frame the issues for the campus, and defuse false narratives.
SECTION 3
SELECT THE MESSENGERS AND MODE FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Ask those persons trusted by each affected campus stakeholder group to add their voices to yours or quote them. Trust is difficult to achieve in a crisis; reach for those who have developed it over time. Use formats (press conference, town hall, email, social media, etc.) and approaches that together connect with multiple audiences.

WHY TAKE THESE STEPS?
Trust in institutional leaders often dissipates during a conflict. Many students isolate when they are afraid or they seek to avoid argument. Efforts by institutional leaders to persuade students to treat each other with respect and compassion are difficult to “land” effectively. Persuasion often requires repeated messaging from trusted persons that somehow penetrates the information fog. Thus, in addition to the usual challenges of reaching students who interact in different ways with campus life – undergraduate, professional, graduate, non-traditional students – both the need and challenges are greater during conflict.

University and college leaders can accomplish more by heightening their efforts to join with trusted voices and to use multiple modes of communication with frequency.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
Fortunately, there are illustrations of leaders whose communications effectively penetrated the trust barriers and reached the students who have turned their attention to information sources that reinforce their own views. These may spark ideas that fit other situations. In Section 4, we discuss the related strategy of asking faculty and staff to help.

Convening unlikely allies, scheduling joint events, adding visuals
People who disagree do, nonetheless, share some values and goals. When people see that, it helps to humanize their disagreements and may be surprising enough to gain their attention, particularly if captured in an interesting photo. A group of Brown University students, for example, organized and held a vigil within two weeks of the start of violence in Israel and Gaza. The Brown president, provost, and other faculty and staff joined in person. The vigil didn’t attract many students – 100 persons attended, according to a news report – but the university and a newspaper published a photo of the university leaders and faculty, known local community members, and clergy interspersed with the students, holding lit candles in the dark and observing a moment of silence. Both news sources reported the Brown University chaplain’s statement: “There’s a flame that burns in every human heart that’s capable of kindling love, even in moments when hatred, fear and division feel as pervasive as they have over the past eleven days.” A few weeks later, a Brown Palestinian-American student was shot and paralyzed while on vacation in Vermont in what is under investigation as a hate crime, and the Brown students again held a vigil. This time national news covered the vigil, and it included a protest, but was peaceful again.
**Combining voices on common values**

To increase the number of students who believe the message, campus leaders can ask trusted individuals to stand with them as they make a public announcement; issue individual but consistent, reinforcing statements simultaneously; or organize and execute a sequence of statements – all to convey that they agree on issues of basic safety and humane treatment, even as they disagree on other matters. Student leaders whose organizations hold conflicting views on the matter might be willing to issue a joint statement condemning hate incidents and violence. In a modification of the joint leader message approach, University of Wisconsin-Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin quoted an inter-faith statement in the opening letter to the campus community in November 2023:

“I am writing to share what is, to my mind, an extraordinarily thoughtful statement prepared by faith-based and community leaders who are the UW-Madison Center for Interfaith Dialogue’s Faith Advisory Council. In it, they name a tension we are feeling acutely on our campus right now: the responsibility to ensure the right to free speech while simultaneously acknowledging that certain forms of legally protected speech can cause significant emotional harm to the members of our community. The leaders, representing a wide range of faith traditions, urge us to ‘speak freely, but with humility,’ and to ‘act strongly, but do no harm.’ Whether or not you are a person of faith, I am grateful for this call and echo the sentiments of the message. These wise leaders remind us that ‘when passionate advocacy leads people to disregard the safety... of others, free speech can cause serious harm.’”

**Communicating with the people who talk to students**

Parents, alumni, community members, and journalists are in communications with students. Taking advantage of this broader audience, Yale University President Peter Salovey, issued a broadly addressed email just as students would be finishing fall semester 2023 finals and returning to their families. His statement described the on-campus hate incidents to date, what was being done both to support and protect students and to teach them in ways that promote understanding and respect, and how free speech is protected.

**Addressing what occurs on social media**

As students check their mobile phones multiple times a day, they may be looking at hateful social media posts about the conflict. Some posts may contain misinformation and disturbing images or headlines deigned to get clicks. Artificial intelligence permits rashes of divisive posts that may appear to be from fellow students, when they are actually generated elsewhere, even from offshore.

**Posting videos**

About 32% of young adults (aged 18 to 29) get their news from TikTok, a quadrupling from 2020 to 2023. To reach these students, the Campus Bridge Initiative has created language that campuses can use to record short videos, using their own students, to help students understand how to extend support to each other. The suggested posts will link to the checklist included in Section 4. Videos might be created to play on campus buses or in other places that students wait.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

This section may explain the dissonance between administrators who have carefully crafted the content of emails to the campus community and students who say that they have not heard from their leaders. Long emails may be the proverbial trees falling in a forest, heard by no one or at least unheard by students who gain news via their phones or social media. And trust dissipates during conflict. All of this underscores the importance of focusing not just on content but also on who issues the communication and how it is transmitted to each constituency – faith leaders, parents, dorm counselors, etc. – who affect support for students.
Form teams of decisionmakers and experts to do the following quickly after a divisive/hate incident, implementing each when it fits the climate and emotions:

- Augment resources as necessary to assure that students are and feel safe and are able to participate in their educational programs.
- Encourage and guide students to extend individual support to friends.
- Make timely suggestions to faculty, staff, residence hall and student leaders, faith leaders, parents, and community groups on how they might reach out to students and each other to extend support.
- Organize vigils in safe locations if students are mourning.
- Provide trusted places for students to vent.
- Create options for students who want to contribute, such as participating in de-escalation teams or preparing humanitarian aid, when feasible.
- Arrange mediators who can interface with those groups likely to ask the university to make changes.
- Take advantage of the “teachable moment” to offer training in skills and knowledge that will be useful in careers and helpful in the moment.
- Let students know what is permitted or prohibited under student codes and laws affecting demonstrations.
- Establish or refer to existing trusted reporting sites, counseling, reports to campus, and condemnation for hate incidents.
- Identify and prepare for likely future flash points that will affect students.
- Listen to students and message about these options constantly.
- Begin preparations to host student discussions of the underlying conflict, to be held when students are ready to listen across their differences, appreciate each other’s experiences, and begin to heal.

**WHY THIS MATTERS?**

Well-crafted leadership statements and references to counseling resources and safe spaces is constructive and may be enough in some situations, but as we write this, in the midst of violence in the Middle East, it is not. Seventy percent of students in one national poll said that their universities were not doing enough to support them, though it seems, anecdotally, that campus administrators have been working particularly hard to provide support for students. It is a moment to expand support – vastly.

The strategies suggested below reflect several assumptions, based on our collective experience. If students are feeling unsafe, addressing that, we assume, takes priority in terms of leadership actions. We assume that visible campus leadership support is calming and reassuring, but that people are most meaningfully supported by and can most comfortably vent and mourn with people they already trust – friends, professors and staff they interact with frequently, faith leaders, and family. In our experience, many students want to make a difference regarding a conflict – to provide humanitarian assistance, to advocate for a change in policy, to gain attention for a cause, or to help friends who are suffering. Going to the streets may constitute visible, public action to advance their goals, but it may also, in part, reflect frustration that they can do nothing else to help. Thus, we suggest that campus leaders can helpfully address their aspirations by holding vigils and creating ways, some listed below, for students to “do something.” We assume that anticipating flashpoints helps to have resources in place immediately. When people feel isolated, visible and frequent communications help reassure persons of their being valued members of the university community and may also correct false narratives on social media.
POSSIBLE STRATEGIES
Some strategies employed elsewhere may spark an idea.

Safety
A number of universities have recently added security and offered escorts. Yale President Peter Salovey took the additional step of telling students that he had expanded security forces, summarizing hate incidents that had occurred, and noting that he was staying in touch with local police concerning any threats or indications of trouble.xxix

Taking the other steps on this checklist may also contribute to student safety.

Encouraging students to extend support to each other
Students told the Divided Community Project that they were hesitant to reach out to classmates whose position on the Middle East violence they did not know, fearing that they could face an argument or an unwanted request to sign a petition. Some reported that they were mostly going to class and heading straight home. The Project worked with a group of law students studying negotiation to create this relatable checklist, which seems to give students encouragement and a few hints for extending support while avoiding the dreaded arguments:

Extending support to other students during divisive events: a few ideas
Transformative events - such as the violence in the Middle East - affect us deeply, yet unevenly. Whether it is a brief interaction in a class or student club meeting or when passing one another in the hallway, you can reach out to support a friend - even when your views differ from theirs. Here are some ideas to show support in brief one-on-one talks.

- **Think before you talk and then talk like a real person.** Remind yourself that the purpose for reaching out is to show support and empathy.

- **Be genuine when connecting with other students.** Let them know you value them as a person. There are no magic words; just be yourself when you reach out to check in. Acknowledge the situation and be supportive. (“I know there’s lots going on. It’s tough watching the news. How are you doing?”)

- **Show that you hear them without judging or entering into an argument.** (“I think I hear not only your sadness and concerns about the thousands of innocent lives lost but also apprehension about what happens next.” “So, with your connections to the region, you are feeling this with even more depth and urgency.”) If they try to persuade you to agree with their position, let them know that you’re focused on being a friend. (“There are some important arguments going on, but mostly I’m wondering how you’re doing in the midst of this awfulness.”)

- **If they are grieving a personal loss, express empathy.** (“How are you feeling?” “Losing a loved one is unimaginable. I am sorry for your loss. I am here if you want to talk.”) Sometimes you can let them know you care by just sitting with them for a while without saying anything.

- **If they express concern about their safety or well-being, offer to help locate and make an appointment with safety resources, counselors, those who will help them report, or other professionals on campus.** You might ask about their confidence or trust in available resources.

- **Think about ways to conclude the conversation.** Try to end on a positive note. Allow them to preserve self-esteem and leave them with the sense that you value them and want to be supportive in a difficult time. End the conversation after checking in, or, regrettably, if the discussion turns argumentative. (“Let’s stay in touch.” “Thanks for talking. This is a tough time.”)

- **Reaching out matters even if they are not interested.** The other person may not want to talk now, or at all. Respect their answer if they are not interested. (“I understand. If you want to talk later, let me know.”)

This checklist is for a student reaching out to another student. It might be useful for faculty and staff reaching out to support each other as well.xxxi
It may help to give students roleplay practice using such a list to build their skills and confidence. Colleges and universities may use this checklist ([posted online here](go.osu.edu/campusbridge)), create a derivative checklist, or re-brand the checklist with the local logo.

**Suggestions and guidance for faculty, staff, and others to extend support to students**

Administrators can usefully prepare faculty and staff for the ways that issues might play out in classrooms (taking the moment to thank and support these frontline personnel and encourage them to support each other). The suggestion may be as informal as Cardozo Law Dean Melanie Leslie’s email, featured in Section 1, in which she wrote that another professor “began class this week by taking a moment to acknowledge that students might be in distress and asking them to let her know if they were unprepared on any given day as a result,” noting that “very small gestures of kindness and empathy will make a very powerful difference.” Or a leader may more formally ask faculty to acknowledge compassionately and non-judgmentally that students may be feeling a variety of deep emotions regarding the event that has occurred and the availability of campus resources for them. They might point out when to announce a willingness to modify requirements for a student’s role in classroom discussions or assignment deadlines. Leaders can also counsel faculty, if warranted, against spotlighting a student who shares a race or ethnicity with one of the conflicting groups or opening a discussion of the Middle East violence while emotions are so raw that students may still be angry and more tempted to insult than listen.

**Constructive options for students to contribute and learn**

Ideas for students need to fit the campus climate and the types and intensity of feelings. If they are mourning, perhaps organizing a vigil as Brown University’s at two sad moments or a collection drive for humanitarian assistance items to donate for displaced persons. If they are deeply angry, they still might extend support to each other and have discussions within their own faith communities.

When their anger is raw, they may not be able to listen to students with opposing views or discuss respectfully with them about the violence in the Middle East; that discussion might devolve into angry insults. Still, depending on the students and facilitator, this might be a teaching moment on skills that students could use immediately and would help them in the long-term. So, it’s tricky and not without risk – but worth exploring. And, if not now, the time will come when they are still interested and can learn in such a discussion. A time of raw emotions might also be a teaching moment on skills that students could use immediately and would help them in the long-term. For example, anticipating an upcoming difficult year politically, The Ohio State University launched widely attended campus-wide a difficult conversations series, with classes available for students at all levels and study areas. Another illustration of skills training might be the “ambassadors” training done in conflict areas by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service. Pairs representing both sides in a conflict learn to use their differences as a strength in de-escalating potentially violent situations at demonstrations and elsewhere.

Students may also become more interested during a conflict in more theoretical classes, such as constitutional guarantees for speech and assembly as well as civil rights laws that might result in accountability for harassment or taking a deeper dive into conflict resolution skills and processes. Or they may want to learn more about the history and culture of the region where the conflict is occurring. Harvard University, for example, began 2024 with a forum on free expression and a panel discussion among chaplains with different faiths.

Even when the campus divides because of conflict elsewhere, students often pose demands to their own college or university administrations that are designed to both tangibly and symbolically affect that situation. They might ask the institution to divest investments, fire a person, take a public position, or change the name of a program or building (on the naming issues, see [this guide](go.osu.edu/campusbridge)). It can be constructive to engage a civil rights mediator before such demands might emerge in order to keep in touch with student groups likely to demand an action that will lead to a flat “no” from the institution’s governing board (see Appendix: Resources, below). The mediator can teach students to meet with administrators to discuss their underlying interests, rather than issue an impractical demand, and can organize discussions that can lead to a positive result for all concerned.
Handling hate
Hate incidents can diminish the targeted students’ sense of well-being and of their being a valued member of the college community. They affect not just the individual victim, but they also affect people who share the targeted identity with the victim. As discussed in Section 2, those students who are signing petitions or shouting the slogans that caused the problems may not realize the anxiety and hurt they are inflicting. Added to this difficult situation are those students who are away from home for the first time and too new on campus to have developed trusted friends. When they are targeted personally or as part of a group, they may be reeling.

Many universities have built extensive webpages for reporting incidents, learning about reported incidents, setting out an investigatory and adjudicatory process, explaining codes and laws, and announcing resources. The University of Massachusetts has an extensive one. This enables the campus to respond appropriately to secure accountability for perpetrators and safety of students and establishes a credible database that supplants rumors regarding the frequency and types of such occurrences.

Even if the reported painful, disruptive incident does not represent a violation of the student code or the law, it might be especially valued in a time of searing conflict for universities to make sure each student received the help they need by training those who might receive reports, as discussed in Section 5.

It will also be important to reinforce repeatedly the norms against taking out anger against leaders elsewhere in the world on campus community members who share a similar race, ethnicity, or religion. On some campuses, leaders announce prosecutions of those charged with hate crimes. Administrators could also make short videos for campus buses or other spots, as discussed in Section 3. For example, the Michigan Civil Rights Department created a [YouTube public service announcement](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ) for city buses on hate reporting and opposing hate.

Predict and prepare for future flashpoints
A group knowledgeable about the underlying conflict and the campus can meet periodically to identify flashpoints and prepare leaders ahead, thus improving the college or university’s responses. Some potential flashpoints, such as a public statement about the conflict by a professor or a challenge to institutional investment policies, are campus specific. Developments in the underlying conflict – commitment of U.S. troops to join a war, for example – might lead to actions on a campus – such as sit-ins at the ROTC building. This group’s expertise and alliance network can valuably help prepare an appropriate response in advance of the event.

Constant listening and messaging
Repetition helps to reassure and to restate values. Ohio State University Interim President Peter Mohler included in his end-of-semester and holiday message to the campus a reminder that the Middle East fighting continued to be on the minds of administrators and that students had moral obligations as well. He wrote:

“During this holiday season, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge that as hopeful as we (OSU) are for the future, the present is still a challenge for too many. It is heartbreaking to see suffering, pain and death impacting people around the world, especially the Israeli and Palestinian people – and the resulting impacts on our community.”

“There is no question that division exists in our nation and around the world. The hate and intolerance we see on display daily...might suggest we are too divided to come together. It is more important than ever to demonstrate our values as Buckeyes... Our campuses are where we live, learn, teach and work. Ohio State must be a place where our community feels a sense of belonging – a place where everyone can succeed and thrive.”
Plans to stay in touch with students might also include: using two-way communication channels, informal techniques, and mediators to reach affected communities; watching and using social media to reach students and each part of the community that affect students; warning students about divisive comments on social media generated by artificial intelligence operations both offshore and onshore that heighten divisions on both sides can augment efforts to correct false stories before they “take hold.”

A social media checklist might include:

- **Digital citizenship:** Students learn about their rights and responsibilities as digital citizens, as well as how to protect their privacy and personal information online.

- **Media literacy:** Students develop the ability to critically analyze and evaluate media messages, including the ability to identify bias, propaganda, and fake news.

- **Cyberbullying and online harassment:** Students learn about the consequences of cyberbullying and online harassment, and how to prevent and address these issues.

- **Digital footprint and online reputation management:** Students learn how to manage their digital footprint and online reputation, including how to create a positive online presence and avoid damaging their reputation through inappropriate online behavior.

- **Social media ethics and etiquette:** Students learn about the ethical considerations of using social media, as well as the importance of proper etiquette and respectful communication online.

Preparing for healing
At some point, emotions will become less raw. At that point, many students will be willing to listen across their differences, appreciate each other’s experiences, and restore ties with those on all sides of the conflict. Plans for that period can begin immediately. Ideas used to restore relationships and take advantage of a learning moment might include:

- Panels of experts in the underlying conflict, following by facilitated discussions among students.
- Facilitated discussions in which students tell stories about how the violence related to their past experiences and those of their families.
- Initiatives to provide humanitarian aid to the region, co-sponsored by student groups that took differing approaches to the conflict.
- Joint statements by previously opposed student groups on values they share and a desire to restore relationships.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Divisions affecting students deeply call for creative, well-organized, and extensive attention to and engagement by their leaders. “Here are our counseling and inclusion resources” will be insufficient in this setting. By answering the call to protect students, leaders can take advantage of their intense interests to help students learn skills and understandings that will contribute to their educational and lived success. They can remind students, repeatedly and through multiple media, to treat each other humanely. They can arrange the mutual support that keeps students resilient. They can focus them on the positive and away from hate.
Plan jointly with law enforcement constructive approaches to crowd events and hate incidents.

Consider what will be done in each crowd and hate situation. Protocols with law enforcement can reflect shared understandings of the approaches to be used under various circumstances, should protests, disruptions, or hate incidents occur. Plans for crowd events will vary, depending on the range of goals among participants and the likelihood of violence. Arrange an emergency operations center that includes campus administrators with law enforcement to modify plans as an event unfolds. Do joint planning as well for the possibility of hate incidents.

WHY TAKE THESE STEPS?
Two distinct campus events - large scale crowds and hate incidents - pose significant challenges and require campus leaders and policing agencies to respond quickly and without advance notice. Law enforcement responses may be rapid, but their impact can be long-term. Campus policymakers, campus safety/police/security, and outside law enforcement agencies can reduce the likelihood of injuries, arrests, and loss of trust by developing a shared, coordinated understanding for addressing large gatherings and hate incidents in advance of their occurrence.

A STRUCTURED AND PRACTICED PLAN COULD:
• Allow campus and outside law enforcement leadership to project jointly a positive tone with the campus community.

• Facilitate an interchange on reducing the likelihood of violence by combining law enforcement capabilities and options with campus leadership’s abilities to: (a) advise on and control admission to locations that separate opposing groups and allow for safety of demonstrators; (b) hear from, advise, and stay in touch with students; (c) plan other events at the same time; and more. In fact, the University of Florida’s joint planning and student consultation prior to a speech on campus by a white nationalist in 2017 is credited with averting injuries and limiting arrests.\textsuperscript{xxxv}

• Avoid situations where campus leadership will step back and let police from off-campus "take over" control. Individuals who were not part of the original demonstration may join subsequent ones if they perceive campus leadership as "turning over" fellow students to law enforcement for discipline or punishment, thus notably expanding the number of students who may have lost trust in campus leadership.\textsuperscript{xxxvi}

• Together arrange for trusted individuals, perhaps by creating an advisory council of such persons, to explain the role that campus police and law enforcement will play and why to various constituencies within and outside the campus. Absent this, campus police presence may be reassuring to some members of the campus community but frightening to others.\textsuperscript{xxxvii} This recognition led the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to heed those differences in reaction by emphasizing the value of arranging for trusted persons to explain the role of campus police and law enforcement ahead of its involvement in hate crimes.\textsuperscript{xxxviii} Presumably, a similar approach would help when off-campus policing agencies will be working with students in crowd situations.

• Plan for an Emergency Operation Center (EOC) that includes campus leadership and leaders of all involved policing agencies during an event. The unfortunate absence of sufficient joint preparation and establishment of joint command posts or an EOC has also been cited in the after action analysis of the 2017 "Unite the Right" University of Virginia/Charlottesville march as a likely contributing factor in the violence.\textsuperscript{xxxix} whereas joint planning and command is thought to have averted injuries that year in another white nationalist/counter-protest event at the University of Florida.\textsuperscript{xl}
• Agree upon plans (such as a mutual aid agreement) among off- and on-campus policing agencies and with campus leadership for the necessary quick communications and coordination. Otherwise, they may act at odds with each other and with demonstrators, potentially resulting in violence.\footnote{xii}

• Allow time for training those who will be involved, such as in de-escalation and interacting with crowds, and even practicing potential scenarios.

Broad experience among large law enforcement programs and civil rights mediators helpfully provides valuable lessons about preparation and coordination that can enable leaders to avoid or minimize these potential problems. Building on these insights, set out below are ideas for an annotated agenda for campus leadership and law enforcement personnel who conduct such a planning meeting.

The agenda is designed to support planning for unusually large and intensely emotional crowd events or targeted hate incidents and with the understanding that those planning the meeting will modify the agenda to fit the size of their institutions, the preparation that has already occurred, and their projections for challenging events.

**REGARDING LARGE SCALE CROWD EVENTS, DISCUSS:**

**1. REACHING OUT TO EVENT ORGANIZERS/INFLUENCERS, COORDINATING WITH THEM, AND SHARING INFORMATION.**

**Context:** This is an opportunity to set a collaborative tone in campus leadership and law enforcement's relationship with event organizers and related student leaders that may translate into positive relationships during and after the event. The overall purpose is to communicate how campus safety/police and law enforcement presence helps to keep them safe as they exercise their First Amendment rights and to be sure that they understand what they can and cannot do without repercussions under campus policies and the law. Reaching out can also be an opportunity to help event organizers execute the permit process (if applicable); address safety matters; designate areas for speech and public safety access/medical emergency, media, etc.; and establish points of contact to reach one another before and during the event. The result may be gaining a strengthened understanding of the organizers' event goals and affirming mutual support and practical plans for the lawful exercise of First Amendment rights. See also points 4-8 below, listing additional matters to raise with organizers and leaders regarding potential for counterprotests, protest disbursement, communications during an event, and concerns about violence.

**Agenda Items:**

• Who will reach out to event organizers and related leaders with the above-listed goals and those in points 4-8, below, in mind (e.g., campus student affairs with advisors of student organizations and, if national groups become involved, a conciliator from the US DOJ Community Relations Service)?

• Who will watch social media over time (for smaller communities, perhaps help from a state resource; for some campuses, student affairs personal can augment what law enforcement does in watching social media) for:
  • Evolving plans for the event, including any threats of violence?
  • Various groups involved, and particularly any groups that might come in conflict with each other?
  • The goals of the various groups that are preparing to gather?
  • The types and intensities of group members’ feelings?

• Who will identify potential flashpoints, such as a professor or administrator making a controversial statement or an escalation of international violence?

• How will this information be shared among the planning group in a timely way?
2. ESTABLISHING AN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)
(or call it something else, such as a coordinating group) to solve problems in the midst of an especially large-scale gathering and what may be highly dynamic event.

**MULTIAGENCY COORDINATION GROUP**

![Diagram of Multiagency Coordination Group](image)

**Source:** FEMA, Emergency Operations Center How-to Quick Reference Guide 7 (2022)

**Context:** Effective decision-making in these situations requires immediate and continual communication. This often requires that all key persons be present in one room or a series of breakout rooms and connected to a room located at the event to share instantly relevant information. Public safety agencies may be familiar with the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA's) National Incident Management System and Incident Command System, and campus leaders can review these, posted at [https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims](https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims), before the meeting.

**Agenda Items:**

- Who will represent the college/university administration - someone who understands not only the university’s values but also traffic and transportation options, communications options, legal affairs, and goals of involved student groups?

- What off-campus law enforcement agencies, such as city, county, state, or federal, and prosecutors might or must be called in a worst-case scenario and therefore should have a representative present?

- Should a conciliator from the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service be present to advise on de-escalation methods?
Would it be helpful to have community members present who could transmit real-time messages that would be trusted by event participants and also the general public?

**ASSESSING THE CROWD DURING THE EVENT.**

**Context:** Crowds are not homogeneous. Various groups and individuals have different interests and perspectives. Crowd composition can vary by time of day, venue, and other factors. Crowd management and developing a broader and deeper understanding of the crowd(s) can facilitate more effective, focused responses.

**Agenda Items:**

- Who will take responsibility for assessing changing goals (e.g., to gain attention? to mourn? to disrupt?), emotions (anger? show of solidarity?), and intensity of emotions of various parts of the crowd? Will there be liaisons in the crowd relaying information to the EOC?

- Who will watch out for pedestrians or motorists who might be diverted from the event to preclude them from becoming either victims or perpetrators of harm?

- How can campus safety and law enforcement responses be focused on the demonstrators who are threatening safety while not angering or confronting the other demonstrators?

- Who can assess how people are coming to and exiting the event so that plans are in place (directing, bussing, escorting) to ensure that people are not vulnerable to disruption and injury?

- Are campus police and the various off-campus law enforcement agencies communicating on the same radio frequency, or have supervisors from each physically next to each other, to ensure optimal communication and direction?

**MANAGING COUNTERPROTESTS.**

**Context:** Counterprotest is a significant risk factor for disruption. An organized protest tends to have a defined command and control organization that leads it. A counterprotest is more likely a reaction drawing in individuals and groups that have different interests and views. Counterprotests often are contentious, have less command and control, and, consequently, are more vulnerable to disruption. They are sensitive to signs that authorities lean in favor of the other group.

**Agenda Items:**

- Who, perhaps a campus team reflecting events management, student life, and security, will hold conversations with the organizers about entry/exit procedures, ticketing, dangerous materials, medical emergencies, etc.? Regarding an event/speaker, who will talk with organizers about limiting attendance to this college/university's students, faculty, and staff and what they can bring to the venue?

- If the opposing groups are divided, do their suggested physical location areas appear to offer equal treatment?

- Does the campus security and law enforcement presence appear equal to both groups (e.g., facing both sides, not appearing to see one group as more threatening)?

- How can media be accommodated in terms of location while keeping everyone safe, acknowledging that this will sometimes be difficult to enforce?

- How can the groups be separated without the means of doing so appearing menacing (officers on bicycles?) and therefore set the crowd against the officers?
PLANNING FOR DISBURSEMENT.

Context: Crowd events can have distinct stages (assembly, march, rally, etc.). The disbanding period in particular warrants discussion and planning, since the end of the event can have the largest crowd numbers and participants may leave energized by animated, motivating speeches.

Agenda Items:
- How can transportation, directions, officers visibly on the paths for departure, and other measures reduce the likelihood of violence among hostile groups as the crowds disband and return to cars or housing?

COMMUNICATING WITH POTENTIAL ATTENDEES.

Context: Demonstrators, especially students, may be attending their first event of this type and thus may not appreciate the parameters and potential consequences of violating event guidelines. Especially for student participants, it is valuable to inform them in advance about rights and responsibilities under the student code and laws, safety advice related to the event, and the joint approach that campus safety and off-campus law enforcement personnel will take to support the right to peacefully demonstrate while also taking responsibility for ensuring public safety.

Agenda Items:
- Who will handle pre-event communications to members of the campus community (e.g., a campus team including student life, communications, security)?
- Who can reach participants during the event (see also points 2 and 8)?

MOVING DISRUPTIVE BUT PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS.

Context: The Report of the Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest of 1970 (the "Scranton Commission"), in perhaps its most significant criticism of university event responses, cited the failure of university leadership to pursue campus management options before asking campus police or off-campus law enforcement to terminate or move disruptive but peaceful events. A helpful vehicle for rules of engagement would be the "Incident Action Plan."

Agenda Items - Discussions might lead to understandings on:
- What are the roles of campus administrators, campus police and outside law enforcement in deciding what is a significant public safety threat such that law enforcement personnel forcibly require demonstrators to move from peaceful on-campus sit-ins or analogous events?
- What are campus alternatives (e.g., campus space reservations processes? enduring an inconvenient crowd event for a few days?) to asking campus security or outside law enforcement to forcibly move demonstrators, thus risking criminal records and injuries?
- What activity (e.g., blocking a street?) will be the basis for an arrest?
- Can these understandings be translated into policies that will be communicated in advance to the students and apply to all events, both to give warnings and avoid the reaction that particular causes are targeted for stronger law enforcement actions?
- Who among responding agencies will make arrests on campus, acknowledging that this may be modified during an event if required because of the scale?
MINIMIZING CHANCES OF VIOLENCE AT THE EVENT.

Context: Multiple university and community group members might be available to contribute toward a peaceful event. Faith leaders, community leaders, student groups, community peacemaker groups, and other resources may help maintain a peaceful focus. Maintaining communication with participants can affect the tone positively, make it safer, and convey accurate information (taking into account the social media posts and real or fake videos that will circulate among demonstrators during the event).

Agenda Items:

• Should plans be made to mobilize the assistance of persons trained in de-escalation techniques?

• What groups can assist in organizing and providing transportation to event participants that can move them safely to, through, and away from event space?

• How should officers present themselves (e.g., vests to mark de-escalation/dialogue officers; less obvious protective equipment; or bicycles)?

• How might officers, assisted by crowd event monitors, distinguish peaceful demonstrators from persons who may pose risks to public safety?

• How might the leadership group and community leaders stay in touch with participants to offer accurate information, identify safe options, and set a positive tone?

COMMUNICATING AFTER THE EVENT.

Context: Communicating an accurate narrative of the event's activities promptly through multiple media and social media outlets is critical to the public’s understanding of what transpired and, if positive, the reaffirmation of the resilience of contesting yet civil acts of assembly and disagreement.

Agenda Items:

• Who will issue statements summarizing and framing what occurred during the event?

• What methods of communication will be used (e.g., social media, email to campus, news conference)?

• What are the lessons of what to include or not include in such communications, understanding that the application of these lessons will vary based on what occurred (e.g., regret and compassion for any who were injured; not negative characterizations of entire demonstration based on actions of a few; not off-putting defensive statements)?

TESTING THE PLANS AMONG THOSE AT THE MEETING.

Agenda Items:

• Portray several 10-minute scenarios ("What would you do if the following, which happened at the University of occurred here?" "Have we established plans and protocols needed for those situations?").

• If the planning group learns in advance of a planned demonstration or protest on campus, conduct a tabletop exercise that mirrors the anticipated dynamics of the planned event and arrange for facilitated discussion afterward about what was missing and needs to be arranged for effective leadership in a real situation.
SEEKING AN AFTER-ACTION ANALYSIS.

Context: Particularly for every event interaction involving multiple personnel, demanding time constraints, and, potentially, significant public visibility, conducting a post-event review and analysis helps to apply lessons learned to the next such gathering. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies requires its accredited agencies (not all policing agencies have this accreditation) to have an after-action meeting and create a report to learn what was done right and what can be improved in the future. It would be beneficial to have an after-action meeting with all university partners and any outside law enforcement who assisted with the event. Especially if the group wants an independent analysis, it’s preferable to agree in advance to conduct such an assessment as a matter of course, so that the review is not misconstrued as a negative reaction to what occurred.

Agenda Items:

- Should outside law enforcement and campus leaders agree in advance to have the after-action analysis conducted together?
- Should it be done by an independent party?
- Should the independent party be identified and retained in advance?
- Should the after-action analysis be made public? If so, when and by what means?

REGARDING HATE INCIDENTS, DISCUSS: TRAINING FOR CAMPUS SAFETY, OUTSIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND STUDENT CODE PERSONNEL.

Context: Training can increase accurate identification, prosecution, and reporting of hate crimes, thus helping others to be safer. Accurate reports can also ease concerns raised by false reports of hate crimes. Students targeted with bullying or danger because of a perceived identity group membership often feel unsafe on campus even when the act does not violate a law or university code. They may be even more anxious if they report the incident but are told that "there is nothing we can do." Training can reduce the number of "wrong doors" for those reporting by encouraging those encountering hate incident victims to help anxious individuals find campus or community resources for support or safety.

Agenda Items:

- Who would organize the training, which might include FBI courses on hate crimes and encompass:
  - What are state and federal hate crimes?
  - Understanding the importance of reporting them and where to report.
    - a Targeted hate incidents negatively impact not just the targeted individual, but also those who share the targeted identity.
    - a Complaints about hate incidents that are not crimes ("lawful but awful") should be treated with empathy, compassion, and trauma-informed practices and referred to supportive resources.

ISSUING JOINT UNIVERSITY-OUTSIDE-LAW ENFORCEMENT STATEMENTS ABOUT REPORTING HATE INCIDENTS.

Context: It helps to examine and articulate steps that will be taken for secondary victims of a bias incident, not only the identifiable victim. Individuals, families, and communities will have anxieties raised when a hate event is reported. Personal concerns for individual and group safety will be present in communities. Articulated recognition of this beyond the specifics of an incident can greatly comfort a victim community.
Agenda Items:

- How will leadership convey how seriously they take such matters? Possible elements might include: assuring community members that each individual report matters in terms of reducing such acts; informing the community about punishments that courts have recently imposed for such acts in this jurisdiction, for this importantly signals to demonstrators, especially those students new to campus, about the risks they might be taking in engaging in actions that they may erroneously regard as protected speech, but in reality, may constitute a hate crime.

- How will leadership support and organize transparency practices regarding hate incidents and their consequences? Possible elements might include: Campus and law enforcement leaders accumulate and post reports on a website available to students, parents, and others, so that community stakeholders can be aware of safety risks; report incidents to the FBI, the applicable state agency, and applicable nonprofit watch groups.

3. SHARING WITH OUTSIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT WHAT RESOURCES THE CAMPUS OFFERS TO FACILITATE REFERRALS OF THOSE REPORTING HATE INCIDENTS FOR APPROPRIATE SUPPORT.

These might include resources for counseling, health services, student faith centers, student affinity groups, and victim support services.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Campus leaders may be tempted to “turn over” disruptive situations and hate complaints to law enforcement. If instead they plan ahead together – beginning before conflict generates protests and hate incidents – reaching agreement on how to handle these situations, they may avert unnecessary violence, criminal records for students, alienation of students, new conflicts with students over their handling of the protests or hate reports, and unwelcome criticism from those outside the campus.
APPENDIX: Endnotes


Molly Fisher, The Chancellor of Berkeley Weighs In, New Yorker (Dec. 17, 2023),


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For copies (under preparation as the guide goes to press), contact rogers.23@osu.edu.


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For more resources, see https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/resources/supporting-students-through-tragedy.

https://oaa.osu.edu/civil-discourse/courses.

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Hunton & Williams LLC, Final Report: Independent Review of the Protest Events in Charlottesville, Virginia 5, 158-159, 164-165 (2017) (“There was no joint training, unified operational plan, or joint radio communication between the agencies. VSP operated largely independently throughout the Klan rally, rather than in an integrated multi-agency force. CPD planners failed to anticipate the counter-protesters’ desire to disrupt the event by impeding the Klan’s arrival and departure. To protect the safety of all participants, officers had to adjust plans and use an enclosed parking garage for Klan vehicles and a mobile field force to clear a path of ingress and egress into the park. While officers created separation between the Klan and counter-protesters, they left too little space between barricades and allowed media representatives into the buffer zone between the conflicting groups.”), https://www.huntonak.com/images/content/3/4/v4/34613/final-report-ada-compliant ready.pdf.

Wolf, supra note xli.

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For counsel on how to craft after-incident communications, see Divided Community Project: Tools for Building Trust (forthcoming 2024).
**APPENDIX: Resources**

Consultation, mediation and training service offered without charge:

Available nationally:

Community Relations Service in the U.S. Department of Justice  
**CONTACT:**  
Phone: 202.305.2935 | Email: askcrs@usdoj.gov

“CRS serves as “America’s Peacemaker” for communities facing conflict based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. CRS works toward its mission by providing facilitated dialogue, mediation, training, and consultation to assist these communities to come together, develop solutions to the conflict, and enhance their capacity to independently prevent and resolve future conflict.

“All CRS services are confidential and provided on a voluntary basis, free of charge to the communities. CRS is not an investigatory or prosecutorial agency and does not have any law enforcement authority. CRS works with all parties to develop solutions to conflict and serves as a neutral party.”

Bridge Initiative of the Divided Community Project, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law  
**CONTACT:**  
Bill Froehlich, Director, Divided Community Project,  
Email: Froehlich.28@osu.edu | Website: https://go.osu.edu/dcp

“Upon request and at no cost, mediators and other experts with extensive experience in helping local leaders respond effectively to civil unrest and tension in communities across the country can help mediate conflicts between community and law enforcement, train local community members on effective strategies to keep protests safe, and offer technical assistance to executives and community members seeking to build sustainable infrastructure for inclusive engagement.”

Available within their states:

California Civil Rights Department’s Community Conflict Resolution Unit  
**CONTACT:**  
Email: CCRU@calcivilrights.ca.gov  
Website: https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/disputeresolution/community-conflict-services/

“The [CCRU] works with communities, and/or local and state public bodies to constructively manage or resolve conflict, minimize or eliminate the potential for violence, reduce or eliminate antagonism within communities, or help them reach mutually acceptable outcomes.”

Michigan Department of Civil Rights Community Engagement and Education Division  
**CONTACT:**  
Anthony Lewis, Director, Phone: 313-456-3740 | Email: LewisA4@michigan.gov  
Website: https://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/divisions/community-engagement

“The [Crisis Response Team] initiates proactive measures and acts as needed to diffuse situations of community tension and unrest, and to assure that all people enjoy equal rights under the law. To carry out its responsibility, the Department monitors incidents involving race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, and other civil rights-related matters.” The office offers related training.
New Jersey Division on Civil Rights Community Relations Unit

CONTACT:
Tee Leonardo-Santiago, Director of Community Relations
Email: Tisha.Leonardo@njcivilrights.gov | Website: www.NJCivilRights.gov

The Community Relations Unit offers civil rights mediation and consultation, as well as educational programs.

At the local level:

Community mediation programs often have mediators experienced in promoting discussions among groups of people and may offer training. A search function of the National Association for Community Mediation, NAFCM, https://www.nafcm.org/search/custom.asp?id=1949, allows a search for a local community mediation program. The local bar association may also have a list of mediators and their experience levels, though private practitioners will typically will charge fees.

Publications offered by the Divided Community Project without charge:

- Maxwell Herath, Julie Howard, Konner Kelly, Meara Maccabee, Initiating Constructive Conversations Among Polarized University Student Groups: A Framework for Faculty, Staff and Students (Divided Community Project 2023), https://go.osu.edu/dcppsg.
- The Springton University Simulation allows campus leaders to practice their response to an ongoing crisis. It’s available from DCP Director Bill Froehlich, Froehlich.28@osu.edu.
APPENDIX: Acknowledgments

This guide is a publication of the #CampusBridge initiative of the Divided Community Project, https://go.osu.edu/dcp, at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. The steering committee for the Divided Community Project includes: Carl Smallwood, Executive Director, Divided Community Project, and past president, National Conference of Bar Presidents; William Froehlich, Director of the Divided Community Project, and Lecturer of Law, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law; Andrew Thomas, Chair, Steering Committee, mediator in community conflicts and former Community Relations and Neighborhood Engagement Director, City of Sanford, Florida; Thomas Battles, former Southeast Regional Director, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service; RaShall Brackney, Distinguished Visiting Professor of Practice, George Mason University, former Chief of Police for both Charlottesville, Virginia and George Washington University; Chris Carlson, public policy mediator and founding director, Policy Consensus Initiative; Susan Carpenter, complex public policy mediator, trainer and co-author of Mediating Public Disputes; Sarah Cole, Professor of Law and Moritz Chair in Alternative Dispute Resolution at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law; Daphne Felten-Green, former Counsel, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service; Katrina Lee, Shipman Clinical Professor of Law and Director of its Program on Dispute Resolution, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law; Michael Lewis, mediator and arbitrator with JAMS’ Washington, D.C. Resolution Center; Grande Lum, Senior Lecturer and Director, Martin Daniel Gould Center for Conflict Resolution, Stanford Law School, former Director of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service; Craig McEwen, Professor of Sociology Emeritus and former Dean of Faculty and Interim President, Bowdoin College; Becky Monroe, Deputy Director for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs, California Civil Rights Department, former Counsel and Interim Director of the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service; Teri Murphy, Deputy Director, The Ohio State University Mershon Center for International Security Studies; Nancy Rogers, Professor and Moritz Chair Emeritus and former Dean, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, and former Ohio Attorney General; Sarah Rubin, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, California Department of Conservation; Amy Schmitz, John Deaver Drisko-Baker & Hostetler Endowed Chair in Law at Moritz and co-director, the Translational Data Analytics Institute Responsible Data Science Community of Practice; Kyle Strickland, Senior Legal Analyst at the Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity; Josh Stulberg, Professor and Moritz Chair Emeritus and former Associate Dean, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, and mediator in community conflicts; and Ron Wakabayashi, former Western Regional Director, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service, former Executive Director of Japanese American Citizens League. Benjamin Wilson serves as a fellow with the Divided Community Project.

In addition to several members of the Project’s Steering Committee, the following experts in conflict resolution and campus communications met during November and December 2023 to contribute to this guide. They helped to identify the key issues and promising ideas for dealing with them. They include: Sara Childers, Assistant Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence, The Ohio State University; Chris Davey, ThirtyPR and former Senior Associate Vice President for The Ohio State University; Luby Ismail, president, Connecting Cultures, trainer and consultant on cross-cultural conversation and Islamophobia; Carlo LoParo, ThirtyPR and public relations professional; Sara Scheinbach, Director of Jewish Partnerships, Anti-Defamation League; and Ron Wakabayashi, former regional director, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service. We are grateful to the AAA-ICDR Foundation for the grant that funds this publication and the broader #CampusBridge initiative of the Divided Community Project at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. We are grateful to those who provided comments on Section 5, including Noel March, University of Maine; Monica Moll, Craig Stone, and Dennis Jeffrey, The Ohio State University; and Wayne Maines, Stanford University. The Divided Community Project also thanks the Moritz College of Law, the JAMS Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Ohio State University Mershon Center for International Security Studies for supporting its work in using collaborative approaches to turning division in to positive progress.

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LEADING A DIVIDED CAMPUS:
Ideas and Illustrations

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