



Dear Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez,

We, the undersigned CUNY Astronomy faculty, write to condemn the use of police force on CUNY campuses. This response is an escalation that puts our communities in immediate danger. Ensuring the rights of students, staff, and faculty to free speech and assembly is of paramount importance at institutions of higher learning, especially a public university. We demand that CUNY heed [the recommendations for protecting free speech on campuses as detailed in the open letter from the ACLU](#), at a minimum. To repeat the most crucial point, “Schools must recognize that armed police on campus can endanger students and are a measure of last resort.” We do not believe that CUNY exhausted safe strategies for engaging with protestors in productive dialog prior to inviting NYPD onto the CCNY campus to make mass arrests of members of the CUNY community. We insist that CUNY immediately drop charges against those arrested to support their successful completion of the spring semester, in some cases to earn their degrees, and in the interest of fairness.

In conversation with the greater CUNY Astronomy community, we have heard firsthand accounts of how CUNY leadership has shown disinterest in engaging with members of our community regarding the tragic loss of life in Gaza. Our community is invested in the campuses where we work and study, and we aim to ensure that these institutions are taking every action to minimize harm. The paucity of engagement from CUNY leadership and the tacit refusal to negotiate is directly inspiring the protest actions occurring on campus. Inviting militarized police units to invade our schools will only inflame campus tensions, and history has shown that such escalation can lead directly to avoidable violence against unarmed demonstrators.

As we see colleges across the nation choosing different ways to respond to campus protests, we would like to highlight the responses and agreements of other universities that may serve as constructive examples for your own actions:

- [Brown University agreed to a guaranteed timeline for proposed institutional policy changes to come to a vote](#)
- [Wesleyan University president Michael S. Roth acknowledges that while conversation may be difficult during some periods of the protest, opportunities will be created for discussion sessions with the campus community.](#)
- [Rutgers agreed to several of a 10-point list of demands from their community](#)
- [The University of Minnesota proposed actions and achieved an agreement with their community](#)

We insist that CUNY leadership listen to the impassioned pleas from your students, faculty, and staff to reach a peaceful agreement with protestors. We re-emphasize that police presence and mass arrests on campus are an unacceptable response to demonstrations, and that charges against demonstrators should be dropped. Collective punishment of all protestors in response to



claims that individual agitators crossed the line beyond protected speech is reprehensible and immoral. CUNY colleges should encourage their communities to speak out on matters of moral concern, and to maximize the opportunities for these messages to reach CUNY leadership.

Signed,

Majority of the CUNYAstro Faculty