

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 08, 2024

President Jonathan Holloway  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
7 College Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Dear President Holloway:

We write with questions regarding your decision to acquiesce to several concerning demands made by anti-Israel protesters on campus. Jewish students across the country face dramatic increases in antisemitism that have left them fearing for their safety.<sup>1</sup> Institutions of higher education should be a place for learning and the free exchange of ideas which requires that all students feel safe and welcome on campus, including Jewish students. Recent reports of hideous antisemitic threats at Rutgers have already created serious cause for fear about the safety and well-being of Jewish students, and all students, on campus.<sup>2</sup>

We fear that the administration's accession to troublesome demands made by protestors failed to adequately take into account the perspectives and voices of members of the Jewish community at Rutgers. Furthermore, we are concerned that Rutgers appears to have incentivized people to act in a lawless and threatening manner by appeasing the demands of violent and hateful agitators while ignoring an analogous set of requests made peacefully to the University. As a Jewish faculty member said, "We played nice and got little; SJP [Students for Justice in Palestine] broke every rule in the book and got rewarded with amnesty."

According to the ADL, there were more than 8,000 antisemitic incidents reported in 2023, the highest number ever reported since the organization began tracking in 1979.<sup>3</sup> One in ten of those incidents were in New Jersey. Immediately following the heinous October 7 terrorist attacks, antisemitism increased precipitously across the country, especially on college campuses like Rutgers. The outbreak in antisemitic protests on college campuses has left Jewish students

---

<sup>1</sup> American Defamation League (ADL), "U.S. Antisemitic Incidents Skyrocketed 360% in Aftermath of Attack in Israel, according to Latest ADL Data," January 9, 2024, [adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-records-dramatic-increase-us-antisemitic-incidents-following-oct-7](https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-records-dramatic-increase-us-antisemitic-incidents-following-oct-7) (Last Accessed Jan. 10, 23).

<sup>2</sup> Jewish Link, "Rutgers Student Charged for Threatening to Kill an Israeli Student," November 8, 2023, <https://jewishlink.news/rutgers-student-charged-for-threatening-to-kill-an-israeli-student/>; NJ Spotlight News, "Student protesters demand Rutgers dump Israeli investments," November 1, 2023, <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/student-protesters-demand-rutgers-dump-israeli-investments/><https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/student-protesters-demand-rutgers-dump-israeli-investments/>.

<sup>3</sup> Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2023, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (2024), <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2023> (last visited May 6, 2024).

and faculty feeling threatened and targeted.<sup>4</sup> Last month, Jewish students from nine universities, including Rutgers University, participated in a bipartisan roundtable discussion before the House Education and Workforce Committee. As the roundtable revealed, disturbing threats and intimidation on campus have sadly prevented some students from attending classes or using the library because they do not feel safe.<sup>5</sup> Universities have an obligation to ensure the safety, well-being, and security of all students.

As mentioned, members of Rutgers' Jewish community have made urgent requests of the administration, as far back as December, pleading with them to take several reasonable steps that would ensure their safety and welcomeness on campus. As far as we can tell, these requests have been largely ignored. On December 11, 2023, members of Jewish Faculty, Administrators, and Staff (JFAS) respectfully submitted a list of requests designed to ensure student safety on campus and stem the rising tide of antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> Those lists of requests include asking:

1. The University's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE) to include combating antisemitism in their mandate, incorporate combating antisemitism into their mission statements and policies, and receive training on how to report and act in response to antisemitic incidents when they occur.
  - That request remains unanswered.
2. The University to address the openly antisemitic rhetoric being spewed by Rutgers' Center for Security, Race, and Rights (CSRR) and create a university wide Committee on Antisemitism and the Jewish Experience (CAJE).
  - Not only do these requests remain unanswered, Rutgers actively granted lawless agitators' request for an additional cultural center while ignoring the same plea from the Jewish community.
3. A full and transparent accounting of antisemitic incidences on campus and for the equal enforcement of campus polices against hatred, intimidation and harassment emanating from university sanctioned student groups.
  - Not only do these requests remain unanswered, but Rutgers rewarded Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) after they violated the terms of their probation by orchestrating the coordinated harassment and intimidation of Jewish students on campus and the disruption of campus life generally by organizing illegal encampments.

Collectively, these actions, and lack thereof, send the disturbing message that those on campus who abide by the rules and engage respectfully with the administration will be ignored while persistent purveyors of harassment, hatred, and intimidation will be rewarded. Rutgers

---

<sup>4</sup> Anemona Hartocollis, JEWISH STUDENTS DESCRIBE FACING ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS THE NEW YORK TIMES (2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/01/us/antisemitism-campus-jewish-students.html> (last visited May 6, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Matt Egan, Elisabeth Buchwald & Samantha Delouya, "I HAVE BECOME TRAUMATIZED." JEWISH STUDENTS DESCRIBE CAMPUS ANTISEMITISM | CNN BUSINESS CNN (2024), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/29/business/antisemitism-college-harvard-upenn/index.html> (last visited May 6, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> See attached.

cannot ignore the victims of vile and dangerous hatred on campus, while incentivizing those who break the rules.

We commend your May 6 statement, expressing opposition to the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and reaffirming Rutgers' fundamental, academic, and research partnership with Tel Aviv University (TAU).<sup>7</sup>

However, by their own admission, the escalation in these campus protests, encampments, anti-American cheers, and expression of solidarity with Hamas and other Iranian-backed proxies have only emboldened terrorists to prolong the current conflict. Israel and our international allies have agreed to various terms of a temporary pause that would allow for the increased flow of humanitarian aid, and the release of the hostages. Hamas is emboldened by the widespread support on college campuses, who continues to walk away from negotiations. If Hamas truly cared about the Palestinian people, they would lay down their weapons, stop firing rockets at Israel, and release the hostages, including Americans.

These protests, including at Rutgers University, have led to universities canceling or postponing final exams as students have not felt safe on campus.<sup>8</sup> This is in direct violation of Rutgers University policy 50.3.5 – “Disruptions: Administrative Policy and Response” which clearly states, “Disruption is conduct by any person that intentionally or recklessly obstructs, impairs, or interferes with: (1) teaching, studying or administration of the University, including the clinical mission of RBHS, (2) the authorized and other permissible use of University facilities, and (3) the rights and privileges of other members of the University community to engage in educational pursuits.”<sup>9</sup> Rutgers' decision to even give the appearance of complying with a number of demands presented by these protestors, raises a series of questions that Rutgers administration and leadership must answer.

If students cannot feel safe and secure in their learning environment, they are at a severe disadvantage. That is why we would like answers to the following by Thursday, May 16:

1. Will Rutgers implement the December 11, 2023 recommendations of members of Jewish Faculty, Administrators, and Staff? These have been attached as Exhibit A for your convenience. Please enumerate why you will or will not implement each recommendation.
2. How will Rutgers incorporate the perspectives and voices of Jewish students when considering divestment from one of our greatest democratic allies, Israel?
3. Did Rutgers administration consult with Jewish students at any point during these negotiations with campus protesters?
4. Have you met with Jewish student organizations, and other student organizations to discuss their demands for their security and safety?

---

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Holloway, “Statement to Board of Governors on Student Protests,” May 6, 2024, <https://www.rutgers.edu/president/statement-to-Board-of-Governors-on-Student-Protests>

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Holloway & Francine Conway, REGARDING THE PROTEST ON VOORHEES MALL RUTGERS UNIVERSITY (2024), <https://www.rutgers.edu/president/regarding-the-protest-on-voorhees-mall> (last visited May 6, 2024).

<sup>9</sup> 50.3.5 Disruptions: Administrative Policy and Response, Rutgers University, UNIVERSITY POLICY: LEGAL MATTERS, <https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=12005&PageId=459329> (last visited May 6, 2024).

- a. If you have met with them, what requests have been made of the university and what has the university actually done to meet these needs?
5. What assurances can you provide Jewish students that their safety and security will be maintained and preserved on campus?
6. What plans will the university implement to prevent incidents like this in the future and how they will be resolved?

Now more than ever, transparency and accountability are crucially needed from academic and administration officials at campuses across the country. As President Biden said, “In America, we respect and protect the fundamental right to free speech, to debate and disagree, to protest peacefully and make our voices heard... but there is no place on any campus in America [or] any place in America for antisemitism or hate speech or threats of violence of any kind.”<sup>10</sup> Rutgers must abide by these principles to ensure students cannot use intimidation, threats, and harassment towards certain students because of their race, religion, sexuality, or ethnicity to achieve demands.

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress

Attachment

CC: New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy  
Rutgers Board of Governors

---

<sup>10</sup> President Joseph Biden, “Remarks by President Biden at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Annual Days of Remembrance Ceremony,” The White House, May 7, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/05/07/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-u-s-holocaust-memorial-museums-annual-days-of-remembrance-ceremony/>

# **JFAS (Jewish Faculty, Administrators, and Staff) Proposals to Address Antisemitism at Rutgers**

December 11, 2023

**Introduction:** Rutgers JFAS is an informal group founded in 2016 that brings together Jewish employees of Rutgers around issues of shared interest and concern. The group is chaired by Professors Rebecca Cypess (Music), David Greenberg (History and Journalism and Media Studies), and Jenny Mandelbaum (Communication, Emerita) and includes participants from all four chancellor-led units. JFAS is one of several entities that support Jewish life on our campuses.

Since October 7, JFAS activity has increased significantly as a result of the alarming rise in antisemitism that many employees and students at Rutgers have experienced in the workplace, the classroom, and other settings across the university. The group has created this document to guide the university administration in fulfilling its responsibility to understand, address, and mitigate antisemitism at Rutgers.

## **Category 1: Immediate Steps to Mitigate Antisemitism (start during the week of December 11, 2023)**

**1. Publicly provide, in plain language, a full accounting of recent antisemitic incidents on our campuses,** including each incident as reported, how and by whom it was investigated, the current status of the investigation, and what disciplinary action resulted, if any. In particular:

- Immediately investigate the incident at the Rutgers Business School on November 29, 2023, including the possible role of the Rutgers-New Brunswick Office of Student Affairs in enabling and encouraging the activities of student protestors who entered and remained in the RBS building against university policy and against the wishes of the school administration. The account provided by the New Brunswick Dean of Students to the CEO of Rutgers Hillel should be compared with the accounts of faculty and staff who were present, since there are significant discrepancies. The investigation should also include the role of union leadership in fomenting such incidents.
- Investigate incidents and hostile environments at the Rutgers Law School (October 12, 2023, and ongoing), College Avenue Student Center (November 17, 2023), Mason Gross School of the Arts (ongoing), and the Rutgers Academic Building (the lecture by Bruce Hoffman on November 30, 2023).

**2. Clarify and Enforce Codes of Conduct and Ethics.**

- Send immediate reminders (by December 12, 2023) to the entire university community about policies regarding on-campus gatherings and use of facilities, as well as consequences for violations of those policies. Clarify that, by definition, engaging in civil disobedience includes accepting penalties, including arrest, for violating rules or laws. Include explicit instructions to faculty and staff—including Student Affairs officials and RUPD—about what to do when a disruption occurs. Include explicit instructions

about how to file a bias incident report.

- Effective immediately, require that the investigation of complaints avoids all conflicts of interest. Parties that supervise events or groups should not be evaluating bias incident reports regarding that event or group, and this is doubly true of university officials reported to be enabling violations of the Code of Conduct.
- Review all policies and procedures regarding violations of the Code of Conduct to ensure transparency and accountability; revise those policies as necessary and enforce them more consistently and rigorously than has been done until now. Complete this process by February 15, 2024.
- Review and strengthen police and security protocols for dealing with disruptions. Ensure that RUPD monitors announcements of upcoming events to ensure that they are preparing appropriately. Allow RUPD to restore a normal working and learning environment when disruptions occur. Complete this process by February 15, 2024.

**3. Suspend students or student organizations whose members repeatedly violate the Code of Conduct**, as Students for Justice in Palestine has apparently done (e.g., incidents at the Business School, the College Avenue Student Center, and the Bruce Hoffman lecture).

**4. Forthrightly condemn egregious instances of antisemitic speech or actions** without conflating or juxtaposing the condemnation of antisemitism with other forms of hate. When university offices put out misinformation, as occurred through the biased Instagram posts issued by the Diversity Peer Educators during the week of December 4, 2023, correct it clearly and decisively, giving the correction the same level of prominence that the original misinformation was afforded.

**5. Convene a standing, university-wide Committee on Antisemitism and the Jewish Experience (CAJE)** in recognition of the fact that antisemitism is an ongoing problem at Rutgers that requires constant vigilance. The committee should begin its work in the first week of the spring 2024 term.

- The committee should be charged with creating an active strategy, rather than merely reacting to problems as they arise. Its establishment would ensure strong support and a consistent approach across presidential administrations. The committee chair would report to the president.
- The committee would develop strategy and policy to ensure transparency in receiving complaints (including anonymous ones) and overseeing investigations.
- The committee should include representatives of all campus stakeholders, including JFAS.
- The committee should consider adopting guidelines to identify antisemitism when it arises across the university, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) or Nexus guidelines.
- The committee can work with the relevant university officers in implementing other recommendations in this memo.

## **Category 2: Improvement of University Operations (to be implemented by March 31, 2024)**

**6. Prohibit academic departments, programs, and other administrative units from taking a stance on controversial political issues.** Statements espousing such stances give the impression of representing an institutional position to which all faculty, students, and staff members subscribe and impinge on the academic freedom of faculty who do not share the adopted position (see Appendices 1a and 1b).

- Ensure that faculty are adhering to standards of professional ethics that stipulate that they not engage in political advocacy in their classes at the expense of the course subject matter.

**7. Require that university policies and materials that prohibit other forms of identity-based hate also explicitly prohibit antisemitism.**

**8. Require that Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE) and other structures at the university designed to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) include combating antisemitism** (including those forms dealing with animus toward Israel) in their mandate,

incorporate combating antisemitism into their written materials such as mission statements and policies, and understand how to report and act on antisemitic incidents when they occur. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Hillel International, and Academic Engagement Network (AEN) can provide resources to work with DICE and other DEI staff on these steps.

- Require all DEI officers, Student Affairs officers, residence life staff, and advisors to receive regular training in antisemitism from the ADL, Hillel International, or AEN. Require senior leadership in DICE and Student Affairs to receive more extensive training through at least one of the same organizations. After receiving such training, any of these staff members who profess antisemitic views or encourage antisemitic activities, even unwittingly, or fail to denounce them when they occur, should be disciplined.
- Include antisemitism in required annual anti-discrimination training for all faculty and staff, as well as in undergraduate New Student Orientation and orientation activities for graduate students.

**9. Distinguish between faculty rights and faculty privileges and deny privileges to individuals or units who abuse their position.**

- Faculty members who espouse antisemitic views should be held accountable for their discriminatory behavior and not be allowed to hold positions of power or leadership. This is especially important in programs designed to support diversity, such as the STRIDE (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence) training program.
- Research centers that promote antisemitic views, such as the Center for Security, Race, and Rights, should be carefully reviewed for alignment with the university's mission.

**10. Renew and enhance the commitment to collaboration with Tel Aviv University** to build a mutually beneficial relationship. Increasing and enhancing exchange programs for students, post-docs, or faculty beyond the field of Jewish Studies would help to humanize Israeli academics in the eyes of community members with prejudiced understandings of Israel and provide them with opportunities for professional development. TAU faculty could provide relevant programming to Rutgers that would enhance our own campus climate.

- Reaffirm Rutgers’s opposition to the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement, which runs counter to principles of academic freedom and would undermine numerous departments and disciplines at our university.

**Appendix 1a:** Cary Nelson, “Is Academic Freedom a Casualty of the Gaza War?” (June 2, 2021), <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2021/06/03/statements-departments-about-gaza-war-have-implications-academic-freedom-opinion>.

**Appendix 1b:** Draft language prohibiting departments from issuing collective statements on controversial topics, which can create a hostile environment for employees and students:

The university/college prohibits academic departments, programs, and other administrative units from issuing collective statements on contested political topics. Of special concern are issues about which not only the country but also many college campuses are deeply divided. This policy is designed to protect the right of individual faculty members and voluntary faculty groups to issue such statements without the coercive effect produced by formal department endorsement of one political perspective. The right of individual faculty and voluntary faculty groups to express political opinions is guaranteed by academic freedom. Faculty should continue to fulfill their important role of advising both legislatures and the general public about matters of public policy related to their academic missions. However, administrative units do not possess the same freedom to address contested topics in their official capacity. This policy also guards against the possibility that members of the public will conclude that administrative unit statements on contested political topics represent the view of the institution as a whole. Disclaimers included with such political statements will prevent neither of these consequences.