

Transcript of the Faculty/Post-Doc Listening Session with Emory University President Greg Fenves on May 6, 2024, 2-3pm

*This meeting was moderated by the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 combined Executive
Committee of the Emory University Senate.*

George Shepherd: I would like to welcome everyone to our meeting today. My name is George Shepherd, and I'm the President of the University Senate. Welcome to the Executive Committee of the University Senate, and it's a body that represents the university broadly. So, the Senate includes students, it includes faculty, it includes staff, and it also includes alumni. Part of the executive committee of the Senate is the university's faculty representatives, and I welcome them too. In addition, I would like to thank President Fenves for being here. President Fenves has already met with us twice before. He met with the Senate Executive Committee almost a week ago on Tuesday, and he met with a full Senate last Wednesday. Finally, I would like to welcome the hundreds of faculty who are watching this. This session is really for you. Thank you for being with us. I hope that we can have a full and frank discussion of the events in the last week, so that we can all understand more fully what happened, how the decisions were made, and if there are any lessons for the future. We have only an hour together here, so we have decided not to devote any time to introductions, and here's the structure of how things will work. First, President Fenves will make a few minutes of opening remarks. Then, the executive committee will ask some questions, and we've divided them up among the committee, including the faculty representatives on the committee. We have only about three minutes or so per questioner, so I have been authorized to be the friendly MC to remind people when time is almost up, and I apologize in advance if I'm too harsh. After that, the faculty representatives will ask questions that have been submitted by the faculty who are watching. The faculty have submitted scores and scores of questions for President Fenves, and the faculty representatives have selected some of them and will ask them. Since time is short, only the arranged questions will be asked. There's not time for additional impromptu questions. Finally, after those questions, President Fenves will offer some closing remarks. So first, I welcome President Fenves to open the discussion.

Greg Fenves: Okay, thank you. Thank you, George, and again, I want to thank the University Senate for organizing after we spoke last week, as Dr. Shepherd had said. I know this is an unprecedented, tough time at Emory, and I've heard that clearly from you and from across the campus. As Dr. Shepherd said this morning, I spoke to our students, and this afternoon I want you, the faculty, to hear the information that I shared with the Senate last week and have time to answer your questions. I will be brief in my introduction, but I would like to start with a little bit of background and some context. This academic year, there have been many peaceful protests, vigils, and gatherings on the Emory campus. There have been more than 70 events that have engaged open expression observers, working under our open expression policy. Among all the events that have taken place over the academic year, none of these have included encampments, and my position has always been encampments aren't allowed on campus, and why is that? First, they can be incredibly disruptive to the core functions of the university, and in doing so, can affect the experiences and the work of the thousands of Emory community members who live here, learn here, and do work here. Our open expression policy, I think, is very good, and I know in the Senate last year there's been lots of discussion about it, and it provides very broad opportunity to speak, to dissent, and to protest. But there are limitations, and I believe a reasonable limitation is to not allow encampments. There are many other times, places, and means to protest under Emory's open expression policy. From what I've seen at other universities, encampments grow over time, but they do need to end at some point. The longer an encampment is in place, the harder it is to come to an end. There are examples of universities that have allowed encampments to remain for an extended period of time, and I believe the impact has been enormous. Now, with that background, I want to give a very brief context to two weeks ago, what was happening on the Emory campus. Early in the morning on Monday, April

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22nd, individuals vandalized a number of buildings on the quad. EPD, our Emory Police Department, investigated these actions and identified potential threats to the campus. As a result of that investigation after the vandalism, EPD was in a heightened state of readiness. For example, several buildings on the quad were card access only, and their patrols and security had been increased, and that's how the week began. I'd like to share more information about the timeline and the decisions on April 25th, but for now, I'll pause and ask the Senate to begin their questions.

George Shepherd: Thank you very much, President Fenves. First the question would be by Nitika.

Nitika Gupta: Well, thank you, everybody. Thank you, President Fenves, for being here. As you know, my last year as Senate president, I was really focused on developing a process, transparency, and above all, accountability. So of course, my question is around your process. First question is, what's your process for getting information about critical events happening all over campus? Who provides you the information? Who's your team? And the second question is, what's your process for making a decision, especially if it's a critical decision, who do you consult with and who's your team? Thank you.

Greg Fenves: Yeah. So thank you Dr. Gupta, and I think this would be a time to answer your question by going over what happened on the morning of April 25th to be specific about the process for that morning. So early in the morning, a few dozen protesters arrived on the campus. When they arrived, they ignored and pushed past the EPD officers who had been on the quad, for the reason I just mentioned a few minutes ago, and then went to set up tents and other equipment. The encampment was set up in the quad in an area that had already been taped off in front of the commencement stage for the preparations that were underway at the time, for the ceremony. Now, going past this taped area in front of the commencement stage already was a disruptive action, but in addition, the individuals, with part of their equipment and who was there, brought their own media that had cameras set up at several locations. There appeared to be advisors or monitors of the protest that were not open expression advisors, so the assessment was at the time that this was pre-planned and well-organized. In addition, we became aware, around that time there were social media posts on several outlets, calling for others to come to the quad at Emory. When the participants were going from the street, the parking lot, to the quad, they would not identify themselves as students or Emory community members, and so it was because of these factors, EPD made the assessment that these individuals were not Emory community members. Now, as I've said earlier, based on what we know now, it's clear that the assessment was not fully accurate. But we had the other information at the time, which I've mentioned, including the threats that had been identified by EPD a few days earlier, and the risk that this encampment would grow as it was set up and being organized, and had the potential to turn into an ongoing disruption in the heart of the campus, and so, as a result of that, with the information I had at the time, I made the decision that we needed to end the encampment. In this particular case, Dr. Gupta, to get to your answer, let me back step back a moment in a situation like this. When it comes to law enforcement, the Emory Police Department manages the day-to-day safety operations on our campus, but on occasion, and very occasionally, such as on April 25th, when a strategic decision needs to be made, the chain of command starts with the chief of EPD, and then goes to me as president. I will make a final decision based on the information available at the time and the EPD assessment. On April 25th, our chief of police was out sick, so our deputy chief of police was at the start of the chain of command, followed by the VP for Public Safety, Cheryl Elliott, and then me. With

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information from these two law enforcement leaders, I did make the decision that we needed to end the encampment because of the concerns that I'd mentioned, especially that would grow over time. Now, what does that mean? EPD is a small department. During the day, there might be, at best, eight officers on campus. It depends, and at that time, EPD did not have enough officers to be able to remove the equipment with the number of people who were in the encampment. And so, in order to do this, we did need support from outside agencies, which we received from the Atlanta Police Department and Georgia State Patrol, and they acted on my direction to end the encampment, so that is the timeline.

Nitika Gupta: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Next would be Jodie.

Jodie Guest: Good afternoon, President Fenves. Could you walk us through the decision-making about bringing additional police forces onto campus, APD, Georgia State Patrol? And again, who made those decisions to bring them on campus?

Greg Fenves: Yeah, so I want to just be clear to the faculty and everybody. On campus, it was my decision to end the encampment, and I directed EPD as our police department to do that. Again, and I'm trying not to sound repetitive, but I want to be clear, it is a small department, and so they needed to request assistance from other law enforcement agencies. APD is our normal assistance, because we are in the city of Atlanta, but in this case, APD and Georgia Patrol did provide that support that was necessary to achieve what I had asked for. How that support is provided by law enforcement agencies is a determination on their part, and what they need given the information that they have, and so the primary request from me was the EPD, and then it was in collaboration with the other agencies to be prepared to end the encampment if it didn't end voluntarily.

Jodie Guest: Thank you. Just to put a finer point on that, so EPD called APD, but we're still not certain who called Georgia State Patrol on our campus. Is that correct?

Greg Fenves: So, what we have now is that I certainly directed EPD, and they worked with APD. I don't know the exact sequencing of working with other agencies, including Georgia State Patrol.

Jodie Guest: Okay, thank you. Then, can you walk us through the process, when outside police force are brought Emory's campus, can you talk us through the Joint Incident Command Center, and who takes command and how they decide they're going to fulfill their end goal with their procedures?

Greg Fenves: So EPD has arrangements with all law enforcement agencies, not just city, county, and state, but they work with all of them. When there are outside support forces to assist EPD in what they need to accomplish, you've used the term that I introduced in our previous conversations. They do set up a joint incident command center where they are communicating and collaborating on the specifics of how to do that.

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Jodie Guest: Thank you very much.

George Shepherd: Shervon?

Shervon Lewis: Thank you. Good afternoon, President Fenves. First question is how were individuals determined as Emory or not, and were police told to treat them differently?

Greg Fenves: Well, let me answer the second question first. Our EPD officers do not treat anybody differently. They treat everybody that they interact with on the campus the same, and that's part of their job. In the case of that morning, as individuals were coming to the campus, some of them were asked by EPD officers who were there if they're members of the Emory community. That's a normal process, that if an EPD officer decides they want to identify who is on campus, there is an expectation that there'll be answered. In this case, as I mentioned earlier, there was either no answer, just pushing past, or going by the police officers. So in absence at that time, the assessment was that these were not Emory community members.

Shervon Lewis: Thank you. My second question is, when was the administration notified of the arrests made, and what information did you get?

Greg Fenves: Well, once the arrests were made, that goes through its own process. As I understand it, we were getting information through the morning, and even later in the day, to understand who had been arrested. And that did take some time, so it happened over a period of time from the morning to the afternoon.

George Shepherd: Neeti.

Neeti Patel: Hi, everybody. I'm sorry, just one second. So my questions were was the University Senate standing Committee on Open Expression involved in the chain of events that occurred Thursday morning?

Greg Fenves: So first of all, I called Dr. Gupta who, as the University Senate president or outgoing president, I may not have been right about the timing. I did ask Dean Gelaye to work through Campus Life and open expression to contact the chair of the Open Expression Committee. There are some details that I don't have exactly how those conversations went, but the response I got back is that they had been notified. Why that's important is, by that time, I had determined that this was a disruption and such a potential disruption, it wasn't an open expression event and needed to be ended.

Neeti Patel: Okay. Did leadership and/or open expression attempt to discuss the protestors demands on site on Thursday?

Greg Fenves: No. As I said, I did make the decision that this wasn't an open expression event, and so there was no engagement with the protestors.

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Neeti Patel: Okay. And then, lastly, what was the administration's plan in preparation for any encampments on campus prior to Thursday?

Greg Fenves: So that's a great question. EPD knows of my decision that encampments aren't allowed, as you all know, and especially as the Senate knows, we had an issue a little over a year ago that was the same type of question, encampment. Overnight camping was not allowed, and they handled it in the protocols that they used at that time, which were similar to April 25th, but of course, it was a very different situation, and it evolved more quickly compared with a year ago.

Neeti Patel: Okay.

George Shepherd: Thank you.

Nitika Gupta: President Fenves, may I just clarify. You had called me to inform me, correct? We were not part of the process for counsel.

Greg Fenves: Correct.

Nitika Gupta: Thank you.

Greg Fenves: I called you to let you know. I had already made that decision.

Nitika Gupta: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Yes. President Fenves, who decided to move all the demonstrators to a small area within the quad before Georgia State Patrol arrived?

Greg Fenves: So I know that question has been asked, and I don't have an answer to it, because I'm not aware of what happened or how it happened, and that's going to be part of the things we're going to look at in terms of the decision-making.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Who made the final decision to disperse the demonstration?

Greg Fenves: That was my decision. It was part of the process. Once EPD informed me that they were ready, they needed from me a final decision to issue a dispersal order. That's the term they use, and I gave that permission, and they proceeded to do that.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: And finally, what was the impetus for bringing in Georgia State Patrol a second time in the evening?

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Greg Fenves: Throughout the day, there was quite a bit of protest activity. Again, it was under open expression, took place over many hours, but early in the evening, I don't have the exact timing, the part of the protest moved over to the Candler School of Theology. At that time, the Candler School of Theology, the members of the Candler School were in the building, and I understand that they were having a gathering, a vigil, and wanted to keep it to the Candler community that was past the hours of the building, so the doors were locked. But in that early hour, a portion of the protest did go over to the Candler School of Theology, and it turned violent in attempting to enter the building that had been locked. And so, that had escalated the level of violence that had not been present throughout the day, and it was for that reason that the Georgia State Patrol were addressing that situation and trying to reduce the potential for additional violence.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Thank you. Now, Neeti has asked if she can have a very, very brief follow up?

Greg Fenves: Okay.

Neeti Patel: Yeah, just a quick clarification. So as George stated initially, the first time you were asked these questions was on Tuesday, April 30th in a Senate exec committee meeting almost a week ago. You've now had almost two weeks since Thursday to gather information on some of these questions, including the events on Thursday, and you're saying you still don't know the specific answers, including who called GSP?

Greg Fenves: As I mentioned also at the beginning, last week, we have a review that is just in the early stages. There is a lot of information and facts to gather. That process is in the very early stages, and that's what this review is about, to gather that information.

Neeti Patel: Okay. Thank you.

George Shepherd: Tolu

Toluwanimi Olaleye: Yeah, good afternoon. Communication, again, very important. What was the impetus for telling people to avoid the quadrangle early Thursday morning?

Greg Fenves: So that was a EPD decision. When there is a disturbance or the police are present, that's a normal warning that EPD issues and it goes through our CEPAR, and it's just a warning to the entire community about the activity.

Toluwanimi Olaleye: Okay. Then, my next question is why did the first communication say that Emory had limited involvement in the demonstrations?

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Greg Fenves: As I said, that was not fully accurate, and it was based on the information I had at the time. Any communication in a situation like this, there's a balance of getting a message out as quickly as possible, so people understand what is going on, compared with waiting until we can determine, in more specificity, the facts. In this case, I did err, perhaps, on sending the message out soon, because I felt it was important to do so.

Toluwanimi Olaleye: And my next question is, what is the communication strategy when the university decides to lock the doors?

Greg Fenves: So that's something we do need to work on, because it does affect members of the community. Again, the doors were locked because of a security concern that was related to information from the incident of vandalism and other information collected, and we do need to improve our communication protocols for everyone who uses the buildings that may be on a card access.

Toluwanimi Olaleye: And then, my final question is, for the Emory emails that you sent out, was the review process followed as compared to other emails that you have sent out before?

Greg Fenves: Yes. We have a standard process when I send a message, to try to look at it from multiple perspectives to make sure it's as accurate as possible. And I've already addressed one of the concerns there, but again, when it's an urgent message, there is that trade-off between review and fact checking, and I felt it was important to get that message out.

Toluwanimi Olaleye: Okay. Thank you.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Yeah. Thank you, George. President, while we know that people were arrested on that day, would the arrested faculty members face any consequences or repercussions from the university administration, and if yes, what are the probable consequences?

Greg Fenves: We have not looked at that yet. That's going to go through our processes, and I'm not prepared to answer that question at this moment.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Okay. And the second question I had, while there are a lot of graffiti on site, and facility management employees are asked to go out on site at any hour of the day to remove those graffiti and protest items. What is the university doing to ensure their safety?

Greg Fenves: So we depend on our facilities staff to be able to do the repairs and the cleanup, whether it's after vandalism or after any type of event on campus. This has been a lot of extra work for our facility staff and we are concerned about their safety, so our intent is to work with facilities management to make sure the staff who are doing that work are able to do it in a safe manner. While we're on that topic, I would like to just mention one thing, and I know there have been some incidents of a facilities worker out there, covering up a graffiti on a building, painting, cleaning up, and they've been yelled at and asked to

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not cover it up, saying that they're violating the open expression policy. I want to be clear that open expression does not allow messaging of any kind on our building, so our facilities workers are doing their job.

George Shepherd: I think Mustapha just had a brief follow up to his first question.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Yeah, just a follow-up. So now that you don't know exactly if there will be consequences for faculty, are you willing to intercede for faculties personally if it comes down to consequences?

Greg Fenves: I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last part?

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: I mean, if it comes down to any consequences, are you willing to intercede for them with whatever charges?

Greg Fenves: Well, so Emory is not pursuing dropping charges of anybody that was charged in the event. And that's for anybody that has been charged. If your question is what is Emory as a university doing, the consequences of a faculty member or a student, we have processes for addressing each one of those. And it depends on whether it's a student, faculty, or staff.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Thank you.

George Shepherd: The next person to ask the question would be April, but she's not here, so Noelle, could you ask April's question?

Dawn Francis-Chewning: George, I think I was tagged with that because now-

George Shepherd: Okay, I'm sorry. Let's have Dawn do it.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: So, President Fenves, how does the rhetoric of trespassing/non-Emory-affiliated people align with our strategic plan, the pillar that is Emory and Atlanta?

Greg Fenves: Well, Atlanta is very important to Emory, and I hope Emory is very important to not only Atlanta, but the entire community. Every day we have hundreds, if not thousands of people on our campus from Atlanta and from beyond. They're here to attend events, go to lectures, participate in programs that we have, go to performances in the arts, and that's what our campus should be for everyone in Atlanta and individual communities within Atlanta, but like anybody on the campus, there are rules and there are limitations. And so, those rules of limitations apply to whether they're Emory members of the community or not directly affiliated to Emory, and so it's not unlimited for anybody to come here, or to be here or to come here and to violate the rules.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

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George Shepherd: Noelle.

Noelle McAfee: Can y'all hear me? Can you hear me?

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Yes, very well.

Noelle McAfee: Okay. I apologize. I'm in Rome, and I can't get a good connection. My question, summarize a previous question and answer, and pose a quick follow-up. Previously I've asked you, if you had to do this over again with the same limited information, but the hindsight from this experience, what you would do differently and you replied that you would try to end this as peacefully as possible. So my follow-up, which I articulated earlier, I'll just be really brief here, is would you be willing to engage protests like this, that was peaceful protests, peacefully, and without the police being involved by having administrators or some faculty members go in and talk with the students to try to work out an alternative?

Greg Fenves: So you have asked me that question before, and the answer to that question very much depends on the circumstances, and I felt that at that time, that that was not a viable option because of the factors that I've already mentioned. Other times and other situations that may be worth considering but an encampment does provide a disruption, and I'm not prepared to begin negotiating to end a disruptive behavior.

Noelle McAfee: So, with all due respect, the disruption happened when the police attacked the students.

Greg Fenves: The way the encampment was set up, and encampments in general are going to be a disruption to the university, and I am very concerned about that, and that's why I made the decision.

Noelle McAfee: All right. Thank you.

George Shepherd: Okay. Next we move on to the next section of our time together this afternoon, which is where faculty representatives of the executive committee will ask questions that have been submitted by faculty who are observing online, so we will just rotate through the various faculty members here who will ask the questions that have been selected. Nitika?

Nitika Gupta: Yes, so this question has been asked. Mustapha asked about charges against faculty. I think the faculty on the call also want to know if your stance is the same for charges against students, because the faculty are concerned about the students too.

Greg Fenves: Yes, and I did answer that question this morning with the students, and Emory does not plan to pursue that.

Nitika Gupta: Not to pursue?

Greg Fenves: Not to pursue dropping charges.

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Nitika Gupta: Not to pursue dropping charges. Okay, thank you.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: President Fenves, can you tell us about any plans that you had made prior to the protest on Thursday? What kind of notification did you have that an encampment might be coming to the university and what kind of plans and policies you were considering at that time?

Greg Fenves: So there was no direct notification that encampment was planned for that morning that I'm aware of. What I was aware of is what I mentioned in the introduction, is the investigation of the vandalism that previous Monday morning did cause a great deal of concern in EPD that alerted us to it. And that's why that week there was a heightened state of watchfulness and alertness. There was no, to my knowledge, specific information of what that would be, but a general indication that there was a concern.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Noelle.

Noelle McAfee: Yeah, thank you. Again, it's someone else's question. Why can't encampments or tents be at Emory?

Greg Fenves: Again, I mentioned this earlier. I think they can be incredibly disruptive to the campus and all individuals that are at the campus. It's like taking over a classroom. That means the classroom can't be used for other purposes. They can't be used for discussions when you take over, and encampments imply a permanent. That means that's space that belongs to everybody at Emory. That space can be used in many ways. It can be used for protests that don't have that sense of place that an encampment does. Then, I observe what's happened at other universities, what's happening at other universities, and the level of disruption is significant, that I don't think we should have that at Emory.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Yes. Thank you. So, President, you mentioned earlier that the protestors did not identify themselves to EPD when approached. Would the decision have gone differently if people had identified themselves as Emory?

Greg Fenves: Well, it's hard to answer a hypothetical question, because if that was the only issue, that would be one question, but it was the entire set of circumstances that I mentioned at the beginning, the heightened state of alert, that there was an increased awareness of threat to Emory based on the information from the investigation of vandalism, the organization and the way it rapidly developed on the quad, the equipment that was part of the tents and other aspects of the equipment. As I mentioned, there

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was media and advisors that were definitely non Emory being set up, and the social media posts that were starting to be monitored on different social media channels to come to the Emory quad.

George Shepherd: Next would be Nitika, except she had to step away, I guess probably to save some lives, and so Alicia will ask her question.

Alicia DeNicola: Hi. Thank you. Dr. Fenves, did you expect this level of violence to students and faculty when police and GPS arrived, and what do you think could have prevented it, or could you have stopped it after it started?

Greg Fenves: Well, nobody supports that level, including the police. And when we asked for assistance and EPD asked for assistance, and I've gone over that, the expectation is that we'll be able to end an encampment peacefully, and so nobody expected that or wanted it.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: What kind of communication did you have with the leaders of the student protest groups prior to the morning of Thursday, April 25th?

Greg Fenves: Well, there had been communication throughout different aspects of the university. Certainly, Campus Life had been involved, and I don't have all the information of what they had been working on as the division in the university that works with students and student organizations. In February, I had met with a couple of groups of students, and heard some of their demands, and so there had been some discussion throughout the semester.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

Noelle McAfee: Thank you. I would like to add another line to Nitika's question. Not only did you expect the level of violence, do you tolerate the level of violence that the police had on bystanders, students, faculty?

Greg Fenves: Nobody wants police brutality, and I can speak for our Emory Police Department. They go through a internal review process and I have spoken with the police chief and they are preparing that, and other law enforcement agencies do that.

George Shepherd: Noelle, I guess you are on the list to ask the next question too.

Noelle McAfee: Yes. Do you plan to meet with student protesters now or soon?

Greg Fenves: So that's a great question. There was a lot of protests taking place in the days afterwards, and for the most part, for nearly all of it, it was within our open expression policies. I have to commend our open expression team for all the work they did, working with students and organizers to be able to have those protests. Right now, my priority has been on getting through the end of the semester to make

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sure that we can have a commencement, as I announced this morning. There's a lot of planning and coordination that needs to be done over the next couple days to get to commencement over the weekend and, finally, on Monday. So right now, that's my priority. Longer term, and maybe we conclude with some of the discussion, there is long-term work to do at Emory, and I certainly recognize that. I want to work with the Senate, with the faculty, and through Campus Life about how we can organize those discussions and make them productive.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Thank you. President, would you please convey to us what you have learned from the recent campus activities, and looking ahead, what would you do differently in the future?

Greg Fenves: Well, what I've learned is I think what all of us has seen, this is a very contentious time in the country and the world, and we're seeing it on university campuses. So, I think the work to do for the future is, how do we keep a focus on our mission, our education, our research, the services and the role in society, and be able to have productive discussions, even with highly contentious issues? And so, that's what I see as the work ahead for Emory University.

George Shepherd: Alicia.

Alicia DeNicola: Thanks. What are you doing now to repair trust on our campus?

Greg Fenves: So my goal is to repair trust, and I realize it is not going to happen quickly. It's not going to happen with a couple of webinars this week. This was a decision and consultation with the Senate, of being able to speak what I've said, and the timeline and the facts as we know them, why I made the decision, but the repair, the rebuilding of trust is going to be a long-term project.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: Thank you. What can you commit to doing now to ensure that a situation like this never happens again, that we don't redo Thursday, the 25th?

Greg Fenves: Well, what I can commit to is things I've already said, is that we are reviewing this, and that's, I think, a very important part of what we do to review the Emory decision-making, because we want to make sure this doesn't happen again, but that's the review. There's a lot of information. We're just getting our outside investigator organized. That is, frankly, going to take some time to be able to collect the information, look at the facts, and develop recommendations about how to improve our process. What I can commit to now is that I still have the priority of keeping the campus safe, and it is circumstance-dependent. But what I can commit to now is that we look at it as carefully as we can with the experience of the last couple of weeks, but with the intention of improving our decision-making process.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

**Transcript of the Faculty/Post-Doc Listening Session with
Emory University President Greg Fenves on May 6, 2024, 2-3pm**

*This meeting was moderated by the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 combined Executive
Committee of the Emory University Senate.*

George Shepherd: Noelle.

Noelle McAfee: Yes. If you witnessed police brutality against one of our students, and they asked you to walk away, would you walk away?

Greg Fenves: Noelle, if I was-

George Shepherd: Noelle, that was not the question that you were supposed to ask. That was not the question that was agreed upon.

Neeti Patel: I want to hear the answer, actually. I kind of want to hear the answer.

George Shepherd: No. We're going to proceed with the questions that have been posed.

Noelle McAfee: I'll [inaudible 00:41:39]. That's fine. I'll leave it unanswered. That's fine. My question is, to what extent are the trustees involved with or concerned with the decisions that led to Thursday's arrest or the protests?

Greg Fenves: How are the trustees involved, and are they concerned? The trustees have been calling me. They want to know the same facts that I've just gone over and the reason for my decision, and they're certainly following it closely.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Oh, yeah. Can you tell us about his plan for review or investigation processes on the decision made on the 25th?

Greg Fenves: Yes. I had mentioned this earlier. I'll repeat it. So we are in the process in the early stages, I should say. Last week we were just in the process of hiring an experienced investigator. We are still working on collecting overall structures of information for the investigator to look at. They will be interviewing people, and we'll have a process, potentially, for others to ask to be interviewed. This will take some time because of the amount of information. As we get this better organized and this early stages, I said we'll have some more information for the campus community about the review. But I do want to be clear, the scope of the review is the facts that we knew at the time and going into those and where they were correct, where there was additional information that we didn't know, or where they incorrect, and the review of the process Emory used in making its decision. So that's what the scope of this review is. Again, I just want to recognize, because of the amount of information, this will take some time. We'll try to do it as expeditiously as possible, but I don't have a timeframe yet now for that.

George Shepherd: Alicia.

Alicia DeNicola: Did the administration evacuate the campus on the 25th of April?

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Greg Fenves: No.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: Tell us your stance on protecting brief speech for faculty and students without threat of retribution.

Greg Fenves: Well, open expression is our policy. There is no retribution or any other restriction on open expression that follows our rules. It's when there is an encampment, and in this case, I did make the decision that the encampment did not follow our rules, then it's outside of our open expression policy, and there is an expectation that rules that the rules will be followed. But again, I want to emphasize, open expression is very broad for all members of the community: faculty, staff, students, and invited guests that are on the campus.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Noelle.

Noelle McAfee: Were the deans included in any conversations about procedure on Thursday or since then?

Greg Fenves: The deans were not involved in the decision on Thursday. Since then, our provost, Ravi Bellamkonda, has been keeping the deans informed, along the lines I've already spoken with. I've met with the deans, I think, at least once. There was another meeting with the deans on related issues, and I've talked with a few deans, but they were not involved in the decisions.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Yes, thank you. So, you have mentioned sometimes ago that you were on the quad on the day of the protest at around 8:00 AM. Can you tell us what you saw at that time?

Greg Fenves: So I wasn't on the quad. I was in Convocation Hall and could see the area of encampment from the window at Convocation Hall. What I saw at the time, I've already relayed. It looked like a very well-planned organization. As I mentioned, cameras were set up at a couple of locations. We'll identify the exact number. There were individuals with some kind of vest and hat walking around, talking to anybody that came close to the encampment. They were not Emory personnel, and my view from Convocation Hall is that was very well organized.

George Shepherd: Next would be Alicia.

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Alicia DeNicola: We have policing legal scholars, historians at Emory, who are leaders in their fields, and have written about what happens when police are involved. Were any faculty brought into the conversation on how to address what we all knew was likely coming with protests and encampments?

Greg Fenves: So Alicia, no. The answer is no. I did not engage faculty. This is important scholarly work. It's important to study, but I did not engage any of any faculty in the decision that I made.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: Thank you. So President Fenves, this conflict has deeply impacted all the individuals at Emory. As an institution dedicated to fostering dialogue and understanding, it's crucial that we provide a platform for constructive discourse. Going forward, would you be willing to have open discussions, forums, panels, you name the style with students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds who can share their perspectives, experiences, and concerns in a respectful and an inclusive environment?

Greg Fenves: I'm open to doing that and looking at ways to do it. I think it is important that it'd be open, it'd be respectful, it'd be productive, and such as the discussion as we're having now with all the limitations of a webinar, so I think that is part of the process that I want to look to and try to do it as best as I can, recognizing there will be some other duties and other things, but I am committed to doing this work.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Noelle.

Noelle McAfee: Can you give us an update on investigations about graffiti on campus?

Greg Fenves: So I don't have any additional information. EPD, again, as a small department, their focus has been on safety. I can't speak for them. I don't want to speak for them, but I guess the investigative work has been at a lower priority and backburner with the safety issues from after April 25th with the many activities and events that took place on the Emory campus, and they're continuing to do that as we plan for commencement and providing a safe environment for commencement this weekend. So I don't have any more information on the status of the investigations specifically related to the graffiti incidents.

George Shepherd: Mustapha.

Greg Fenves: Let me add. I should add, there has been a lot more graffiti on campus in the past week. It may have tapered off, but EPD and Facilities was getting multiple reports a day of new graffiti in different locations on campus, and so their EPD is prioritizing what they can investigate.

George Shepherd: Mustapha, and then after that, I guess we'll have closing remarks from President Fenves, because it looks like this last question will require some substantial answer too.

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Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Oh, yeah. So, my question is, now that we got an email this morning about the new change for the location of graduation, what is the university doing to provide transportation for graduates and their families?

Greg Fenves: So since we have a little bit of time, let me say, to answer your question, but before I answer your question, why did we make the change? After the events of April 25th and the encampment, a weekend and early last week, where there was a lot of protest activity on campus, as I mentioned, with a few exceptions fully with an open expression policy and an important part of protecting open expression. But I did also ask EPD to be able to do an assessment of having the traditional commencement on campus. We did bring in a consultant on security and consult with other agencies, and as I said in my email, their recommendation was not to have it on campus. Again, on campus commencement on the quad, we have 14,000 people together. It takes a long time to set that up. The commencement preparations were already behind schedule on April 25th, but there was a real concern about having that number of people on campus, around campus for the ceremonies on the quad, in addition to all the school and college ceremonies that take place at different locations around the campus on that day or a few days earlier. So, the consultations we had is that it simply was not a prudent move to hold an on-person commencement. This was at a very late stage, and fortunately we were able to find a venue, now called the Gas South complex in Gwinnett County, that was able to accommodate most of what we needed to try to provide as normal commencement for the university commencement, the school commencements, and associated events around commencements. So, I'm very grateful to Gas South District to be able to do that on such short notice. We recognized that transportation was really important, and we recognized it was a hardship, and so we had already planned transportation arrangements for graduating students, and we'll be looking at getting that announced pretty soon for being able to get transportation from campus to the center. We recognize it's a hardship on many people and I just ask that anybody let their school or college know, and we want to try to address it as best as we can, but this will be a change and unwelcomed change, but it was essential be able to celebrate commencement, congratulate the class of 2024, and in these circumstances be able to provide it in a safe manner.

George Shepherd: Just before the closing remarks by President Fenves, just there was one final question from Jodie.

Jodie Guest: Sure. President Fenves, can you let us know if, at the new graduation venue, this is a question that came in from faculty, will there be the ability for people to have protests, and will Emory's open expression policy apply at the new graduation venue?

Greg Fenves: Yeah, so if you go through the FAQ, it talks about the policies for protest. We would like to have the ceremonies and not have it disrupted for the graduating students and their families, and I sincerely hope and expect that that's what we will be doing, but you'll see in the FAQ that was linked to my message about the process that is consistent with our open expression policy.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

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George Shepherd: President Fenves, we just have a few minutes left. Would you like to say anything more to the faculty?

Neeti Patel: Can I ask, President Fenves, if you'd be willing to give your time to two more questions that faculty had for you?

George Shepherd: I think we don't have time.

Neeti Patel: I'm asking President Fenves if he would like to yield his time to answer some of these questions.

George Shepherd: No. We're going to stick with the schedule that we've already decided, and President Fenves has the floor to for closing remarks.

Greg Fenves: Okay. Well, thank you Dr. Shepherd, and thank you to the Senate for organizing this. I know this was a lot of work on your part, and that means a lot to me. As I've said a couple of times, we're focusing on finishing the semester with exams, concluding the semester. I've already talked about commencement, but the real work ahead is beginning to find ways to work together. So, there were some good suggestions from Jodie. I plan to work with the Senate and how we can do this and make it productive long-term for Emory. I know the faculty, you all play a critical role in this, and I want to work with you and dedicate myself to rebuilding trust with the faculty and helping this community move forward. This is just a webinar. It's a small step with a lot of work ahead of us, but I want to make clear to the faculty, I'm committed to doing this work, and engaging with you in the weeks and the months ahead, as we look forward to the conclusion of this academic year and beginning the next academic year. So finally, thank you for giving me this opportunity through the webinar to speak with you.

George Shepherd: Well, thank you so much, President Fenves, for appearing here today and answering the questions, and I also wanted to thank the Senate Executive Committee, including the faculty representatives, and also, thank you to the hundreds of faculty who have observed this and who have submitted questions. I hope so much that this is a first step to helping our beloved Emory heal and to thrive. Good afternoon.