

Transcript of the Staff Listening Session with Emory University President Greg Fenves on May 7, 2024, 2-3pm

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

George Shepherd: Good afternoon. My name is George Shepherd, and I'm the President of the University Senate. The Senate is a body that represents the university broadly. It includes students, it includes faculty, it includes staff, and it includes alumni. I would like to welcome everyone to our meeting today. First, I would like to welcome the Senate's Executive Committee. They are the little faces and boxes that you see before you. A part of the Executive Committee is Emory's staff representatives. I welcome them too. In addition, I would like to thank President Fenves for being here. President Fenves has already met with us several times. He met with the Senate Executive Committee a week ago, and he met with the full Senate last Wednesday. Then yesterday morning, he met with us in a large webinar with students and then yesterday afternoon in another webinar with faculty. Finally, I would like to welcome the hundreds of staff who are watching this. The 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 two weeks so that we can all understand more fully what happened and how the decisions were made and if there are any lessons for the future. We have only an hour here together today, so we have decided not to devote further time to introductions. 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. We have divided them up among the committee, including the staff representatives on the committee. We have only about three minutes or so per questioner, so I've been authorized to be the friendly MC to remind people when time is almost up. I apologize in advance if I'm too harsh. After that, the staff representatives will ask questions that have been submitted by the staff who are watching. They 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 is not time for additional impromptu questions or statements. Finally, President Fenves will offer some closing remarks. So, I welcome President Fenves to open the discussion.

Greg Fenves: Hey, thank you, Dr. Shepherd, and thank you for organizing this webinar. I do want begin by saying that this is an unprecedented difficult time at Emory, and I've heard that clearly from across the campus for the past week or two. But I do thank the Senate Executive Committee for organizing the webinars this week. As Dr. Shepherd said, yesterday I spoke with a group of students and then in the afternoon the faculty. I want you, our staff, to hear the information that I have shared with the University Senate and with students and faculty. I've tried to be consistent in my answers across all these webinars so that all members of the community can hear, but then also, I can hear your specific questions as members of the Emory staff. To our staff, thank you for the work that you're doing to keep Emory running every day. You have many varied jobs across the university, and the university is only able to do its work because of what you are doing. Now, I'd like to start with a brief background and a little bit of context. This past academic year, which is just about to end, Emory's had many peaceful protests, vigils, and gatherings on our campus. There have been more than 70 events that have engaged Open Expression observers. Now, none of these events, protests, and other types of vigils have included encampments, and my position has always been that encampments aren't allowed on campus. So, the question is, why? Well, first, they can be incredibly disruptive to the core functions of the university and, in doing so, affect the experiences of the thousands of Emory community members who live, learn, and work here. Our open expression policy is very good. It provides a 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 need to end at some point. The longer an encampment is in place, the harder it is to end. There are examples of universities that have allowed

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encampments to remain for an extended period of time, and I believe the impact has been enormous. Now, I just want to give some brief context on what was happening on the Emory campus two weeks ago. Early in the morning on Monday, April 22nd, individuals vandalized numerous buildings on the Quad. The Emory Police Department investigated these actions and identified potential threats to the campus based on their investigation. As a result, EPD was in a heightened state of readiness, so, for example, several buildings on the Quad were card-access only, and EPD had increased their patrols and security on the campus. So that's how that week began. I'd like to share more about the timeline and decisions on April 25th. But for now, I'll pause for questions from the University Senate Executive Committee.

George Shepherd: Thank you very much, President Fenves. Our first question is from Nitika.

Nitika Gupta: Thank you, President Fenves, and thank you everybody for being here. President Fenves, as you know, my past year as president of the Senate, I was always focused on process, transparency, and accountability. So, I'm really curious to hear from you what your process is for gathering information when such an important event or any event or crisis is happening on our campus? What are your information sources, and then your process for how you make a big decision which involves the entire campus? Thank you.

Greg Fenves: Thank you, Dr. Gupta, for your service on the University Senate and for the question. That's a very broad question about decision-making processes. I think it would be best if I just focus on what the timeline was for April 25th and how that decision was made, and then we can have questions about that. So if it's okay with you, I'll go through the timeline. Early in that morning, a few dozen protesters arrived on the campus. When they arrived in the parking lots near the Quad around the campus, these individuals ignored and pushed past the EPD officers who were on the Quad, as I mentioned earlier, because of the heightened state of alertness. The protesters then went on to set up tents and other equipment. The encampment was set up in the Quad in an area that had been taped off in front of the commencement stage so that preparations could be made for commencement. Now, going past this taped area for commencement preparation already was a disruptive action since it had been taped off. These individuals brought their own media with cameras that had been set up in a couple of locations, and they appeared to have advisors or monitors around the Quad and around the encampment. So the assessment at that time is that it was pre-planned and well-organized. In addition, we became aware at that time that there were social media posts on several channels calling for others to come to the Quad at Emory. Now when asked, the participants would not identify themselves as students or Emory community members. So because of these factors, EPD made the assessment that these individuals were not affiliated with Emory. Now, based on what we know now, it is clear that this assessment was not fully accurate. But looking at all the information, I won't repeat what I just said about the setup of the encampment, the tents and the equipment and including the social media posts, in the context of the threats that had been identified by EPD in their investigation that I mentioned earlier, the risk that this encampment could grow and could have turned into an ongoing disruption, I did make the decision to end the encampment. Specifically to your question, in regards to April 25th, when it comes to law enforcement, the Emory Police Department manages the day-to-day safety of the campus through their operations. Occasionally and rarely, fortunately, 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, and I will make the final decision based on the information available at the time and EPD assessment. Now, on April 25th, our chief of police was out sick, so the deputy chief of police was at the start of the chain of command, followed by VP for Public Safety, Cheryl Elliott, and

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then me. With the information from these two law enforcement leaders, I did make the decision to end the encampment because of the concerns that it would grow, along with the factors that I had mentioned earlier. Now, EPD is a small department. During the day there might be eight officers on campus. It depends day to day. EPD did not have enough officers to remove the encampment. So in order to do this, we needed support from outside agencies, which we did receive from the Atlanta Police Department and the Georgia State Patrol. I want to be clear that the EPD was acting under my direction to end the encampment, and they worked with the agencies to provide the law enforcement that was needed to do that.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Nitika Gupta: Thank you.

Jodie Guest: Thank you, President Fenves. Can you walk us through why outside forces were needed on campus on Thursday the 25th, and who made that decision?

Greg Fenves: Well, Jodie, I'll repeat what I just said earlier. Given the size of the encampment and the expectation that it was going to grow after the time I made the decision to end it. EPD needed additional officers to be able to do that. It's a small police department, as I mentioned. EPD works with all law enforcement agencies, city, county, and state, and APD and Georgia State Patrol, as I mentioned, provided that support. So I want to be clear that how that support is provided is their determination of what is needed based on Emory's decision to end the encampment.

Jodie Guest: It's EPD's determination of what they need to support them, correct?

Greg Fenves: It is EPD's determination of what is needed in this case to support my directive to them to end the encampment.

Jodie Guest: Right, okay. Thank you very much. Then when additional outside forces, like Georgia State Patrol and Atlanta Police Department join EPD on campus, can you walk through the Joint Incident Command Center and who takes control of decisions once those joint forces are on campus?

Greg Fenves: So I can answer in general, and this is part of the protocols that EPD has with other agencies, is that when EPD calls other agencies for support, they do set up a Joint Incident Command Center, and they work together to be able to accomplish what Emory has asked them to do. The specifics of that, of how they work together, I can't answer and I'm not involved in, but the outside agencies are acting under the direction of EPD in terms of the overall approach.

Jodie Guest: Can EPD be in charge of the tactics used by the outside forces when they're on campus?

Greg Fenves: That's a good question. I think that I can't answer it now. That's part of the protocols that EPD has with the other agencies together.

Jodie Guest: Thank you, President Fenves.

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George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: How were individuals determined as Emory or not, and were police told to treat them differently?

Greg Fenves: Well, when EPD asks somebody are they a member of the Emory community, they're expected to answer yes or no. In this case, the answer was either no or there was no answer, so EPD did not have that information. But EPD provides service across the campus and they treat all individuals the same, whether they're part of the Emory community or not directly affiliated with Emory.

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

Greg Fenves: The arrests were done by the police. The information came in over the course of the morning and even through the afternoon, so we were getting updates. But because lots was happening and we wanted to be able to keep supporting open expression on the campus after the encampment was ended and after the arrest, I wasn't keeping an eye on the arrests. Now, eventually we had a list of who was arrested and what the charges were.

George Shepherd: Neeti.

Neeti Patel: Thank you. Was the University Senate Standing Committee on Open Expression involved in the chain of events from Thursday morning?

Greg Fenves: First of all, I did contact Dr. Gupta as president of the Senate just for information, what was happening, and my plan to ask for the encampment to be ended. Then Open Expression was contacted. We'll go through... Well, part of our review will be exactly who called whom to make sure, but the information I got back is that Open Expression had either been contacted or hadn't responded. We're not quite clear at this point. But it was really for information, As I did not consider this an Open Expression event for the reasons I mentioned earlier, the concern that it was going to grow rapidly. So the chair of the Open Expression Committee was informed of that.

Neeti Patel: You said you're not clear. I just want to clarify. The first time you were asked these questions was almost two weeks ago, so you've had now two weeks to gather this information on these questions you know that the community is looking for answers to and you still don't know fully.

Greg Fenves: I want to make sure when I speak it's very definitive, and that's part of the review is to examine step by step, time by time exactly who called who. I don't want to misspeak and mischaracterize. But what's important about the question is I had already decided that we needed to end the encampment, so I did not consider it an Open Expression event.

Neeti Patel: Then so did leadership, I guess, or Open Expression attempt to discuss the protesters' demands on Thursday?

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Greg Fenves: No.

Neeti Patel: And that was even after they were identified as Emory community members? Because I understand the protests carried on throughout the day.

Greg Fenves: Well, there were protests throughout the day, and yes, at that point, Open Expression observers and, I believe, the chair of the Open Expression Committee was involved throughout the day. The protests continued throughout that day and into the evening. Yes, certainly Open Expression observers and the Open Expression Committee were involved at that point.

Neeti Patel: In discussing demands? Were demands discussed?

Greg Fenves: I don't know if they had discussed with any of the protesters during that day.

Neeti Patel: Then lastly, what was the administration's plan in preparation for a potential encampment on campus?

Greg Fenves: We do scenario planning. I've been clear that I don't allow encampments on campus, and so EPD was aware of that. That's why when the EPD saw the protesters approaching, I was alerted immediately. We set up the system that I mentioned earlier to get information, and they had been part of the planning to do that.

Neeti Patel: And that's your stance, not policy, correct?

Greg Fenves: That is my stance and interpretation of open expression, yes.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you, President Fenves. Prior to the Joint Incident Center coming together, who decided to move all the demonstrators to a small area within the Quad before the Georgia State Patrol arrived?

Greg Fenves: I know this question has come up, and I can't answer because I'm not aware of a group of protesters moving or being moved in the morning.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you. Who made, in fact, the final decision to disperse the demonstration? Who made that final call?

Greg Fenves: Back to the question about planning and preparation, once EPD informed me that they were ready to be able to effect the end of the encampment, it is a decision that has to be confirmed and they have to provide an order to disperse. So EPD asked me, and I gave them that approval to issue a dispersal order.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you. Later on in the evening, what was the impetus for bringing in Georgia State Patrol yet again that evening?

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Greg Fenves: As I mentioned earlier, there were protests throughout the day. Open Expression was involved, Open Expression observers were there, and it was all peaceful until early evening on that Thursday. In the early evening, a group of protesters moved from the Quad to the Candler School of Theology. The Candler School of Theology, the building was locked at that time. Members of the Candler School were inside and they were having their own vigil, and the building was closed to only Candler School individuals. The group of protesters approached the building and tried to enter it, and there was some violence around that. As the protesters moved back to the Quad with the concerns of the violence potentially escalating, the Georgia State Patrol helped disperse the crowd to avoid further violence.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Francis.

Francis Yeji: Thank you, President Fenves. What was the impetus for telling people to avoid the Quad early Thursday morning?

Greg Fenves: As part of the planning that was asked earlier, when EPD is working and active in an area, our CEPAR protocol is to send out a campus-wide alert to avoid the area. That's done just for awareness and for safety. So that notice from CEPAR was sent out at least once. It may have gone out twice. But that's a standard protocol when EPD is involved in a situation.

Francis Yeji: Secondly, in your first released communication, why did you say that Emory had limited involvement in the demonstrations?

Greg Fenves: So in communicating in a urgent situation like this, there is a trade-off to communicate quickly and as clearly as possible with the information at hand or to take longer to provide more information or to confirm information. Because this was so significant in ending the encampment, I felt it was important to communicate to the entire campus community. It was based on the information we had at the time, which I said was not fully accurate. So that was just a result of I wanted to get it out quickly.

Francis Yeji: Finally, what is the communication strategy when the university decides to lock doors? What is the review process for Emory-wide emails sent out by you?

Greg Fenves: Well, so I'll answer the second question first. Emails that I send out, we have a process of internally reviewing messages, multiple steps, and try to make sure everything is accurate, and there are lots of different perspectives looking at the message. In a situation like this, we tried to do the same thing, but it was in a shorter time frame because I felt the urgency of getting a message out. But that's what we strive to do in any university communication, including my own. On the communication for limiting access to buildings, often where it hasn't been communicated, we recognize that that was an issue in the week beginning on April 22nd, because people wonder why they can't get in the buildings and how to get in or why they're card-access. That's something we will be looking at is what's the right way to communicate changes in building access.

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Francis Yeji: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Mustafa.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: Thank you very much, George. While we know that students were arrested in the day during the protest, would the student directly face any consequences from Student Conduct?

Greg Fenves: Well, those will be matters for Student Conduct to review. It'll be done on a case-by-case basis depending on which school the student is in. So those are going to be handled as Student Conduct cases.

Mustapha Oloko-Oba: My other question is, what is the university doing to ensure safety for Facilities Management employees who are asked to go outside at any hour of the day to remove the graffiti and other protest items?

President Fenves: Well, thank you for asking the question, especially as I'm speaking to the staff at Emory. I mentioned this at one of the earlier meetings with the Senate. A few days after April 25th, as I was walking on the Quad, I saw one of our Facilities staff, a painter, getting ready to work on removing graffiti that had been on the building. I just thanked him for his work because I know this is not the normal work that Facilities staff do. It was important to be able to, as quickly as possible, remove the graffiti and other things that were on the building. Let me make two points. One is that if any member of the staff feels unsafe, I'm very concerned about that, and we'd like to figure out how we can provide that safety. No worker and no staff should be in a situation that they feel unsafe. The second thing is I've heard reports of people yelling at members of our staff for removing graffiti, for painting, for temporarily covering up graffiti before it can be removed and yelling at them that they're violating the Open Expression policy. I just ask all members of the Emory community not to treat our staff like that. In fact, the Open Expression policy does not allow graffiti on buildings. So our facility staff who are covering them up and removing them are doing exactly what they need to be doing to accomplish their work.

George Shepherd: Our next question is from April. We normally have everybody on video, a image available, but she's home with an ill child, so it's okay that she's just participating just by voice. April?

Shervon Lewis I'll take April's question.

George Shepherd: Okay.

Shervon: How does the rhetoric of trespass... excuse me, trespassing non-Emory-affiliated people align with our strategic plan pillar of Emory plus Atlanta?

Greg Fenves: Well, every day we have hundreds, if not thousands, of Atlantans on our campus. That is so important to Emory, and we want Emory to be important to Atlanta. As you mentioned, the pillar that I added to the One Emory plan recognizes the importance of Atlanta to Emory, and we hope by Emory to Atlanta. We have visitors from our city, from our region, from across other parts of the state and the country and world come for lectures, come for events, come for programs, go to the museums, go to

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performances in our art center. That's what a university should be. We welcome them and look forward to having them here and even more programming that engages our communities. But like any place, there are rules and there are limits. So we hope and value all the Atlantans who come to Emory and enjoy and learn and interact and debate and even protest, but recognizing that there are limitations to that.

George Shepherd: Jodie.

Jodie Guest: President Fenves, is the administration willing to acknowledge any shortcomings in the approach that you all took on Thursday, April 25th in your decision-making before, during, after the protest? If so, what specific areas does the administration feel they could have handled better?

Greg Fenves: Well, to answer those questions, I do want to answer those questions, that's why we had announced and we're in the early stages of a review. We've hired an experienced investigator to collect all the facts that we can gather, to go over the timeline, to examine the decision-making so that we can learn from that. Some of the questions that have come up the past week, "Why haven't we gotten more information?" it's important that this review be thorough to collect it so we can answer those questions and look at how to improve our decision-making.

Jodie Guest: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Now we're going to move to the part of our proceedings today where we pose questions that have been collected from the staff, from the people who are watching the proceedings today. First of all, the questions will be asked by the staff members of the Executive Committee. So first is Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: First question, how will your responses to these questions be widely circulated?

George Shepherd: Maybe I can jump in there-

Greg Fenves: [inaudible 00:30:52].

George Shepherd: -because I can tell you that what's going to happen is there will be a verbatim transcript that will be created of all three of the webinars. Those should be done within 24 hours, and they will be posted on the Senate website. Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: President Fenves, when did you request this detailed timeline report, and when will it be complete? More importantly, when and how will it be shared with the Emory community?

Greg Fenves: I did request it, let's see, I don't remember the exact date, but it was announced in one of the messages that came out either over the weekend or on Monday. I don't remember exactly which message it was. There is a lot of information, and there's a lot of facts. As I said, we're in the early stages of just getting organized to do that. We'll expect to have some more information about it next week or, I should say, within the next two weeks as we organize the structure and the process for that. The reason I say that there's a lot of facts, there's a lot of information is to be able to do it thoroughly, and we do want to do it thoroughly. It is going to take some time, and I don't have that estimate at this point. At this point,

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the goal is to focus on Emory decision-making that morning, and we'll look at what the decision process was, how it can be improved. We have not yet decided, since it's in its early stages, of what will be shared, but I do want to be able to share with the community some of the lessons learned.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Unless April is available, we'll have the question asked by Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thank you, George. Appreciate that. President Fenves, I know you just referenced a longer-term information gathering strategy so we can get a report. What will be done differently to keep our students, our faculty, and particularly our staff safe at the ongoing and future protests, and will police be involved?

Greg Fenves: Well, our goal is to keep everybody safe. Again, one of the reasons that encampments can be a problem, particularly the ones that go on for a long time, is it does affect safety of large numbers of people. Right now, we're focused on the immediate term of campus safety through the end of the semester. We're focused on celebrating commencement over the weekend and on Monday in our new location in Duluth. That decision, in fact, was informed by campus safety. I don't know if that was part of your question. We did look very, very seriously at how to provide a commencement on campus, recognizing that for the main event, we have 14,000 people on the Quad, but we have thousands and thousands of others that are on campus because of the other events. As I announced yesterday, the determination was and the recommendation was that, because of some of the things that I had mentioned earlier on, that it was just going to be very challenging to provide that environment for tens of thousands of people on campus. So that is an example of how we're taking safety as a paramount consideration.

Walter Kolis: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: Why are the sessions for staff separate from those of faculty and students?

Greg Fenves: Well, maybe, Dr. Shepherd, I'll ask you to help answer that question. I think there was some discussion about doing everybody at once or to be able to get questions from students, faculty, and staff separately and being able to address them. I don't want to turn the question over to you, but I think that was the approach that was taken for these webinars.

George Shepherd: It just seemed to be an approach that was logical, three extremely important groups on campus: the students, the faculty, and the staff. So that just seemed like a logical way to separate things up into manageable groups. Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: President Fenves, in messaging the Emory community you have specifically mentioned students and faculty. Why didn't you indicate support for staff in these same messages besides noting Facilities teams as cleanup crews and commencement facility preparers?

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Greg Fenves: I wish I had done it because I was focused on the students and the faculty at that time, and I should have recognized the staff who have to do their work under all these settings. What you all do is so important to me because it's so important to the university, and I will strive to be able to recognize you and thank you and try not to have that oversight again.

George Shepherd: Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thank you, George. President Fenves, why didn't the administration send out a notice about the initial Quad building vandalization that occurred overnight Sunday, April 21st into Monday, April 22nd? Why not engage the Emory community at that initial point, discuss what happened, and set the tone for what is and what is not acceptable in the name of protest?

Greg Fenves: Well, that's a very good question. Vandalism occurs on campus, sadly. This was an unusual amount, and with some of the other information that was gathered, it did increase the preparedness. This is a judgment call in communication of notifying the community of these types of terrible, terrible situation, but without also unduly alarming people. I can't promise that we get it right every time. Obviously, on Monday the 22nd after the vandalism was discovered, Facilities in particular worked quickly to clean it up. EPD, it had started its investigation. We did not make the decision that this was something that was worthy of a campus-wide communication, at least for me. I don't know. I can't recall if it was communicated any other way, but I don't think so. But it'd be important to have feedback about what the level of communication is, that would be helpful, recognizing that, unfortunately, these things do happen with some regularity. If you communicate it too often, people start to pay less attention.

Walter Kolis: Thank you, President Fenves. One brief follow up. Can you expand just briefly on your notification, about deciding when an all-campus notification is sent out and when it is not? What might rise to something requiring an all-campus notification and what might not? Thank you.

Greg Fenves: Thank you for the question. It's not my decision about an all-campus notification. That is a protocol that's planned for between EPD and CEPAR about communicating when there's police activity on campus.

Walter Kolis: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: In 2020, shortly after arriving at Emory, there was a partnership with a third party to re-engage EPD, consider what kind of public safety we want on campus, and build stronger alliances between EPD, our university community, and surrounding neighborhoods. Part of this review included reviewing and changing policies related to use of force and implementing a community-based policing model. How have those recommendations been implemented, including the decision to involve police on campus last week?

Greg Fenves: Well, that's a great question. There was a lot of work done after 2020, after I got here. Our executive vice president for Business Affairs, Chris Augostini, was leading this. We had outside

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consultants. Off the top of my head, I don't want to answer all your questions, but there was quite a bit of work that was done in reviewing EPD policies. Chief Elliott, Cheryl Elliott, who was chief at the time, was very, very involved in that. That's the first part of your question. The second part of the question is involving law enforcement agencies when EPD needs assistance. I don't know at this time, without going back to the work that was done several years ago, if that was part of the review of EPD and the work that took place, but we can certainly look into that and get that information.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: President Fenves, why was there not an attempt at de-escalation and negotiation from administration before the encampment was torn down?

Greg Fenves: It was my assessment based on the information there that I felt the risk of it growing with the way it was organized and the social media calls to come to the Quad, that the longer it went on, the more difficult it would be to end the encampment, so that was my decision. In terms of negotiation, negotiating to end conduct that's not permitted, that's something I'm concerned about doing because of the precedent that it can set.

George Shepherd: Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thank you, George. President Fenves, were you on campus on the morning of Thursday, April 25th when the protests began, and did you go down to meet with the protesters? If not, why not?

Greg Fenves: I was on campus. I got to my office at Convocation Hall about eight o'clock that morning, and so I was able to see parts of it from the window of Convocation Hall. Then, again, I decided not to go down there. We had our EPD officers down there and got the information. I decided at that time that it wouldn't be productive for me to go down there.

Walter Kolis: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: How is Emory University administration currently engaging with members of the Emory community who have been protesting on campus? What, if anything, is different before April 25th?

Greg Fenves: Since the morning of April 25th, there have been a lot of protests on campus, as I mentioned, throughout the rest of the day, throughout the weekend, early next week. We've had some on the Quad recently. They have all followed the Open Expression policy. They've all had Open Expression observers. I want to thank the Open Expression team and Campus Life for the incredible hard work that they're doing. It has worked for years at Emory. It worked through the weekend and since then. That's the engagement that's important to be able to enable protests at Emory.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

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Dawn Francis-Chewning: On Thursday, April 25th, people have asked, where were you that morning and what time did you leave?

Greg Fenves: As I said, I got there about eight o'clock. I don't know the exact time I left, but it was later in the morning.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: April. I'm sorry, Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thanks, George. President Fenves, given that Emory has CEPAR, the Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response, does that office have a protocol for responding to protests, and is it shared publicly? If not, why not? Then will Emory publicly share and make known its campus protocol moving forward?

Greg Fenves: CEPAR is our emergency response program. They're prepared for managing all kinds of emergencies across the Emory campus. They're not our police department, they're not a law enforcement agency, so they don't directly make any decisions related to protests. Those are done in conjunction with Open Expression that I had mentioned earlier and EPD. For most protests, CEPAR doesn't have a role, and it was in that situation with the decision to end the encampment that it was CEPAR's role to send out that notification.

Walter Kolis: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: Are you aware that the line that you've been using about outside agitators at the Free Palestine/Stop Cop City encampment was also historically used to discredit the Montgomery bus boycott and other forms of nonviolent resistance to corrupt institutions throughout American history?

Greg Fenves: Yes, I'm aware of that.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Clarification? Were you aware before you used the term or after?

Greg Fenves: I was generally aware before I used the term, and I will be more careful in using that in the future.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Dawn, it's your question again.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: President Fenves, how will you help the Emory community heal going forward?

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Greg Fenves: Well, that is my commitment to serve Emory. This is a time that we need to move forward including the important work of healing. I know these webinars are not sufficient. They are a first step. So, thank you for joining me this afternoon. We are thinking through and would love your advice about how to do that. I was going to end with some closing comments about being able to complete the semester with exams, the work of the university to be able to hold the commencement, to be able to communicate as best as possible over this short period of time, but then begin the steps to move forward, so you have my commitment on that.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Thank you.

George Shepherd: Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thank you. President Fenves, how do you see yourself leading the university after the past week given the votes pending or some votes that happened in the past of no confidence by some faculty and staff organizations, and how will you rebuild our trust?

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Correction, it was faculty and student organizations.

Walter Kolis: Thank you, Dawn. Correct, faculty and student organizations. Thank you.

Greg Fenves: Well, I heard the voices of the faculty who have voted, and I've heard the voices of the students. I'm disappointed that it has come to that. My goal, as I mentioned earlier, is to begin to rebuild their trust. It won't happen soon and it won't happen quickly, but that is my goal.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: Thank you. Will Emory revise or develop policy stating no encampments on the Quad? I saw a news report, not me, but this is what the person said, I saw a news report that at least one university in the United States has done so. I seem to recall, as a matter of fact, it was in metro Atlanta.

Greg Fenves: Well, the University Senate has already begun a process to review our Open Expression policy, and look forward to working with the Senate on that. I have spoken previously, I think one of the important aspects of any free speech or Open Expression policy is, what are the reasonable limitations on time, place, and manner? I think it would be immensely important to have clarity on what those limitations are, again, recognizing broad opportunity for speech, for dissent, for protest. But as I said earlier in the beginning, all free speech policies have some limitations, and I think that would be an important discussion as the Senate and the administration work together on improving the Open Expression policy.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: The general sentiment appears to be that the university should be dropping charges against current staff, faculty, and students who are arrested at the protest, specifically that the university should be looking out for its own members, especially because police were called because the protests were initially thought to be composed primarily of non-university members. Have the charges been dropped against university members regardless... well, not regardless, but perhaps the better

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question is, who's pressing the charges? If they've not yet been, can Emory or you guarantee that they will be?

Greg Fenves: Dawn, I can't guarantee they will be because Emory is not going to drop the charges, and some of the charges are not Emory's. The place for adjudicating that is in the court system, and Emory is not going to drop the charges.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis President Fenves, will you transparently state the order of which... excuse me, the order of whose concerns you prioritize during decision-making around campus protests and how you respond to them, for instance, is the order, students' concerns, then faculty's, then donors', then the broader public, etc.? Is it some other combination and some other order? Having knowledge of this will help everyone everywhere understand the process and maybe why some decisions are made helping cement accountability. If you do not have a formal order of whose concerns are prioritized, would you consider developing one to be made public?

Greg Fenves: Well, in this situation, my concern was for the campus to be able to carry out its mission of education and research, of open discussion, of protest without significant disruption. That should concern all members of the campus community. Encampments, particularly if they go on a long time, become incredibly disruptive to the purpose of the university and the work and the lives of thousands of people on campus. I feel that that's a campus priority because it affects everybody on campus.

George Shepherd: Dawn.

Dawn Francis-Chewning: Can you give us an update on the investigation about the graffiti on our campus?

Greg Fenves: The graffiti on the Monday of that week, I can't give you an update. That's still being investigated by EPD. Their priority has been campus safety as the weeks went on. So, I don't know where they are in their investigation and what the status of that is. But I do want to add in terms of the earlier question about vandalism, there's been a lot of vandalism on campus since that incident. For a while, almost every day, there was a new report of vandalism that required our Facilities to clean or remove. EPD was tracking it, but I don't know if they've investigated it.

George Shepherd: Shervon.

Shervon Lewis: What plans were made before Thursday in anticipation of these protests/encampments, and did these plans deal with de-escalation?

Greg Fenves: I think this question was asked earlier in a different way. EPD does alert for when encampments are established or our office, excuse me, our Open Expression Committee. It depends on the specific circumstances. For example, a couple of days later, there were student protests around the admissions building, and they had tents, and there was an ongoing discussion between Open Expression for several hours. Eventually, they needed to leave the building and leave that plaza. They were asked to do so by EPD officers. Then it continued on the Quad for several hours that evening. So those protocols

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work very well as they have in the past. The situation with that Thursday morning was different because of the way the encampment was established and the factors that I won't repeat again.

George Shepherd: Walter.

Walter Kolis: Thank you. President Fenves, the commencement has moved to Gas South Arena. Could you please explain the decision for why that was made?

Dawn Francis-Chewning: [inaudible 00:55:29].

Walter Kolis: Will Open Expression policies apply at the alternate location?

Greg Fenves: The decision was made because we consulted with EPD. We had a consultant that specialized in these kind of questions and other agencies. The recommendation from them was that, for safety's sake, having several tens of thousands people on the campus in one day was going to be a safety concern. That's why the decision was made to move to an off-site location.

Walter Kolis: Thank you. Will the Open Expression policy be applied at the alternate location?

Greg Fenves: Yes. There's an FAQ about the commencement. It talks about the Open Expression protocols on how dissent or protests will be handled during the events.

George Shepherd: Thank you. I think now we have ended the time that we have in order to ask questions. There was additional questions in the queue, but I think we don't have time to do them. Instead, I'd just like to offer President Fenves an opportunity for some closing remarks.

Neeti Patel: I feel like the question would take a minute. I would really like to hear it. President Fenves, I think it would be responsible-

George Shepherd: I think we need to stick with [inaudible 00:57:00].

Neeti Patel: - to answer the community's questions, if you're really committed to healing moving forward.

George Shepherd: I think we need to stick with the schedule.

Neeti Patel: President Fenves, do you think it's more important for you to say your final words than answer the community's questions?

George Shepherd: There are many other questions that could be asked. We need to stick with the schedule. So, President Fenves, your closing remarks.

Neeti Patel: That is noted. Okay, noted. Thank you.

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Greg Fenves: Well, I want to thank Dr. Shepherd and the University Senate Executive Committee again for all the work and efforts you put into organizing these webinars. I want to end where I started and thank our staff for the work that you do every day. If in one of my messages or other messages that I'm not recognizing and thank you, I will continue to do that and pay attention to the work that you do every day. As we near the end of the semester and students are finishing their exams, as I had mentioned, our goals are to be able to let everyone finish their work while we support peaceful expression for all members of our community. Speaking of staff and the relocation of commencement, there's an immense amount of work that is going on right now by our staff to be able to have the commencement in Duluth, a beautiful arena, to be able to prepare for that and to be able to recognize the accomplishments of the class of 2024. So for all the staff who are involved in that substantial effort, I want to say thank you. But most importantly, the questions that have come up have helped me think through, and I look forward to working with the Senate as we begin to find ways to work together to begin to heal and to begin to rebuild trust. So I want to thank you for that and look forward to working with you.

George Shepherd: Thank you so much, President Fenves, for appearing here today and answering questions. I also wanted to thank the Senate Executive Committee, including the staff representatives. Finally, we are grateful to the hundreds of staff who have observed this. I hope so much that this is a step to helping our beloved Emory to heal and to thrive. Thank you very much.