

## Transcript of the Student Listening Session with Emory University President Greg Fenves on May 6, 2024, 10-11am

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

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**George Shepherd:** I would like to welcome everyone to our meeting today. Welcome to the Executive Committee of the University Senate and part of the executive committee is the Emory University's elected student representatives. And so, I welcome them too. In addition, I would like to thank President Fenves for being here. Finally, I would like to welcome the hundreds of students who are watching this. This session is really for you, and thank you for being with us. I hope that we have a full and frank discussion of the events of the last week or two so that we all can 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, so we have decided not to devote 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 and we've divided them up among the executive committee, including the student representatives on the committee. And, we have only about three minutes or so per question or so. I have been authorized to be the friendly emcee to remind people when time is almost up. I apologize in advance if I'm too harsh. After that, the student representatives will ask questions that have been submitted by the students who are watching. The students have submitted scores and scores of questions for President Fenves and the elected student representatives have selected some of them and will ask them. Finally, President Fenves will offer some closing remarks. So first, I welcome President Fenves to open up the discussion.

**Greg Fenves:** All right, well thank you Dr. Shepherd. And I do want to thank the University Senate and the work we did last week to start having these conversations. And today I want you, our students, to hear the information that I shared with the Senate and to answer your questions. Now I do know this is an unprecedented time, a tough time at Emory, and I have heard that clearly from across the campus and our community, and that's why today I wanted to reach as many students as possible through this webinar. Thank you for joining as you finish the academic year with your finals, papers, and other important work at Emory. But before we get to the questions, as Dr. Shepherd said, I would like to provide some background and a little bit of 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 the open expression observers. They have all gone well. None of these events, protests, have included encampments and my position has always been that encampments aren't allowed on campus. Now why is that? First, they can be incredibly disruptive to the core functions of the university, and in doing so can affect the experiences of thousands of Emory community members who live, learn, and work here. Our open expression policy at Emory provides very broad opportunity to speak, to dissent, and to protest, that is part of a college campus and that is part of our open expression policy. But there are limitations, and I do 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, and from what I've seen at other universities, encampments grow over time, but they do need to end at some point and the longer an encampment is in place, the harder it is to end and the more disruptive it can become. There are examples of universities that have allowed encampments to remain for an extended period and the impact has been enormous.

Now I want to give some brief context about what was happening at Emory on the campus two weeks ago. Early in the morning of April 22nd, individuals vandalized numerous buildings on the quad. Our Emory police department investigated this and identified potential threats to the campus and as a result of that investigation, EPD was on a heightened state of readiness. And so, for example, several buildings on the quad had card access only and EPD had increased patrols and security. And so that's how the week began.

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Now I'd like to share more about the timeline and the decisions on April 25th, but for now, I'll pause for this Senate to ask questions.

**George Shepherd:** Thank you very much, President Fenves. I just wanted to make clear, one thing that I forgot to mention is that the president has already spoken with the Senate a couple times. So, meeting first almost a week ago with the executive committee and then the next day with the broader Senate. So, this is not the first time that the president has spoken with us. So now we turn to questions from the executive committee. And first is Nitika.

**Nitika Gupta:** Thank you. As you know, in my year as past president of the Senate, which finished us two weeks ago, I was really focused on process and accountability and transparency. So glad we are having this, but President Fenves, can you tell us your process for gathering information for critical events such as these, who's your team, who provides you the information, and then what's your process for decision-making? Who all are in your team, who all do you include and what are the steps, if you can walk us through that for, and especially, of course, with relevance to this event.

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so thank you Dr. Gupta, and thank you for your leadership of the Senate this academic year. So I think it would be best if I go through the timeline as I've mentioned, and make a few points and take follow up questions that you've asked. So early in the morning of April 25th, a few dozen protesters arrived on the campus. When they arrived, these individuals ignored and pushed past our EPD officers who had been on the quad as I mentioned earlier, and then went to set up tents and other equipment on the quad. The camp that was set up on the quad in an area that had been taped off in front of the commencement stage so that preparations for the ceremony could be made. Going past this taped area for commencement preparation already was a disruptive action to the university operations. These individuals had brought their own media that had been set up and they appeared to have advisors or monitors. Looking at the setup of the camp, the assessment at that time was that it was planned, pre-planned and well-organized. In addition, we were aware at that time of social media posts calling for others to come to the quad on Emory, again looking like it was pre-planned. And 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 Emory community members. And we know based on information now, it is clear the assessment was not fully accurate, but in the whole information we had available, including the threats that had been identified by EPD earlier in the week, the social media posts, the organization of the encampment and the risk that the encampment could grow and could have turned into an ongoing disruption, I made the decision to clear the encampment. So, Dr. Gupta, to get to parts of your question, I'll break that decision down in a couple of steps. First of all, when it comes to law enforcement, the Emory Police Department manages day-to-day safety on our campus. But when a strategic decision needs to be made, the chain of command starts with the chief of EPD and then goes to meet as president. I will make the final decision based on the information available at the time and with EPD's assessment. Now, on that morning, 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 then me. That morning, with the information from these two law enforcement leaders, I did make the decision to clear the encampment because of 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

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campus, it depends on what day that is, and EPD did not have enough officers to remove the encampment. And in order to do this, we did need support from outside agencies, which we did receive from the Atlanta Police Department and the Georgia State Patrol. EPD working with EPD and Georgia State Patrol acted on my direction to end the encampment. So that is the timeline.

**George Shepherd:** Thank you. Next would be Jodie.

**Jodie Guest:** Good morning, President Fenves, you were starting to allude to this, but could you walk us through the decisions to bring outside enforcement on campus and who made the call to include Atlanta Police Department and the Georgia State Patrol?

**Greg Fenves:** So, the decision to bring outside law enforcement, again, is given the size of the group that the encampment, the expectation that it was going to grow. EPD did not have enough officers available to be able to have the encampment end and they needed additional officers to do it. EPD did get that support, which they needed from Atlanta Police Department and the Georgia State Patrol. Now how that is organized and prepared for is a law enforcement decision, but I want to be clear that bringing in those forces at EPD's request was based on my decision to end the encampment and the police agencies needed to decide what was the way to do it.

**Jodie Guest:** Thank you. Previously when we've spoken, you were not positive who brought Georgia State Patrol on campus? Do you know at this point?

**Greg Fenves:** No. You asked the question last week and I still don't know.

**Jodie Guest:** Okay.

**Greg Fenves:** I want to emphasize again, EPD needed support and that support was provided.

**Jodie Guest:** Okay. And then when outside police force joins the EPD, can you walk us through who is in command and how they make decisions about how they're going to go about tactically handling their outcome that they're working towards?

**Greg Fenves:** Well, I can say the first part. The second part is, I'm not involved with their tactical decision making, but part of the longstanding protocol with Emory and outside agencies is to set up what they call a joint incident command. And so that's where they work together to understand what the situation is and what are the law enforcement steps to carry out what I had directed to remove the encampment.

**Jodie Guest:** Thank you, President Fenves.

**George Shepherd:** Shervon.

**Shervon Lewis:** Thank you. How were individuals determined as Emory or not and were police told to treat them differently?

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**Greg Fenves:** So, first of all, EPD treats all individuals the same. There's not a difference in they the work our officers do, depending on whether somebody is a member of the Emory community or not affiliated with Emory, that's a very important part of EPD's work. The determination that morning was based on the officers who were at the quad asking the individuals who come to campus, "Are you associated with the Emory community?" Emory community members are expected to answer that question. And as I mentioned earlier, they either pushed past or ignored the EPD officers. So, they made the determination that given the information they had, they were not Emory community members.

**George Shepherd:** Neeti

**Neeti Patel:** Yeah. Hi. So just because a lot of these have been answered, you previously stated that you contacted Open Expression but didn't wait for a response before calling in EPD. You also just stated you couldn't identify that the protesters were Emory community members. So, can you walk us through why the decision to contact Open Expression was made if you didn't feel that they were Emory community members and why you didn't wait for that response?

**Greg Fenves:** So, as we talked about last week, I did give Dr. Gupta just a call about what was going on. And by that time, based on the information that I had, I've gone through it, I felt that this was not an open expression event and I was even concerned about having open expression advisors involved and we'll certainly review that question as part of the review that I had mentioned. Dean Gelaye did call the chair of the open expression committee, there was no response, and I did make the decision that because of the situation and how it was developing and how quickly it could grow, I made the decision not to proceed.

**Neeti Patel:** Okay, thank you. The second question was, did leadership or open expression attempt to discuss the protesters demands onsite Thursday?

**Greg Fenves:** No, they didn't because open expression advisors were not involved.

**Neeti Patel:** Okay. And then lastly, what was the administration's plan in preparation for an encampment on campus?

**Greg Fenves:** Our plans for an encampment on campus? Well, we have had encampments and in fact, just a little over a year ago, and my position is we don't allow encampments and EPD does prepare for that if a situation does develop.

**Neeti Patel:** And that's your position, correct? Not the University's? That's your position, not the university policy's position?

**Greg Fenves:** So that is my position based on-

**Neeti Patel:** Thank you.

**Greg Fenves:** -my interpretation of the university policy.

**George Shepherd:** Thank you. Dawn.

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**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** Yes, thank you President Fenves. We've asked these questions again last week and we pose them again maybe in the hopes of getting an update. My question is, well one, who decided to move all the demonstrators to a small area within the quad before the Georgia State Patrol arrived?

**Greg Fenves:** So, I know, Dawn, you asked that question last week. I don't have any more information about that and what happened or how it happened.

**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** Thank you. Second question, who made the final decision to disperse the demonstration?

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so that was an important step. Once I was in constant contact with VP, Cheryl Elliott and the EPD and the other agencies were there, there has to be a determination to disperse the encampment. And so, excuse me, EPD asked me and I did give that approval to disperse the encampment.

**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** Thank you. What was the impetus for bringing in Georgia State Patrol a second time in the evening?

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so it was a day where protests continued and they were part of our open expression policy. There were many on the quad and around the quad. In the early evening, a large group moved over to the Candler School of Theology. The Candler School of Theology was closed, and in fact there was a vigil, and I believe a prayer service going on within the building by primarily the Candler community. That protest around the Candler building did turn violent and that's not allowed. And so, the Georgia State Patrol did begin to respond to the violence around the Candler School of Theology.

**George Shepherd:** Tolu

**Toluwanimi Olaleye:** Yes. Good morning. You had touched on this before in our meeting previously, but communication is a very important aspect, especially with regards to the situation. Why did the first communications say that Emory had limited involvement in the demonstrations?

**Greg Fenves:** So, there's a balance that I have to strike, and maybe that wasn't the right balance to get messages out quickly about what's happening compared with waiting to get more specific information. I do strive to be as accurate as possible. And in this case, I felt getting that information out to the entire community was really important. And we didn't have all the information at the time, so it was based on all the information afterwards and it was based on the information I had at the time.

**Toluwanimi Olaleye:**

Okay. My next question is, what is the communication strategy when the university decides to lock the doors on campus?

**Greg Fenves:** That's a very good question. I do think that is something we need to look at because as I mentioned the week before, we did have a card access, and that's certainly something we need to be looking at and informing and working to inform the community about, on such changes in building access.

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**Toluwanimi Olaleye:** Okay. My final question is is there a review process for the Emory-wide emails that you send out or?

**Greg Fenves:** For the Emory messages I send out, yes, we go through a process with the communications team, try to get as many people to look at it as possible. It's really important to do that with all my messages. When their information messages that go out, we have more time to do it. It is, again, a balance of getting the information out with the level of review.

**George Shepherd:** Thank you. Mustapha.

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Thank you very much, President, for coming again. I know that I asked this question before, but in hope that would've had an update on it. Would the arrested students face any consequences? And, if they would, what are the likely ones?

**Greg Fenves:** So, will the arrests have any consequences? So, in terms of student conduct?

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Yes.

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so in terms of student conduct, those will be handled by our student conduct offices. It depends on if the student's undergraduate, in a graduate or professional program, and they each have their conduct processes.

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Okay, thank you. My second question is while there were a lot of arrests on campus, what is the university's plan to ensure the safety of facility management employees who were asked to go to onsite at any hour of the day to remove graffiti and protest items?

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so I'm concerned about safety of all members of the Emory community. Our facilities management staff have the responsibility to paint over the graffiti, to clean up after a protest, and they are really important to the work of the university. I do feel for them, and we have been working with facilities management to not put any member of the staff in a place where they feel unsafe and how we do that for them to be able to provide that work. I do want to make sure the campus community understands that when a facilities member is covering up graffiti, that facility staff is not violating open expression. Open expression does not allow graffiti or any kinds of messages on the buildings. And so, I ask you to respect the work of the Emory staff who are carrying out the work that they should be doing.

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Thank you.

**George Shepherd:** April. April?

**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** Unmute, Noelle.

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**George Shepherd:** Is April here? She dropped off.

**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** [inaudible 00:22:27] will take-

**Noelle McAfee:** Sorry. I apologize. Dawn, could you ask April's question? I can't pull up the thing right now.

**Dawn Francis-Chewning:** How does the rhetoric of trespassing/non-Emory affiliated people align with the strategic plan pillar of Emory plus Atlanta?

**Greg Fenves:** Well, Atlanta is important to Emory, I want Emory to be important to Atlanta, and that's why we have that strategic pillar. Every day we have hundreds, if not more, of Atlantans and others coming to the campus to learn, to attend lectures, to attend events, to attend concerts in the Schwartz Center, to protest. When protests take place, they are open to the community if invited onto the campus for that purpose. And we have many non-affiliated Emory people participating in protests along with all the other activities. But like any campus, there are limits. And that activity, that engagement that we want to have with all people is not completely unlimited. And so, if a law is broken, it doesn't matter whether they're Emory-affiliated or non-Emory-affiliated, they're breaking the law.

**George Shepherd:** Noelle.

**Noelle McAfee:** Thank you so much. Thank you, President Fenves, for being here with us again. So, the past two meetings, I've asked the same question and I've heard your response. I want just repeat what I heard and then ask a follow-up to that question. The question I asked was, if something like what happened that morning were to happen again, what, if anything, would you do differently? So, your response was really that your goal was to clear the encampment, that you would not do anything differently, but then you qualified it and said more the next day that you would do everything you could to clearing the encampment as peaceful as possible. So, one could wonder why the imperative to clear the encampment and just not let it stay. But let's just stay with your imperative to clear the encampment. All right. So, my colleague in the center of Roberto Frenzi points out that whenever the police show up via-

**George Shepherd:** Noelle Noelle, we have limited time. Could we get to the question?

**Noelle McAfee:** I know, I am getting to the question.

**George Shepherd:** You're muted now.

**Jodie Guest:** Noelle, you're on mute.

**Noelle McAfee:** So, there might be other better means. And you said you'd be exploring other better means to clear the encampment. So, what I'd like to ask is would you consider this situation to clear the encampment, not to call the police in, but to bring in people to come and sit down and talk with the



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demonstrators to try to find alternative solutions and agreeing to have conversations, continue those, invite them into a peaceful process? Because as a member of the faculty and with my...

**George Shepherd:** Oops, you're muted again somehow, Noelle.

**Noelle McAfee:** Yeah. What we're trying to do is teach our students to solve problems peacefully, to think critically. Sometimes what it means to put something on the public agenda to do that, it's through peaceful protests. The students were engaged in very peaceful protests, and I think a lot of students would like to not see police on campus.

**George Shepherd:** Noelle, could we hear the response.

**Noelle McAfee:** This is important.

**George Shepherd:** We're not making statements, we're asking questions.

**Noelle McAfee:** I'm asking a question. I'm asking whether, I'm explaining the question. I'm asking whether would consider an alternative peaceful process in the future when something like this happens to...

**Neeti Patel:** Can you please stop muting Noelle and let her speak? Noelle is one of the two people here that were actually present on Thursday and impacted by this. So, I would actually really like to hear what she has to say.

**George Shepherd:** Yeah, why is Noelle, I'm sorry.

**Neeti Patel:** I don't know.

**George Shepherd:** Oops. It somehow, there's a glitch that she's somehow become muted.

**Noelle McAfee:** That's my question. Would you engage, would you commit to non-violent means, not bringing in the police to address differences of opinion to help model civic engagement for our students?

**Greg Fenves:** Thank you, Noelle. This is an important discussion and civic engagement is critical to the functioning of a university, to the education of the students. But as I had mentioned at the beginning, given the context we were operating in, the information about, from social media, the inability to identify at that time who was participating in the organization, I felt the risk of letting it grow and becoming a larger encampment would've made it even more difficult to end. Different situations, different circumstances, of course, the goal is to have dialogue to discuss, to reach an understanding, but my determination at that time is that that was not going to work based on what I knew at that time.



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**Noelle McAfee:** So, you would bring the police in again. Okay, thank you.

**George Shepherd:** Let's move on now to the open portion of the session where we now are going to have the elected student representatives to present a selection of the questions that were submitted by the participants in today, the student participants. So first I'd like to turn things to Francis.

**Francis Yeji:** Thank you very much and thank you President for coming to address student's concern. Let me just add that over 90 questions were submitted by students and the leadership of the students represented by the GSGA, SGA, and Oxford SGA went through to select these questions from students to ask you. So, first of all, you've already addressed this, but because of time limitation, I am sure that there are other aspects you have not been able to talk to. So, I would like to ask this question again, if you can talk about it and address issues that you've not had the opportunity to address. Why did the administration feel it was necessary to call in the police on Thursday during the protest? A lot of students have asked this question and it was repeated several times, so they would like to hear and elaborate an answer from you. Thank you.

**Greg Fenves:** Well, thank you for the question and I'd just like to go over some of the information I had and why I made the decision. And again, it was based on the context they were operating that week, the organization and setup of the encampment, the inability to identify who was setting it up. And again, the social media posts on a number of channels to come to the quad. And so, as I have said, it was my decision that we needed to end the encampment at that time. EPD is our law enforcement agency on campus and they're the ones that are responsible for carrying out that direction. And they did not have enough force to do it, they did not have enough officers on duty. And when there is a situation that I'm asking them to remove an encampment, they do require support. And that support was provided by APD and the Georgia State Patrol.

**George Shepherd:** Abigail.

**Abigail Dubinski:** Hello. What steps are you taking to make sure all students feel safe on Emory's campus and what are you doing to repair our campus trust?

**Greg Fenves:** So, our goal is to have all students and all members of the community feel safe on our campus. And that's been paramount. A lot of work was being done on the following days. There was lots of discussions, a lot of gatherings, and quite a number of protests. And I have to compliment our open expression observers who have been working very, very hard, our Campus Life staff and working with students and EPD who was working extremely hard over the next couple of days and continue to do so. Longer range, I do want to have the trust of the students and beginning to build that is really the first step today. It is just one tiny step that I think is necessary. So, I look forward to working with the student government organizations and of course involving Campus Life and others and helping work with you and communication with students, especially those who do not feel safe on the campus.

**George Shepherd:** Kenan.

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**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Yeah. So, the next question we had prepared was already answered. So, I'm just going to move forward to the next question that I had prepared to say on behalf of the students, from the questions they submitted. What was known about the identity of the protesters at the time EPD was called in and which laws or policies were they thought to be violating? What measures were taken to differentiate between Emory-affiliated and non-affiliated participants?

**Greg Fenves:** So, the information I had at the time is that the participants did not identify themselves as Emory members. But the situation, the information I had was that this encampment was concerned, the encampment was going to continue to grow, making it more difficult. Again, whether it's university employees, campus life, and certainly EPD, they make no distinction on how they work with and how they interact with an individual based on whether they're Emory-affiliated or unaffiliated.

**George Shepherd:** Back to Francis.

**Francis Yeji:** Yes. Thank you. So again, in your first issue statement in response to the protest on that day, you did claim that the protesters were mainly outsiders when at the time there was evidence that it's an Emory community. So, can you please speak to that? Why you did say that? You answered it previously, but it is very important as a lot of students still keep asking that question. If you can address it, thank you.

**Greg Fenves:** Well, I'm not sure I can add anything more based on what we knew then. And as I mentioned earlier, we are going to be conducting a review and that will be part of the review for people that were involved, especially EPD and others, about what the information was, the information we had at the time, and how it relates to information that we can find afterwards. But again, I want to emphasize, and I recognize I am being repetitive, it wasn't just based on the participants not identifying themselves initially, it was the context, the way the encampment was set up and organized. It was the social media posts that were being broadcast on a number of channels. So, it was the entire set of factors that led to my decision.

**George Shepherd:** Abigail again.

**Abigail Dubinski:** Yep. Some students feel hateful language has been used during campus protest. While certain speech may be protected under open expression, how do you plan to address the unease and fear some students may feel in response to speech? Are policy revisions being considered?

**Greg Fenves:** So, I want no student or anyone at Emory, but especially students, to be fearful. And that's very, very, very important. But it can't be controlled by speech. Our open expression policy is very broad and is modeled under the First Amendment, which as a private university, we do not need to follow, but we effectively follow the principles of First Amendment. And one of those principles is that there isn't a category of hate speech. Hate speech is protected speech. I think it's awful. It should be condemned, it should be rebutted. But we don't have a policy and I don't intend to have a policy that has a specific category of hate speech. And I hope everybody who hears hateful speech identifies it, and again, speaks out against it and reports it. And that's part of the bias reporting system is when a student or any member of the community hears something that's hateful. Now, if I go a little bit broader, we do have, as a university, obligations under a Title Six of the Civil Rights Act that applies to higher education. And we do

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have a responsibility that we are a campus that doesn't harass, doesn't threaten students based on who they are. And so that's, again, an obligation that we take very seriously. But hateful speech, even though we should call it out and speak out against it, in itself, does not reach that level under Title Six. I'm sorry, I'm giving a little bit of a legal aspect, but it's really important that we protect free speech as we uphold our obligations under federal law to be an educational institution free of harassment and intimidation.

**George Shepherd:** Thank you. Kenan do you have another question?

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Yeah, I'll actually go back to the question, the submitted question that I skipped through. Has the university dropped the charges against students and faculty who were arrested on April 25th?

**Greg Fenves:** No. And Emory is not pursuing that.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Okay. And are you just able to provide any elaboration on that?

**Greg Fenves:** Those are charges that are in the court system now, and Emory is just not pursuing being involved in the adjudication.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Got it. Okay.

**George Shepherd:** Oh, so I could jump in. So does that mean, does that mean that the charges will then be dismissed because Emory's not pursuing them? Or maybe you could just, so we understand that a little bit.

**Greg Fenves:** Some of the charges are not Emory's charges and the charges that were based on certain aspects. And again, I'm getting out of, I'm in a legal area that I don't know the details. You're a lawyer, George, so you may know more about it, but let me be clear in the principles, if a law has been broken, that needs to be adjudicated in the legal process and that's Emory's position on it.

**George Shepherd:** Francis.

**Francis Yeji:** Yes. Just related to the law, attending protests is particularly risky to certain category of students such as international students whose visas are at risk in the event of an arrest. How will you foster an environment where students can express their right to protest without the fear of violence or retaliation?

**Greg Fenves:** So, every student should be able to protest. That's part of our open expression policy and it's used very broadly at Emory, as I mentioned over the past year. And it's been used very broadly in the past two weeks. And there shouldn't be fear of protesting, but again, there are limitations. And an encampment I think is an area where, as I've already said, not going to allow and when encampments need to be removed, that is not intended to limit free speech rights or open expression rights, but it needs to be followed.

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**George Shepherd:** Abigail.

**Abigail Dubinski:** Are there plans to prepare EPD in handling protesters to a greater extent to prevent relying on outside police forces?

**Greg Fenves:** Well, I can tell you we have a very dedicated Emory police department. They have a lot of experience working at Emory on a college campus where protest and dissent is part of the college process and they continue to work on training and how they work together to support open expression rights. So that's absolutely part of the training of EPD. But EPD is a small department and when it's necessary to enforce a rule or a decision, they, as a police force, need to rely and have to rely on the law enforcement agencies that we work with. Of course, APD is our local agency since we're in the city limits, but they work with all the agencies at the county and state level because there's simply going to be situations where the police department is not large enough to handle.

**George Shepherd:** Kenan.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Yeah. So, the next question we have is, have you engaged with the demands regarding divestment and is divestment being considered?

**Greg Fenves:** So, I've certainly heard demands for divestment from Israel and I had met with students and student leaders earlier this year. I am not considering, and I don't support Emory divesting from Israel.

**Neeti Patel:** I just want to clarify, it's Israeli apartheid and Cop City. Those were the demands, divestment and disclosure.

**Greg Fenves:** Well, I think I've made my position clear in regards to Israel. On Cop City police, the Public Safety Training Center, we've spoken about that earlier. That's a city of Atlanta decision by the elected leaders of the city of Atlanta. And Emory doesn't have a position, that's the voters electing their city leaders and making their voices heard.

**Neeti Patel:** I know. I just think it's interesting. It's been a week and you know the exact demands of that of-

**George Shepherd:** Wait, let's move on. It's Francis' turn.

**Francis Yeji:** Yes, thank you. So, since President, since you had intelligence the day before of what was going to happen, why was there no attempt to dis-escalate or engage with the potential protesters to negotiate by the administration?

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**Greg Fenves:** Well, I just want to make sure I understood what you said earlier. So, we did not know the day before, there was going to be a protest. So, we did not know that it was, EPD was in a heightened state of alert because of the threats that they had determined in general, it was very general from the vandalism and other information from the Monday morning event. So, there was no information that there was going to be a plan for an encampment that Thursday morning. So, I just want to be clear about that. The question of why didn't I engage the protesters in the encampment? I think I've already addressed that maybe even a couple of times. So, I don't want to repeat it too much, but it was given the circumstances and the assessment that we had at the time, that the risk of having it continue and go on was going to be substantial.

**George Shepherd:** Kenan.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** So, the next question was posed from an Oxford student and it's addressed in person, in first person, but I'll just read through it. "As an Oxford student, I find it quite discomforting and frustrating to observe my Atlanta campus peers have their final exams canceled and/or modified as directed by Emory's administration, while the Oxford campus remained without such a revision, why was this notion not applied to all students rather than a specific majority? How would you respond to students who feel that this decision illustrates the second place nature that remains poised towards Oxford students? And if there's any clarification that you think is necessary, we would really appreciate that.

**Greg Fenves:** Well, Oxford is not second class, so let me start out with that. It's an incredible place. I've been there many times, interacted with students and faculty, so it's a very, very special place. And so, there is no second class status at Oxford. It's an integral part of the Emory undergraduate education and experience. The issues on final exams were not a administration decision at my level or the provost level. This was either individual faculty or faculty working with deans to make accommodations for students. I don't have the information here about how many classes were affected by finals, but that information is available. There is no direction from the central administration about how to handle it as there often is no direction, and there shouldn't be, on many academic matters. It was an accommodation for students who were here in the Atlanta campus and either were directly affected by the protests on the 25<sup>th</sup> and ongoing because it didn't end on the 25<sup>th</sup>, it went past the reading period and into the finals period.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** I don't know if we can hear you, George.

**Jodie Guest:** Yeah, I think George, your AirPods may have died.

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Yeah, I think we'll have Khegan take the next question.

**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** So, for what I understand for how it was going to go, because that was the last question from the questions we had. However, Khegan and [inaudible 00:47:46] had questions.

**George Shepherd:** Can you hear me?

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**Kenan Bajraktarevic:** Oh yes, we can hear you now.

**George Shepherd:** I'm sorry. Can I be heard now? I was having technical difficulties. Okay.

**Mustapha Oloko-Oba:** Yes.

**George Shepherd:** Khegan Meyers asking a question about the upcoming no confidence vote.

**Khegan Meyers:** Yeah. Hello, President Fenves, good morning. So, students voted last week in SGA, the new SGA, to host a referendum of no confidence in your leadership. The ballot will go live in about an hour and 12 minutes. So, my question is, what do you have to say to students who will vote on a referendum of no confidence today?

**Greg Fenves:** Well, my message to students is you make your decision based on your experience as a student, but hopefully some of the students are participating in this webinar. I know it's just a listening mode, it's not a discussing mode. And I hope the information that we've talked about today is helpful in each student who's voting to make their decision. I recognize the student voice is important and this is part of a student voice. And I'll just say that I'm committed to working with the students. It's not started yet, and this will be an ongoing process.

**George Shepherd:** Next, we'll have Abigail asking about the new plans for graduation.

**Abigail Dubinski:** Yes, as we have many graduating students on this call, can you please provide an update on graduation and how you'll work to ensure that the graduating seniors are celebrated?

**Greg Fenves:** Well, I hope everybody has seen the announcement from early this morning. I have been firm in my commitment to celebrate the class of 2024. The class of 2024 is a special class. Many of you did not have a high school graduation. Many of you started your journey at Emory online during the pandemic. And I have been firmly committed that we are going to have a commencement ceremony, the full university commencement and all the college and school commencements to recognize and celebrate your accomplishments with you and your family together. How to do it was something that we were deeply concerned about as we were getting information about the 25th, which had already commencement preparations on the quad had already been delayed and then many protests took place on the quad after that. But putting that aside for a moment, I do want to just lay out that the commencement we would all love to have, the main commencement has 14,000 people on the quad. There are many thousands of others who are participating that day and other days at the college and school degree ceremonies across campus. And so, we worked with EPD, we had an external security consultant and we worked with other agencies in the area to ask the question, can we have that many people on the quad and throughout the campus, not just on the quad, and be able to do it safely? And after an analysis that took place last week, the recommendation was that that was not possible. And so I felt it would've been the wrong decision to try to organize quickly the commencement on the quad and on campus with those safety considerations on paramount. Fortunately at the last minute, we were able to secure a wonderful venue on Gwinnett County, now the Gas South complex. It's not new to Emory.

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About 10 years ago, Emory held a wonderful event there. I wasn't here, but everybody who was there said it was wonderful with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. So, it is set up for these kinds of events. And so that is why I made the decision that we were going to have commencement, but for safety considerations, it was necessary to locate it to an off-campus location. But the purpose is to celebrate and congratulate the class of 2024.

**George Shepherd:** We have about seven minutes left and I'd like to just offer President Fenves the opportunity to say anything further that you'd like to tell the students.

**Neeti Patel:** George, I think there was actually a question from Khegan that we would like to hear.

**Khegan Meyers:** Thank you, Neeti. I think it's really important to ask the question. It's not hostile in any way, but I think it's just necessary based in the announcement this morning. So based on that announcement, and as a member of class of 2024, who's having my family fly in from around the country, I'm a low-income student, they need accommodations too. They have to make the appropriate accessibility concerns. Can you be really specific? It's kind of two parts. Can you be really specific about what safety concerns are present and went into the decision based on that analysis you mentioned? And secondly, are there plans for relevant accommodations to make commencement accessible, especially with the change of venue?

**Greg Fenves:** So, I can't answer the accommodations question right now. We will certainly look into it. This is a... If that's possible. But in terms of transportation, I know we'll have more information out about transportation to the location. So, we are certainly concerned about it and recognize, Khegan, that that was a trade-off with the safety considerations. The specifics, I don't have right now the right way to describe it except to just imagine more than 14,000 people together outdoors on the quad in an open campus, which is so important to us, and be able to support and to be able to have that kind of event outside. Even under a normal commencement, there's a lot of safety and security concerns. And back to the context of the week that I had mentioned, those concerns still exist. There were additional concerns that took place over the weekend. Some of that has been announced by EPD and just felt deeply that safety needed to be a priority with the information that was available.

**Neeti Patel:** So, I'm just going to actually add here. As a public health student, accessibility should never be something that is up for negotiation on the table. And it seems like you're saying accessibility was not considered when choosing this venue. Because if it was, it seems like you would have the answer for us. So, I just really want to clarify. You did not consider accessibility.

**Greg Fenves:** So, access to the site was a factor and we'll look at how best to provide it within the venue. It's fully accessible.

**Neeti Patel:** Okay. I wanted to note it says that-



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**George Shepherd:** I think we need to offer president [inaudible 00:55:28].

**Neeti Patel:** I can tell when I'm being censored.

**George Shepherd:** No, it's time-

**Neeti Patel:** I'm just letting the-

**George Shepherd:** It's not your turn. It's President Fenves's turn to finish.

**Neeti Patel:** You are muting me. So, this is not-

**George Shepherd:** It's not your turn, Neeti. It's time for President Fenves to be able-

**Neeti Patel:** I understand that.

**Francis Yeji:** Mr. President, [inaudible 00:55:46].

**Toluwanimi Olaleye:** Can I please ask about-

**Neeti Patel:** This is really not a good look for y'all. I hope you know that.

**George Shepherd:** No, you just have to take your turn, Neeti. Other people need to talk too. President Fenves, could you finish off with some closing remarks of anything else you'd like to tell them.

**Greg Fenves:** Maybe can I just answer, I think part of one question I heard about the Oxford commencement, which is also being relocated. There were also concerns about Oxford and we had similar considerations and a lot of discussion about how to do that, but did make the determination that we needed to have all the commencements together at the venue in this case.

**George Shepherd:** So, we have about three more minutes. President Fenves, anything else you just wanted to finish off with? I think that was the structure that we had just offered you, a closing statement if anything you want to say.

**Greg Fenves:** Yeah, so I just want to thank the senate for organizing this. I know that you put a lot of work into it and I really appreciate it and look forward to the additional webinars that we're going to have today and tomorrow. But I want to emphasize this is just beginning of how we exchange information, how we discuss these issues and they are difficult, tough issues. And so, this will be an ongoing dialogue and it may be a long process, but as we close out the academic year, I am focusing on continuing to create an environment where our community can focus on their work as they finish up, students in particular with their exams. And as we've already talked about, holding the commencement to recognize the accomplishments of the class of 2024. Throughout this time, we have supported peaceful expression for all members of our community and be a place that we can talk about these difficult issues within the broad

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limitations of our open expression policy. I want to work with you on finding ways to work together and I'm absolutely committed to that. So, I want to thank you for this first opportunity to speak with you and again, thank the Senate for organizing.

**George Shepherd:** Well, thank you very much President Fenves for being here with us and for talking with us earlier to last week. And I wanted also to thank all the members of the Senate Executive Committee and especially the student representatives today. And then also wanted to thank all the, I see there's 933 participants now who are watching this online. So, I hope this was helpful and we very much hope we can continue this dialogue and help Emory University to heal and thrive. So, thank you very much.