



[Some Universities Respond to Protests Like a Police State Bowing to Political Pressure and Financial Favors](#)

While various universities and law enforcement agencies have been justifiably criticized for heavy-handed responses to student anti-war protests on college campuses across the country, with some schools acting like a police state and bowing to political pressure and financial favors, a few have elicited praise for their productive handling of them. Schools such as Sacramento State, Evergreen State College, Brown University, and Rutgers University – among a few notable others – reacted to the solidarity movement in a non-escalating and constructive way. Unlike too many institutions, that unfortunately militarized their campuses and as a result smeared and antagonized participants, these universities deserve commending for their civil approach to the situation which saw them consider and even agree to at least some of the student protesters’ demands. In most cases, student protesters were merely asking for transparency into their universities’ investments and to divest from weapons manufacturers that are increasingly under criticism for their complicity in Israeli war crimes and human rights violations. Thus, other schools should take note of how to appropriately deal with these very reasonable and fair requests, instead of forcefully cracking down on peaceful expression of free speech and allowing for the brutalization of their own students and faculty.

The universities that responded positively not only considered and agreed to some of the student requests, but they also defended their right to voice these issues and have a platform to do so. At Sacramento State for example, in the memo that the school released outlining their policy updates in response to the Gaza solidarity encampment and student protests, university officials labeled the actions as “cornerstones of higher education and democracy” and affirmed students’ ability to take part in peaceful activism. This was a welcome development and encouraging to see, especially given that administrators at other universities regrettably chose to vilify protest participants and call on armed law enforcement to occupy their campuses – as if the peaceful demonstrations were somehow a grave threat to maintaining order. As opposed to unnecessarily militarizing their university campuses, colleges like Sacramento State admirably decided to engage in healthy, democratic, and productive dialogue with students to fittingly address their concerns.

Consistently across the board, one of the main demands of student protesters involved in the anti-war solidarity movement was to initiate transparency into the investments process of their universities. Some of the schools that responded positively to the protests agreed to post all public information on investments to their respective websites and discuss these processes with students. Many even instated an array of committees comprised of both students and faculty to focus on socially responsible investing and divestment from companies that profit from human rights violations. The commitments from some universities to increase investment transparency were celebrated by social justice advocates as useful incremental steps, with the hopes that schools would look to them as an example for future actions. Due to the growing and widespread nature of the anti-war protests at universities throughout the nation, there is also optimism that this will become a more mainstream demand and topic of conversation as well.

What transpired at Sacramento State and the other aforementioned universities was a valuable lesson in how to effectively handle peaceful protests with dialogue instead of violence. As Sacramento State University President Luke Wood aptly put it in describing his school’s response to the protests, “the message here is to create an

environment where people can engage in honest and open dialogue, without being vilified or canceled.” This humane approach was certainly applauded by students involved in the solidarity movement and those affiliated with the university, as the school’s Academic Senate also hailed the president for his use of open dialogue and resolution over administrators’ methods at many other colleges across the country which relied on unwarranted police force. Just as the troubling militarization of campuses and police brutality which has been too commonplace since the onset of this wave of anti-war protests deserves condemnation, on the flip side, the manner of the responses from Sacramento State and those like it are uplifting and worthy of favorable acknowledgement.