

EXHIBIT 4

Statement of the Interim President and Deans of Harvard University on University Rights and Responsibilities

January 19, 2024

In recent weeks, University and School administrators have received questions about how the guarantees and limitations regarding protest and dissent found in the **University-wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities** apply in specific settings.

The University-wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities defines the rights and duties we share as an academic community, ensuring that Harvard's dual commitment to free expression and mutual respect is honored, regardless of the specific subjects of debate and disagreement. We write to reaffirm our shared commitment to the University-wide Statement's guarantee of freedom of speech—including the right to protest and dissent—as integral to the values of our University. We also reaffirm our commitment to the University-wide Statement's crucial policy that one may not exercise those rights in a way that “interfere[s] with members of the University in performance of their normal duties and activities.” These principles together enable the University to fulfill our central mission of “learning, teaching, research and scholarship.”

The University-wide Statement has been in place for more than 50 years. It was first adopted on an interim basis by the Governing Boards on September 20, 1970, and then voted in May 1977 to remain in effect indefinitely, alongside an interpretation making clear that “intense personal harassment” amounting to “grave disrespect for the dignity of others” is “an unacceptable violation of the personal rights on which the University is based.” In early 2002, a second interpretation clarified that the University-wide Statement prohibits “any unauthorized occupation of a University building, or any part of it, that interferes with the ability of members of the University to perform their normal activities.” This essential framework is complemented by other important policies, including the University's **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying Policies**, and the community principles and **protest and dissent guidelines** embraced by individual Schools.

We recognize that primary responsibility for determining particular violations of the University-wide Statement rests with our several faculties and disciplinary boards. We also thought it helpful at this time to articulate our shared understanding of key principles in the University-wide Statement—to answer questions and to provide guidance both for those seeking to understand how the University-wide Statement would apply to planned expressive activity and for faculty, staff, and disciplinary boards charged with implementing it. The following guidance has been shared with and endorsed by the Corporation.

Guidance on Protest and Dissent

By protecting freedom of speech while not permitting interference with the “normal duties and activities” of members of the University, the University-wide Statement guarantees the right of students to learn and study and to make a residential campus their home; the right of faculty and instructors to teach, research, and mentor; and the right of staff to do the vital work necessary for the University to fulfill its mission. Accordingly, unless a particular School makes an explicit exception, demonstrations and protests are ordinarily not permitted in classrooms and other spaces of instruction; libraries or other spaces designated for study, quiet reflection, and small group discussion; dormitories, residence halls, or dining halls where students live and take their meals; offices where the work of the University is carried out; or other places in which demonstrations and protests would interfere with the normal activities of the University. Because free speech is of fundamental importance, Schools should take steps to have venues for protest, dissent, and the like in courtyards, quadrangles, and other such spaces, and through the ability to reserve classrooms, event spaces, and/or places for “tabling.”¹

The University-wide Statement also contains explicit time, place, and manner limitations relevant to protest and dissent. For example, because the University-wide Statement prohibits interference with “freedom of movement,” blocking ingress or egress to campus buildings, classrooms, administrative offices, or other spaces is forbidden, as is blocking or otherwise interfering with the free flow of vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian traffic. Because the University-wide Statement further guarantees “freedom from personal force and violence,” conduct such as assaulting, threatening, or intimidating another person or damaging, defacing, or removing a properly posted sign is not permitted.

Finally, because the University's mission includes hosting lectures, speeches, and other events that expose community members to ideas, discussions, and debates, disrupting such events or activities interferes with the normal activities of members of the University. Accordingly, community members may not protest a speech or event in a manner that interferes with the right of the speaker(s) to be heard or of the audience to hear them. Many Schools have adopted detailed **protest and dissent guidelines** that elaborate on the rules and principles of the University-wide Statement.

By providing guidance on the University-wide Statement, we reaffirm the essential function of our University, fostering an environment where community members learn from a vibrant exchange of ideas through debate, discussion, and disagreement. Harvard's dual commitment to free expression and mutual respect enables our University to be a place where students, faculty, and staff can work together to continue to expand human knowledge and deepen understanding.

[1]: “Tabling” involves the reservation by a student organization of a table within a campus building for purposes of activities such as soliciting views or seeking signatures for petitions.

