

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

PRESIDENT'S ROOM

April 30, 2024

Michael Gerber, Deputy Commissioner, Legal Matters
New York City Police Department

Dear Deputy Commissioner Gerber,

I write with regard to the unrest on Columbia's campus.

As we have discussed, in the early morning of April 30, 2024 a group of individuals entered Hamilton Hall for the purpose of occupying the building. The building was closed at the time the students entered. An individual hid in the building until after it closed and let the other individuals in. There were two security guards inside. We were able to secure their release. We believe that while the group who broke into the building includes students, it is led by individuals who are not affiliated with the University. The individuals who have occupied Hamilton Hall have vandalized University property and are trespassing.

In addition, we have had a continuing encampment on the West Lawn of the Morningside campus since Friday, April 19, 2024. Last night an additional encampment appeared on the Math Lawn.

After more than a week of discussions with representatives of the group engaged in the West Lawn encampment, we reached an impasse on Sunday, April 28, 2024. The group was informed that they are not permitted to occupy spaces on campus, are in violation of the University's rules and policies and must disperse. All University students in the West Lawn encampment were informed Monday morning that they would be suspended if they did not disperse by 2:00pm Monday and that participation in other campus encampments was prohibited. At this time, all participants in the encampments are suspended, not authorized to be on University property and are trespassing.

The takeover of Hamilton Hall and the continued encampments raise serious safety concerns for the individuals involved and the entire community. The actions of these individuals are unfortunately escalating. These activities have become a magnet for protesters outside our gates which creates significant risk to our campus and disrupts the ability of the University to continue normal operations.

The events on campus last night have left us no choice. With the support of the University's Trustees, I have determined that the building occupation, the encampments, and related disruptions pose a clear and present danger to persons, property, and the substantial functioning of the University and require the use of emergency authority to protect persons and property.

With the utmost regret, we request the NYPD's help to clear all individuals from Hamilton Hall and all campus encampments. As part of this process, we understand that the NYPD plans to use its LRAD technology to inform participants in the encampments that they must disperse.

In light of the activities that occurred after the events of April 17-18, 2024, we further request that you retain a presence on campus through at least May 17, 2024 to maintain order and ensure encampments are not reestablished.

We trust that you will take care and caution when removing any individual from our campus. The safety and security of our community is our highest priority, especially for our students. We appreciate your commitment to assist us in a peaceful and respectful manner at this difficult time.

Columbia is committed to allowing members of our community to engage in political expression – within established rules and with respect for the safety of all. The policies we have in place around demonstrations are in place to support both the right to expression and the safety and functioning of our University.

Thank you for your assistance with this very challenging situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Minouche Shafik". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Minouche Shafik