

For Immediate Release  
Tuesday April 23, 2024

Dear Members of the News Media:

We write as members of the [Policy and Planning Committee of the Faculty of the Arts and Sciences](#) (PPC) to condemn, without question, all instances of national, ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination. We abhor all forms of hate speech, including antisemitic, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim utterances and behavior. We wish to disassociate our campus and our faculty from the vile and abusive language reported on and around our campus.

At the Arts & Sciences Faculty Town Hall on Monday April 23, the members of PPC reaffirmed the rights of all Columbia students to an atmosphere free of harassment and discrimination, clarity and consistency in the application of University rules, and the ability to speak and assemble freely. Along with academic freedom, these rights are essential to guaranteeing the best possible education for our students.

Like many faculty at Columbia, we have witnessed the events of the last week with great sorrow and concern. We respect the profound disagreements that exist among different members of our community and we acknowledge and affirm the distinct, sometimes conflicting, experiences of our students and colleagues, many of whom are motivated by profound moral and political commitments.

It is because of this respect for all Columbians that we have been so distressed by reports that conflate on-campus protests with the actions of bad actors from outside our community.

We recognize that recent events at Columbia are of interest beyond our campus. We understand that groups on all sides of the present conflict have encouraged supporters and counter-protesters to gather outside our gates. We also acknowledge that the University's decision to restrict access to Columbia affiliates has made it hard to fully report on events on campus.

Nevertheless, the PPC condemns the reckless conflation by some in the media of the protected speech of our students with the harassing and abusive acts of visitors. We remind the media that many of those who demonstrate outside our gates do so precisely because they are not Columbia affiliates, access to campus having been mostly restricted since April 15th. With the exception of the excellent work by, for example, the staff of the *Columbia Spectator*, WKCR Radio, and *Bwog*, much recent reporting of student protests has been sensational and inaccurate. This does not mean that there have been no bad actors or actions on campus; it means that we should not inflame the situation by describing Columbia as paralyzed by chaos and conflict. It should be

possible to acknowledge and address the fear and pain felt by some Columbians without misrepresenting the whole situation of the university.

Incendiary reporting poses grave dangers to our student body. By ratcheting up tensions, it leads to calls for more punitive actions by armed police. Inflammatory calls for mass arrests, more guns on campus, or the presence of the National Guard are unmoored from real conditions at our university. They must be rejected for what they are: bad faith attempts to exploit disagreements within our community for partisan ends.

We cannot let the actions of those who do not share our university's values determine how we are represented in public. We cannot accept that a media circus off campus may shape administration policy on campus. Bad-faith actors, whether on Broadway and 116th Street or in Washington DC, cannot be allowed to tell our story.

We challenge the news media not to substitute clickbait headlines and out-of-context videos for honest reporting. And we tell all antisemites and provocateurs: You do not represent us. We do not want you on our campus or outside our gates.

Sincerely,

Matthew Hart, Professor of English and Comparative Literature (PPC Chair)

Dima Amso, Professor of Psychology (PPC Vice Chair and Chair-Elect)

Greg Bryan, Professor and Chair of Astronomy

Navin Kartik, Professor of Economics

John Tachiang Ma, Professor and Chair of Classics

Pablo A. Piccato, Professor and Chair of History

Camille Robcis, Professor of French and History

Nicole Wallack, Senior Lecturer, English and Comparative Literature

Gregory J. Warwo, Professor of Political Science