

Student Protest and Demonstration Guidelines¹

Updated as of: November 2023

At Simmons University we respect the rights of free expression and view protest as an acceptable means of demonstration. This may include expressing opinions publicly and also joining together to demonstrate those concerns in a safe manner. Simmons protects the right of voluntary assembly, allows peaceful demonstrations, welcomes guest speakers, and endeavors to protect these assemblies from disruption and interference.

Simmons also respects the rights of our community to be free from harassment. Protest becomes unacceptable when it obstructs the basic exchange of ideas and when it results in censorship. By asserting the right to protest, individuals cannot decide for the entire Simmons community which ideas are worthy of expression.

Simmons University will not allow disruptive or disorderly conduct which interrupts the academic enterprise. Behaviors such as interrupting a classroom; prohibiting the free passage of others through picket lines; or halting a lecture, performance, or program violates the Simmons Code of Conduct (Section 5, Disruptive Behavior). Students engaging in such conduct shall be subject to disciplinary action, which could include a Conduct Hearing.

To ensure that demonstrations² do not threaten the safety of others, suppress others' speech rights, or disrupt the education of students, Simmons students planning a demonstration must register their intent by providing written notice by way of the form to attached as Appendix A to this Policy to the University's Division of Student Engagement, Success, and Diversity at least five days in advance of the demonstration.³ Only Simmons students may submit a notice of a demonstration.

Students who complete the required form within the stated timeframe will generally be deemed to have registered the demonstration, but the University reserves the right to modify the time, place, or manner of a demonstration when there is a reasonable expectation that it may threaten safety, suppress others' right to speech, or disrupt the academic, teaching, and learning activities of Simmons community members. Please note that even those demonstrations that have been approved may be cancelled or cut short if the University believes the demonstration no longer meets the requirements detailed above.

¹ Acknowledgment to Wellesley College and Wentworth Institute of Technology, whose policies informed this policy.

² For the purposes of this policy, "demonstrations" shall include protests, pickets, and other similar types of in-person and online events.

³ There may be circumstances in which it is not possible to meet this expectation, for example, in the case of a spontaneous demonstration or a demonstration held in response to an unanticipated event. In such cases, organizers are responsible for ensuring that the demonstration is in compliance with all the other provisions of this policy and for contacting the University as soon as possible. The University reserves the right to determine whether the protest organizers had sufficient time to provide five days advance notice and therefore may be in violation of this policy for failure to give adequate notice.

Examples of conduct that will NOT be permitted include, but are not limited to:

- Blocking access to campus facilities or activities, or impeding the travel of persons or cars on campus property.
- Using bullhorns or other loud or amplified sound-making devices that may disrupt academic activities and/or our Fenway neighbors.
- Disrupting or interfering (in any manner, including by volume, number of participants, or banners, placards, leaflets, or other types of written messages) with the educational or institutional mission, activities or goals of Simmons.
- Causing injury to, or endangering the safety of, any individual.
- Engaging in theft or vandalism, including littering, or other property damage.
- Introducing dangerous or hazardous items or weapons on campus.⁴
- Bringing carrying/storage cases, including but not limited to coolers, large bags, duffle bags, and suitcases.
- Disrupting or interfering with Simmons' online operations and/or technology in any manner.
- Using intimidating tactics or unwelcome physical contact between demonstrators, counter-demonstrators, audience members, speakers or performers, or University officials.

Response to violations of the policy

Students who violate this policy will be advised, when appropriate and reasonable, to stop the offensive conduct. Simmons also reserves the right to take immediate action to stop and/or address any behavior that violates this or any other Simmons policy. Behavior that continues to violate this policy, after notice to cease the behavior, will be referred for review, assessment and response to an appropriate University administrator or office.

Students should be aware that the use of public streets for demonstrations is subject to City of Boston ordinances and permitting requirements. Students should also be aware that Simmons University Public Safety has the authority to respond to violence and/or threats of violence without prior notice to demonstrators, their organizers, or Simmons University administrators.

Simmons University is a private institution and as such may require members of the public who are not current faculty, staff, or students to leave Simmons University property or off-campus or online Simmons-sponsored events. Failure to comply may result in removal and/or arrest for unlawful trespass or other criminal violations. Members of the Simmons University community who invite members of the public onto the campus or to off-campus or online Simmons-sponsored events are responsible for the conduct of their guests.

⁴ Dangerous items and weapons include torches, glass products, poles, clubs, bats, aerosol products, mace, pepper spray, firearms, explosives/fireworks, sharp objects, knives, shields, ammunition (live or empty shell casings), dangerous chemicals, or anything else that could be used to harm members of the community or neighborhood.

APPENDIX A

Simmons University Student Protest/Demonstration Registration Form

Simmons students planning a protest/demonstration must register their intent by providing written notice to the University's Division of Student Engagement, Success, and Diversity at sesd@simmons.edu by way of this form. Only Simmons University students may submit a notice of a demonstration. With limited exception, students must submit this form at least five days in advance of the demonstration.

Someone from the Division of Student Engagement, Success, and Diversity will be in touch with the organizers after you submit this form.

1. Provide the contact information for all organizers of the demonstration (must include each person's full name and Simmons email address).

2. Describe the purpose and nature of the demonstration.

3. List the time, manner, and location of the demonstration (including whether it will be online/virtual).

4. Detail what security you anticipate will be necessary for the demonstration.

5. Describe your plan for managing any disruptive behavior that may occur during your demonstration.
