

**Confidential and Subject to the Rules of the Administrative Board of
Harvard College**

**ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF HARVARD COLLEGE
SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

February 16, 2024

I. The Complaint and Response

The Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct (OAISC) is investigating the events on November 29, 2023, involving [Redacted - PII] '25), [Redacted - PII] '25), and [Redacted - PII] '26), [Redacted - PII], and [Redacted - PII] entered the Science Center and Sanders Theater disrupted the in-session classrooms of Ec10a and Stat 100, by making loud noises, chanting, and using a bullhorn.

Case Manager of the Administrative Board, [Redacted - PII], individually met with Ms. [Redacted - PII] [Redacted - PII] and [Redacted - PII] and their Board Representatives, Resident Dean of [Redacted - PII] House and [Redacted - PII] House, [Redacted - PII] and [Redacted - PII], on December 7, 2023, over Zoom, to explain the confidentiality rules of the College, the procedures followed by the Board in disciplinary cases, and the complaint that was made against them. The Faculty Dean of [Redacted - PII] House, [Redacted - PII], was also present as the personal advisor for all three students. Additionally, case materials were emailed to each student after their initial meetings. [Redacted - PII] and [Redacted - PII] responded to the charges by submitting an initial statement on December 16, 2023. [Redacted - PII] responded to the charges by submitting an initial statement on December 18, 2023. Each student's statement was exchanged with the other students on January 11, 2024.

On receipt of the full information, the Dean of the College appointed a subcommittee of the Board to meet with the student concerning these allegations. The subcommittee was composed of [Redacted - PII], Resident Dean of [Redacted - PII] (chair), and [Redacted - PII], Resident Dean of [Redacted - PII].

The rules of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, in the section on "Standards of Conduct in the Harvard Community" in the *2023-2024 Harvard College Student Handbook*, state that,

It is the expectation of the College that all students, whether or not they are on campus or are currently enrolled as degree candidates, will behave in a mature and responsible manner. This expectation for mature and responsible conduct also encompasses accountability for one's own well-being, including responsible decision-making regarding physical and mental health. Further, the College expects every student to be familiar with the regulations governing membership in the Harvard community, set forth

in the pages that follow. Because students are expected to show good judgment and use common sense at all times, not all kinds of misconduct or behavioral standards are codified here. The College takes all these diverse principles very seriously; together they create a foundation for the responsible, respectful society that Harvard seeks to foster among its students, faculty, and staff.

Harvard College Student Handbook, Page 49

The section on “Honesty” in the *2023-2024 Harvard College Student Handbook*, states that,

The College expects that all students will be honest and forthcoming in their dealings with the members of this community. Further, the College expects that students will answer truthfully questions put to them by a properly identified officer of the University. Failure to do so ordinarily will result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, the requirement to withdraw from the College.

All students are required to respect private and public ownership; instances of theft, misappropriation, or unauthorized use of or damage to property or materials not one’s own will ordinarily result in disciplinary action, including requirement to withdraw from the College.

A student who commits an offense against law and order during a public disturbance or demonstration or who disregards the instructions of any other University officer at such a time is subject to disciplinary action and may be required to withdraw.

Harvard College Student Handbook, Page 53

Additionally, the section on “Interpretation” under “Faculty Resolutions in the *2023-2024 Harvard College Student Handbook* states that,

It is implicit in the University-wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities that 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 constitutes unacceptable conduct in violation of the Statement and is subject to appropriate discipline.

Harvard College Student Handbook, Page 53

This Subcommittee Report will be shared with each student and they will be given the opportunity to respond in writing before the case is considered by the Board. The recommendations regarding possible outcomes included at the conclusion of this Subcommittee Report are a starting point for the discussion of the Administrative Board regarding this case. In all cases, the Board is not limited in its discussion and has the full range of sanctions allowed by the Faculty available to it.

II. Investigation of the Complaint

On November 29, 2023, a number of students entered in-session classrooms in the Science Center and Sanders Theater, disrupting normal business operations by making loud noises, chanting, and using a bullhorn. Video of the events shows that [Redacted - PII] interrupted STAT 100 and [Redacted - PII] and [Redacted - PII] interrupted Ec10A, classes they were not enrolled in, and disrupted the class with a bullhorn.

Around the time of these interruptions at approximately 11:30am, a group of approximately 20 people walked through the Science Center chanting and using a bullhorn and made their way outside to join a larger group where chanting and speeches occurred using amplified sound including bullhorns. At approximately 12:20pm, half of the group entered the Science Center chanting and using bullhorns, making disruptive sounds near libraries and classrooms. The loud noises continued until approximately 12:50pm. HUPD was present outside the Science Center and inside the Science Center Arcade area.

[Redacted - PII] Subcommittee Appearance

On January 26, 2024, [Redacted - PII] met with the subcommittee by Zoom. She was accompanied by her Board Representative, Dean [Redacted], and her personal adviser, Professor [Redacted], Faculty Dean in [Redacted] House. Also, present was Dean [Redacted], Board Representative for another student.

The subcommittee began by asking [Redacted - PII] if she had anything she wanted to share with the subcommittee at the start. She wanted to convey that they were moved to act due to care and love for the community, inspired by Harvard's mission to "inspire everyone for a more just world," but that after reading the reports and reflecting further, realizes that the group's action did not line up with their intentions. She expressed "deep regret" that their actions may have been harmful to other members of the community and would have done things differently now she is aware of the impact on community members.

In response to a series of questions from the subcommittee, [Redacted - PII] shared that their intent that day was to draw attention to what was occurring in Palestine. They planned for a classroom walkout and a rally in the Science Center immediately after. They modeled these after previous protests they had either attended or heard about. From the outset, they planned to enter the classrooms to announce the walk out and encourage people to participate and to use bullhorns. They understood that the University-Wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities document prohibits disruptions that interrupt university operations or impede learning and took this into consideration in their planning. [Redacted - PII] noted there is a lot of ambiguity in the document's interpretation and said their interpretation was that they would not violate the guidelines because nothing they did was intended to be a disruption. They thought that by keeping the

announcement brief (under 30 seconds), this would not be considered disruptive and assumed that classes would resume immediately after the announcement. They purposefully waited until the last 15 minutes of class so that anyone who chose to join the walkout would forfeit only a small portion of their learning rather than the entire class meeting.

For the rally that followed entering the classrooms, they had originally planned to hold it outside, but it was extremely cold. Out of care for the safety of everyone attending the rally and respect for the speakers, they moved the rally inside at the last minute. [Redacted - PII] said she thought what they were doing was in accordance with policy based on what had happened at other events and demonstrations that used megaphones and came through the Science Center. She also noted that no HUPD or Securitas officers let the group know in the moment that they were not permitted to use amplified sound inside, which furthered her understanding that what they were doing was permitted. She noted that if anyone had told them what they were doing was not allowed or was making other people uncomfortable they would have stopped immediately.

When asked by the subcommittee if [Redacted - PII] had participated personally in any of the previous actions she had mentioned that seemed to be similar to their actions that day, she indicated she had been at one action that came through the Science Center during school hours that included chanting and using megaphones, and to her knowledge no one was penalized for participating. She cited consulting The Crimson for details on other past successful protest actions and thought a classroom walkout with announcement would be allowed based their coverage of past events. She reiterated that they had explicitly tried to make a protest plan that would be allowed by the guidelines of the University and that their main goal in their action was care and safety, both for people in Palestine and for members of the Harvard community.

When asked if they had considered the impact on students' mental health related to interrupting classes in a jarring way or ability to learn due to amplified sound disruption from the indoor rally, she replied that during planning they were focused on whether they were within the guidelines but did not give as much thought to the other impacts it may have on students, and she hopes to give this kind of consideration to avoid making people feel startled, unsafe, or unable to learn in future plans.

[Redacted - PII] reflected several times throughout the appearance that the group's goal had been to bring awareness to the community, and they realize now there are many other ways they could have achieved that goal without causing the unintended harm that resulted, for which she has deep remorse. She believes the cause is dire and plans to continue demonstrating or using other strategies to bring attention to it but doing in a way that is "more welcoming for the community to engage" and is "respectful of the functions of the University and our peers." She has appreciated the clarifications that the University has provided more recently about what is and is not permitted and will ensure that future actions stay well within these guidelines. She has

already received a lot of resources and guidance from the House on how to speak out in a way that brings people together to learn about the issues. She has found perspectives from someone in a different position from the students in her group helpful to ensure their plans are in line with their intentions and plans to consult University resources like her House faculty and the Student Engagement team in planning future actions.

Redacted - PII *Subcommittee Appearance*

On January 26, 2024, **Redacted - PII** met with the subcommittee by Zoom. He was accompanied by his Board Representative, Dean **Redacted - PII**, and his personal adviser, Professor **Redacted - PII**, Faculty Dean in **Redacted - PII** House. Also, present was Dean **Redacted - PII**, Board Representative for another student.

During his appearance, **Redacted - PII** shared that the walk out and rally on November 29 was part of a broader week of action that his group (AFRO) planned after the University had not responded to three demands they had issued earlier in the term. They purposefully planned the walk-out to be only the last 15 minutes of class rather than the whole class and to have someone enter the large classes to make the announcement and lead the walk-out. The rally that followed was planned to happen outside on the Science Center Plaza but was moved inside last minute to the lobby of the Science Center due to the cold temperatures outside. The group had the bullhorns for the rally and decided to use them in the classrooms because they were large lecture halls where amplification is typically needed to be heard. They did not know that guidelines limit the use of amplified sound indoors.

Redacted - PII shared that the action that day occurred just following a shooting of three Palestinian students in Vermont and just before the humanitarian pause in Gaza was about to end, and that the group members were feeling stress and “intense desperation” at the loss of life that had already happened and was about to resume. They were trying to raise awareness and “exhaust all other actions to publicize our cause.”

When asked what his understanding was at the time of the University’s policy regarding interrupting classrooms or impeding the ability of others to learn, he replied that he believed other similar actions had occurred previously in recent times and no one was disciplined, which led him to think that amplified sound in the science center or classroom walkouts were acceptable within the guidelines. **Redacted - PII** was not present at past demonstrations with amplification in the Science Center but was present at a classroom walkout in which he was not an enrolled student in Spring 2023 and was not disciplined. He mentioned the group would not have taken the actions if they knew they were not allowed as doing so is not productive to getting their message heard. He understands now he has a responsibility to understand the policies better and appreciates the more recent clarifications the University has made about the policy.

[Redacted - PII] noted that they value learning, which is why they limited the walk-out to only the last 15 minutes of class and left so the instructor could continue after. They had not previously considered how interrupting the classroom or using amplified sound near classes or libraries might have caused harm, and he is remorseful for that.

Upon reflection, [Redacted - PII] feels that he will proceed very differently in the future, since they would never want to cause harm or make community members feel unsafe. [Redacted - PII] appreciates all he has learned so far from the staff and faculty in [REDACTED] House and wants to work more closely with them in the future to help him further the cause while building community. He plans to have “deep empathy when thinking about future actions” so he can live his values in ways that do not do harm. He will be sure not to go into a classroom while protesting again, and says the group is considering other methods such as teach-ins for future protest actions.

[Redacted - PII] Subcommittee Appearance

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During his appearance, [Redacted - PII] explained that his group had already done demonstrations and sent a letter to President Gay before Thanksgiving to no effect, so they planned a week of action to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis and loss of life in Palestine and to “get people sympathetic to the cause” of calling for a ceasefire. The November 29 classroom walkout was meant to be the apex of a week of protest action. They planned to ask people to walk out during the last 15 minutes of class rather than the entire class period to keep the loss of classroom learning short. A rally in Science Center Plaza was planned for after the walkout.

Entering the classrooms to call for people to walk out was always part of the group’s plan to get the word out about the protest in addition to some flyering they did earlier that day. The group planned the walkouts, including entering the classrooms and the use of megaphones, based on previous actions at Harvard they were aware of and thought that what they had planned was permitted. [Redacted - PII] said they used The Crimson as an archival source as well as group members’ personal experiences at past actions to gauge what would be permitted. When asked if he had personally been at similar past actions, he replied he had been at past actions indoors in the Science Center that had used megaphones.

Redacted - PII noted that he and his group members had been thinking about disruptions to learning from the point of view of the participants in the walkout, which is why they called for the walkout to be near the end of class rather than the full class period, thinking 15 minutes was a short amount to give up compared to the scale of the loss of life they were trying to call attention to. He and the group had thought because their announcement in class was meant to be short it would not be a hindrance to academic life. In response to a question from the subcommittee, **Redacted - PII**

Redacted - PII noted that he had not given much thought to how their unexpected and loud interruption may have impacted students' mental health, instead they were "hyper focused on what was happening [in Palestine]," and it was "moment of desperation" when they were focusing on organizing to try to have some impact on the loss of life. In reflection, he can understand how their actions may have negatively impacted students and regrets the harm they caused.

Redacted - PII explained that the plan for the rally had been to hold it outdoors but that once they were outside, they noticed people were shivering so they made a spur-of-the-moment decision to move it inside but did not think it would be an issue to move. The fact that HUPD and Securitas were present and did not say anything about their presence furthered their understanding that it was acceptable to hold the rally inside.

When reflecting, **Redacted - PII** said of the event that looking back on the event, he sees it was not the best way to get people to be sympathetic to their cause, and they could have used a different strategy that would not have made people feel uncomfortable or unsafe. He understands it is his responsibility to do more investigating to understand what is and is not permitted. He noted that an action that does not draw people to the cause and especially one that makes people feel uncomfortable is a failed action, and he wants to ensure that people "feel safe and protected and comfortable and engaged" at any protest actions he plans and will give more thought to the strategies they employ moving forward.

Redacted - PII concluded his appearance by underscoring that he is someone who "feels a "moral obligation to humanity," "deeply cares about people and humanity at large," and who "tries to be there for people," and so he felt deep pain that his actions caused harm to people in the Harvard Community. This is not something he ever wants to happen again.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

Redacted - PII *Recommendations*

The subcommittee wishes to thank **Redacted - PII** for her deep engagement in this process and for her reflection.

The subcommittee notes that ambiguity in policies existed before this incident occurred, in that what degree of disruption of university operations would constitute a violation is not directly spelled out in the policies. The students involved in this incident attempted to understand what was permissible, looking to published reports of past protest actions as well as drawing on the personal experiences of themselves and members of their planning group who had participated in prior protests that included use of bullhorns indoors and/or classroom interruptions for which they had not been disciplined. Therefore, the subcommittee believes it to be credible that the students thought their planned actions would not violate the policies. That Securitas and HUPD were present and did not notify the students that they were violating a policy or request that the students end the protests furthered the students' sense that they were within the bounds of policy. Each of the students acknowledged that Interim President Garber's recent clarification about what is and is not permitted regarding free speech and specific limits on its time, place and manner were helpful and that they plan to ensure any future protests do not disrupt university operations and minimize impacts on community members.

That said, [Redacted - PII] did interrupt a class in progress and disrupt the learning of other students using a bullhorn. Therefore, the subcommittee recommends that [Redacted - PII] be admonished for inappropriate social behavior. We recognize that some members of the Board may wish to consider probation.

[Redacted - PII] Recommendations

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