

November 22, 2011

Dear President Kelly,

Over the past week we have heard from students expressing their concerns and questions related to the increased presence of uniformed security guards at the CUNY Graduate Center. What has been especially disconcerting is the disproportionate increase in security forces in areas of the building devoted to student study, governance, and socialization. The large number of security personnel patrolling our hallways and outside our classrooms signals to many that you believe there is a threat to the Graduate Center. Indeed, the presence of these security forces in student spaces, not at the established building entrance checkpoints, suggests that you believe the threat is internal.

We have chosen to address this issue with you in a public letter because this is a public issue and requires a public response.

In light of recent security and police actions toward peaceful student protests on CUNY campuses and at other public universities, it has become especially difficult to believe that deploying additional security personnel without notice does anything but intimidate students and faculty and create an environment of fear. The Graduate Center community must be informed should some imminent danger require you to make the decision to mobilize security forces.

You have assured the Doctoral Students' Council that peaceful protest and assembly will be allowed on our campus. Indeed, a number of events related to student and faculty protests have gone exceedingly well and without incident from security forces for those peacefully assembled. We thank you in advance for your continued support on this matter and hope you will join the students, faculty, and staff in participating at future events.

On behalf of the students of the CUNY Graduate Center, but for the benefit of the entire community, the faculty and staff included, we request the following information:

(1) a community notice explaining the choice to increase security presence on campus, with reference to specific safety concerns;

(2) an outline of the policies and protocols for responding to student protests, including details on the levels of force that Graduate Center and CUNY security is currently authorized to use, and an overview of how security officers have been trained in responding to these issues;

(3) a report on security actions taken, observations made, and any other pertinent information on public safety officer activity, including an open disclosure of the Graduate Center budget for additional security; and

(4) a clear timeline of when the Graduate Center will draw down the increased security presence.

We thank you for your attention to these matters and anticipate your response.

Sincerely,

Officers of the Doctoral Students' Council

Colin P. Ashley, Officer for Funding
Annie Dell'Aria, Co-Chair for Business
Anne Donlon, University Faculty Senate Liaison
Nicole N. Hanson, Officer for Outreach
Sarah Jordan, Officer for Student Services
Eero Laine, Co-Chair for Student Affairs
Christina Nadler, University Student Senate Delegate
Jared Simard, Co-Chair for Communication
Patricia Stapleton, Officer for Technology and Library
Monique Whitaker, Officer for Health and Wellness