City College of San Francisco Chancellor Arthur Tyler Calls on College Community to Show Respect for All and to Express Dissent Peacefully

Dr. Arthur Tyler, chancellor of City College of San Francisco, on Friday called on the college community to demonstrate respect for all who are a part of City College and expressed sadness that a Thursday afternoon protest turned violent.

“I am saddened to see students engaging in violent outbursts and I am saddened to know that students were arrested. I ask the entire City College community to tone down the rhetoric and treat each other with respect,” Tyler said. “Making this institution work requires all of us—students, faculty and staff. Please remember that we are colleagues and each is deserving of respect and physical safety. We have many challenges ahead and we need to unite around our efforts to keep the college open and to create a future where we thrive.”

City College fully supports the student’s right to peaceful protest – we encourage students to develop their voices and exercise their right to free speech. At its conclusion, the rally organizers lead a group of students and faculty on a walk around the campus, terminating at the administration building, Conlan Hall.

The building houses classrooms, academic testing, Admissions and Records, counseling and student services in addition to the Chancellor’s office and stored students’ records. In order to maintain these functions the building was restricted to students and staff entering the building to utilize or manage these services.

CCSF PD advised the group that they would not be allowed to protest inside the building due to safety issues and ongoing building use for student services. It should be noted that apparently a sit-in had been planned by the students.
Due to the nature of the buildings use several students were already inside prior to the shutdown and locking of the doors. It was found that several students belonging to the protest had been pre-positioned with the plan to open the doors and let the protestors in. At a key moment these students opened doors from inside and the larger group stormed the building as CCSF PD officers attempted to keep them out. Assistance was called for by summoning SFPD who responded with a team of officers. During the incident CCSF PD as well as SFPD had to use non-lethal physical restraint. Two individuals identified as CCSF student were arrested.

One student was found hiding in a restroom and instructed to leave the building numerous times. He threatened the officers and was arrested. He has been charged with:
- Interfering w/Officer in Performance of Duty (148 Penal Code)
- Trespassing /withdrawal consent from school property (626 Penal Code)

A second student was witnessed striking an SFPD police officer. He was also arrested. He has been charged with:
- Battery on Peace Officer (243c 1 Penal Code)
- Interfering w/ Officer in Performance of Duty (148 Penal Code)

Approximately 15 students were able to get into the building. They were allowed to remain in the building all night. They left at approximately 8:30AM this morning. Conlan Hall is once again open for business, but the college and city police remain on alert to maintain the safety and security of the building and its staff and students.

Also, during the incident several CCSF PD Officers received minor injuries as follows: six City College Police Officers sustained minor injuries and one was treated for pepper spray contact.

Here are the facts surrounding other issues the students and faculty were protesting at the rally on Thursday, March 13th:

1. The CCSF payment policy: this policy was implemented at every other California Community College within the past three years, as established by the state legislature and governor. City College chose not to comply with or enforce that policy, leaving college with $7 million of uncollected tuition funds, which the state deducts from the school’s apportionment (matching funds), in effect, resulting in a $14 million loss of revenue. Once this was made clear to the elected Board of Trustees, they voted to enforce the payment policy in December of 2012 with initial enforcement in the Spring of 2013. We are also working very hard in concert with the community to ensure that undocumented students have access to financial resources and the DREAM act to register. 40 percent of CCSF’s students pay no fees at all. We have the cheapest tuition in America. We will continue to work to find resources for all our students.
“I wish college was free,” Tyler said. “I would advocate for that. But it’s not. The institution has to follow the law and be fiscally responsible. There is a payment plan and many financial aid options which we work very hard to make available to students. We are also fundraising. We are seeking state support to stabilize our finances. We are working on many fronts to manage our finances. Violence and physical altercations pitting students against staff don’t help us build support for this institution.”

2. The Special Trustee. Special Trustee Agrella was asked to City College by the elected community college board and appointed by the Board of Governors of the State Community College system. Substantial and extensive progress has taken place under Dr. Agrella’s leadership, including:

- Hiring the first permanent Chancellor at the college in several years.
- Successfully negotiating new employment agreements all bargaining units.
- Employing an entirely new permanent management and academic leadership team, including a new Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, Chief Instructional Officer, Chief Student Services Officer, Chief Employee Relations Officer as well as others in key leadership roles.
- Developing a clear and transparent “roadmap” that outlines the 352 specific steps the college needed to take to fully comply with the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards. This roadmap is posted at www.ccsfforward.com.
- Instituting fiscal controls and more effective financial planning and budgeting.
- Plans for new facilities that were scheduled to cost more than was available in bond funds have been suspended. Those funds have been redirected to refurbish aging existing buildings on campus.
- The Chancellor and Special Trustee have enhanced partnerships with philanthropic, business and community groups that are supportive of City College’s plan to remain accredited.

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