

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

At 11:00 AM, Friday October 6th, a large group of students took the stage in the EMU Ballroom during the University of Oregon President Michael Schill's "State of the University" address. Led by students of color, LGBTQA3 students, and low-income students, they issued a set of demands of the administration. These demands are not new to the president and the rest of the university administration. Students have repeatedly sought to work with the administration through more sanctioned means, but have been met with neglect, disregard, and outright opposition. Desperate, the students resorted to using this platform to put pressure on the administration to meet the students' needs.

As students spoke about their grievances, Schill left along with donors and other administration. A large group remained in the ballroom to demonstrate their support for those on stage and hear out the students.

The listed demands were:

1. Ban Immigration Customs Agency (ICE) agent presence on campus and condemn the agencies' repeated violations to human rights.
2. Establish a competent response to remove both ICE and neo-Nazi presence as the responsibility of University of Oregon Police Department.
3. Prioritize accessibility for undocumented and DACAmented students.
4. Establish regulations on hate-speech and neo-Nazi groups that come to campus.
5. The Office of International Affairs, should publicly advertise the bias collect team as a tool for Muslim Students and community members to share their experience of racism, discrimination and any other form of hate through the online site. The bias collect team should be advertised throughout University of Oregon's social media accounts and flyers should be posted all over campus from the Erb Memorial Union to residence halls.
6. Alongside the bias collect team, the Office of International Affairs and the Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence should work together to hire a Muslim advisor to serve the Muslim students.
7. In the Erb Memorial Union (preferably first floor by the foot wash area), a prayer room should be created so that Muslim students can peacefully fulfill their five daily prayers without fear of being kicked out of the space.
8. A year to year improvement to faculty to student ratio particularly for introductory classes
9. End the layoffs of UO faculty
10. Have a graduate employee on the board of trustees
11. Freeze tuition, develop a plan to decrease tuition over the next 5 years
12. Schill, other high ranked leaders and faculty shall explicitly say the names of white supremacy and label white nationalism as hate speech and explicitly condemn it on campus.

13. University Housing shall reverse their decision to stop offering student employees free shift meal since many employees rely on them. In addition, the University Housing shall reimburse its employees the shift meals they have been charged for in the form of back wages.
14. University Housing shall rescind its decision of requiring first-year college students to live on campus since it is a financial burden to low income and first-generation students.
15. Start to cut carbon emissions NOW, not 30 years from now
16. Increased University Investment in LGBT Programs like the LGBTESS, LGBT Friendly Housing, and the Trans Care Team.
17. Expand the Gender Equity Hall to Accommodate the Mandatory Freshmen Housing.
18. Increase Pay and Benefits for Stipended Student Positions
19. Increase Access to Counseling and Mental Health Services
20. Implement an Intersectional and Mandatory Cultural Fluency Program and Shift Training Responsibilities to Human Resources
21. Reconstitute the Bias Response Team
22. Allot University Funds to the Student Identity Spaces to Hire an Independent Historian to Research the History of Marginalized Students and Student Organizing at the UO.

In response to the action, the president issued an email to all students, faculty, and staff condescending the students who took the stage. He claimed that there were a “small” number of protesters, despite the fact the protesters hardly fit the stage and disregarding the group that remained in the ballroom.

In his email, the president frames himself as a victim to “disruptive” protesters who do not understand the “value of free speech.” He disregards the obvious power imbalance at play here. These students do not have access to the same platform as the administration. We cannot email every student, faculty member, staff person, and alumni our grievances. The very email in which he condemns students for taking his platform demonstrates the fact that his platform was not taken at all. The president and administration left students no choice but to take the platform afforded to Schill for themselves.

Schill claimed he values free speech on campus. This contradicts his frequent condemnation and neglect of the voices of the most marginalized students here. Further he has failed to publicly condemn the increasing white supremacist propaganda and organizing occurring on and near campus. So we ask, whose free speech do you support President Schill? Free speech is the right of individuals and communities to express themselves without repression from the state. The students are not the state nor the repressors. Taking to the stage and using this platform was an act of free speech - not a violation of it. Considering the power imbalances at play, it is clear that the president and administration are in the role of the repressors and the state - not the students.

His announcement of a lecture and panel series teaching students about the “value of free speech.” This is not only condescending and paternalistic, but also demonstrates that the president does not understand free speech. Schill proposed to the University Senate last year a new policy restricting the time, place, and manner of student protest. After revoking it due to press coverage and pushback from students and faculty, he has once again indicated he will pursue this repressive policy once again. Schill is not a champion of free speech; he is a demonstrated enemy to it.

Instead of condemning these students, the president should be thanking them for their courage to speak and passion for making the University of Oregon a better place. The University of Oregon Student Collective - a broad coalition of student groups and individual students who seek to take back the university for the students and workers - will be organizing a teach-in and panel series about free speech and the importance of student protest to inform students and affiliates of the University about the importance of free speech, valuing the voice of marginalized people, and the positive role of protest on campus. We encourage Schill and the administration to better inform themselves about free speech and student organizing.

Nothing about us without us. Expect resistance.