

Join 1300+ students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members by sharing your name in support, [sign here](#).

To President Mary Papazian,

As faculty, staff, and students of San José State University, we are outraged by the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others at the hands of police. We stand together in protest to condemn the intentional execution of Black civilians and theft of Black potential despite the concomitant risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic that is disproportionately killing Black, Indigenous, and Brown people across our nation. We do not see the recent murders as isolated events, but rather recognize that, in addition to resulting from the unreasonable use of force, these deaths are the product of systemic oppression driven by a long tradition of settler colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism that traffics in Indigenous genocide, immigrant detention and expulsion, and anti-black terror and control.

We acknowledge that while police violence terrorizes, harms, and destroys all marginalized and oppressed communities, we point to the specific ties of institutionalized policing with racist captivity, punishment, incarceration, and execution throughout history. Policing is but one of the modes through which Black people continue to face ongoing state-sanctioned violence, the perpetuation of anti-black sentiment, and systemic racism in this country. With Black victims at the center of this current movement, we stand in support of the rebellion, protests, and outrage motivating the current calls for justice and policy shifts.

As we watch mayors, governors, and our President applaud, support, and deploy police and paramilitary units against the people to “restore order,” we have also noticed the growing number of organizations that took a stand and began the hard work of divesting from and terminating contracts with police departments. The officers within these units not only cannot be entrusted with the safety of all in the community, but frequently represent a threat to those they are intended to serve.

National Action to Defund and Divest

Several campuses, cities, and public agencies across the country initiated actions to defund, divest, and otherwise cut ties with police since George Floyd’s death. San Francisco Mayor London Breed discussed diverting money from the police department to invest in Black communities. City Supervisor Shamann Walton stated he hopes for a minimum of \$25 million from an existing budget of almost \$700 million to “repurpose resources and give them to Black-led organizations and communities in order to level the playing field and achieve successful outcomes.” Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti also announced a \$150 million reduction to the existing \$3 billion police budget. Similarly, the Minneapolis City Council announced plans to dismantle their police department, and the University of Minnesota announced plans to end aspects of their partnerships with the Minneapolis Police Department, including relying on the police for extra security at campus events.

Additionally, calls to disband campus police units are coming from both school and university campuses in order to find alternate means to provide safety, intervention, and care that prioritizes healing, restoration, and justice for all members of the community. For SJSU to ensure the safety and security of our Black and Brown students, staff, faculty, and administrators, we cannot continue to empower and invest in a police force that is increasingly militarized, armed, and sanctioned to operate with impunity. Though we are conditioned to believe that policing is our only means to safety, we are in constant fear that the police cannot keep *us* safe in general; and in the event that our safety is jeopardized by the police, we know there will be limited to no accountability or recourse.

We are saying that training alone is not enough, e.g. diversity, personnel, or professionalism training. For example, both the University Police Department and the San José Police Department attend a required sensitivity training; however, on May 29th, Derrick Sanderlin, an implicit bias trainer for San José police cadets, was the target of and injured by the deliberate fire of a rubber bullet during a protest. Use of technology is not enough. Police officers are able to remove or turn these devices off, rendering them useless for holding officers accountable. We are emphasizing that, like a growing number of faculty, staff, and students at colleges and universities across the United States, San José State University administration must clearly communicate and bring to fruition its commitment to serving and protecting its staff, faculty, and student body by divesting from law enforcement funding on our campus and reinvesting those funds in education and community enrichment.

The fight against institutional racism requires that we divest from organizations, systems, and groups that engage in murderous aggression toward Black, Indigenous, and Brown people. It requires that we, as an institution, engage in life-giving practices, such as: providing accessible housing, financial assistance, free community access to classes, and a commitment to justice and equity between and within our campus and local community. We stand together and call upon San José State University to serve as a model for its peer institutions in the California State University System and to take a stand by demilitarizing its campus police force and security personnel, divesting from police funding, and investing in resources to support the safety, well-being, success, and advancement of Black, Indigenous, and Brown people as part of its strategic plan.

University Police Department's History of Aggression

At San José State University, our University Police Department has a demonstrated history of violence and failure to act in the best interest of the community they are sworn to serve and protect. The California State University Police Departments were established as a result of fear associated with civil rights demonstrations and revolts in the late 1960s and 1970s. Before the California State University Police Department came about, night watchmen and security guards patrolled campuses. However, since the mid-1970s, the University Police Department patrols the campus using armed officers 24-hours per day. While this has had both positive and negative impacts on the larger student community, we believe that over-policing exists on our campus as evidenced by several events in which the San José State University Police Department used excessive force and failed to respond appropriately in encounters with historically underrepresented members of the community.

There are three specific examples of this at San José State University over the past decade. The death of Gregory Johnson Jr. in 2008 was a huge blow to the Black campus community. His death at

the Sigma Chi Fraternity house was ruled a suicide by the University Police Department, but the majority of students, Mr. Johnson's parents, and the campus community felt that the police response failed to achieve justice for Mr. Johnson's death and to acknowledge the value of his life. In 2014, Antonio Guzman Lopez Jr. was killed at the hands of the San José State University Police Department. The initial police report asserted that the use of deadly force was justified. However, body camera footage (that was only recently released after nearly 6 years of organized effort by the victim's family and community activists) confirmed that police officers discharged their firearms at Guzman Lopez while merely holding a knife and exhibiting no threatening advancement or aggression towards the officers. One of the involved officers currently works as a District Attorney in Yolo County and the other remains employed with San José State University Police Department. And in 2016, Philip Chi Chong was beaten by a San José State University Police Department officer who responded to a call in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. The officer was eventually fired, but the stain of the incident remains.

In addition to the above, students in the Black community lodged many informal complaints indicating that their events are over-supervised and over-policed. The San José State University Police Department was also reported to congregate in the University Housing Quad. Their presence there is inherently intimidating, particularly to Black, Indigenous, and Brown students and questionable when there might be no obvious signs of danger or criminal activity. This demonstrates that there is a need to do real work within our community and the San José State University campus with regard to policing.

A [report](#) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics notes that 92% of public universities use armed police on campus, compared to only 38% at private colleges and universities. This discrepancy is indicative of both the propensity to over-police marginalized populations in the United States and the lack of incentive and capacity to find acceptable alternatives. We propose the following as a start to demonstrate San José State University's commitment to changing policy and action to support the needs of Black, Indigenous, and Brown members of our campus community in this time of unrest and moving forward in the future.

Our Demands

Transparency

- ⇒ Make the budget for the SJSU's Police Department readily available. Our current annual budget report does not include those numbers (e.g., [CSU Sacramento](#)).
- ⇒ Track and report the demographic composition and rationale for police stops. This information is not readily available to the public.
- ⇒ Make [hiring practices](#) for SJSU police officers readily available to the public, including qualifications, prior records of service, history of aggression, etc.

Reform

- ⇒ Immediately disarm campus police officers.
- ⇒ Immediately decrease the SJSU Police budget by 50% in the 2020-2021 school year.
- ⇒ Commit to implementing [#8Can'tWait](#)
 1. Ban chokeholds & strangleholds

2. Require de-escalation
 3. Require a warning before shooting
 4. Require exhausting all alternatives before shooting
 5. Duty to intervene
 6. Ban shooting at moving vehicles
 7. Require the use of force continuum
 8. Require comprehensive reporting.
- ⇒ Increase Community Oversight
- a) Establish a student, faculty, and staff run Community Review Board to oversee the actions of SJSU Police.
 - b) We demand that this board be elected by Black, Brown, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, undocumented, disabled, queer, gender nonconforming, transgender, and students of color among campus leadership.
 - c) This board will be responsible for the response to incidents when a community member alleges they were harmed by the SJSU Police Department.
- ⇒ Form an independent investigative team comprising community members of color, that will examine:
- a) The demographic breakdown of those who are stopped by campus police,
 - b) Investigate every instance of a person of color being stopped by the university police, and
 - c) Review the policies and training practices of the university police.
- ⇒ Publicly commit and privately adhere to the exclusion of former police officers with disciplinary records from eligibility for employment and disqualification from hire as university police officers.
- ⇒ End any joint patrol programs with the San José Police Department on university-owned or affiliated property.

Community

- ⇒ Require all increases in funding for campus police to be approved by the Community Review Board [mentioned in Reform, Increase Community Oversight, above].
- ⇒ Create a policy that protects students, faculty, and staff members who protest on campus from any form of intimidation including, but not limited to threats of retaliation by the university.
- ⇒ Cancel all contracts with the San José Police Department for supplemental law enforcement support at sporting events, concerts, or other large events hosted and/or organized by the university community or at university facilities.

Our Way Forward

We would like the administration to invest and recommit to reallocating resources from the SJSU Police Department to the campus community in the following ways:

Community Health and Well-Being

- ⇒ Significantly decrease the cost of student housing, prioritizing the housing needs of low-income students.

[sign letter](#)

- ⇒ Financially commit to fostering an intergenerational black student and faculty community on campus. This includes but is not limited to:
 - o Reinststate and increase funding for the Black Scholars Theme Community to allow for mentoring and community-building.
 - o Increase personnel and funding for the African American Black Student Success Center.
 - o Grow and protect physical gathering spaces on campus for Black students to gather as a community, e.g. another Black scholars' floor, study floors, AFAM student space etc.
- ⇒ Provide free, unlimited counseling and publicize it through campus-wide communication channels to Black students in times of crisis.
- ⇒ Implement cultural proficiency requirements for counseling faculty who work with Black students.
- ⇒ Create a permanent fund for students, staff, and faculty to receive support from the university if they are faced with legal fees or issues after participating in protests or political activism.
- ⇒ Increase funds to assist low-income Black students who experience housing and food insecurity.
- ⇒ Increase funding and scholarships for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students; including for low-income students.
- ⇒ Partner with off-campus black vendors to encourage community-building with the larger San José Black community.
- ⇒ Hire Black coaches.
- ⇒ The Office of Equity and Diversity needs to shift its tone from diversity and multiculturalism to talking about settler colonialism and decolonization, white supremacy, anti-blackness, racial capitalism, and abolition. Alternatively, this need could be met by a specific division to the Office that supports Black faculty, staff, and students.
- ⇒ "Getting a seat at the table." Appoint Black faculty and staff to positions in senior administration as a strategy to increase influence in decision-making bodies.

Education

- ⇒ Develop General Education required courses on anti-blackness and institutional racism.
- ⇒ Increase the hiring and retention of Black faculty in ALL departments.
- ⇒ Commit to a cluster hire in Justice Studies, AFAM and various departments in the College of Social Sciences that prioritizes Black and Indigenous faculty whose work centers on police and prison abolition, demilitarization, decolonization, racism, anti-blackness, and community restorative justice.
- ⇒ Free community education classes for community organizers, activists, and youth leaders that focus on abolition, police and prison abolition, demilitarization, decolonization, racism and anti-blackness, and community restorative justice.
- ⇒ Fully fund a yearly forum specifically for Black students & faculty to learn about academic interests and scholarly work.
- ⇒ Increase funds to support alliances between the Center for Community Learning and Leadership and activist organizations involved in supporting justice for the Black community.

[sign letter](#)

- ⇒ Commit to actions to increase admission of Black, Indigenous, and Brown students (individually, not collectively) in academic disciplines with low representation through recruitment and adoption of holistic admission practices.

Alternatives to Policing

- ⇒ Develop a campus-wide awareness campaign to familiarize community members with safe alternatives to police that people can call when they feel at-risk.
 - o Provide yearly, in-person training for faculty, students, and staff that focuses on alternatives to calling the police.
 - o Provide written (pamphlets, leaflets, and other) materials on campus and electronic materials on departmental websites with the same information.
- ⇒ Allocate resources to local organizations that support and build community capacity in unarmed mediation, unarmed intervention teams, trauma-informed counseling, and restorative justice.

On behalf of the SJSU community, this petition calls on President Papazian to invest in structures and resources that humanize and offer dignity to the Black community at SJSU. We hope that campus leadership will support us by responding to this call to action in a way that provides real change for students, faculty, and staff at SJSU.

To share your name in support, [sign here](#)

Please see [list of 1300+ signatures here](#)

Share [#defundsjsupd on social media](#)

[Press Inquiries](#)

