

FAQs:

Are protests and demonstrations allowed on the Auraria Campus?

Yes. We wholeheartedly support our community members' right to peacefully assemble and protest, including at the recent demonstration on the Tivoli Quad. Simultaneously, we are responsible for ensuring that all of our approximately 38,000 students pursue their right to a higher education in a safe and secure environment.

Why did you disrupt a protest?

Protesters created an encampment, violating Auraria's long-standing campus policy prohibiting camping for health and safety and allowing others to use the space. Once the demonstration was determined to be an unlawful assembly because the protesters refused to remove the encampment and leave, they were in violation of the policy. They were then asked to leave the premises. Those who refused to comply were then trespassing and ultimately arrested. This action came only after numerous requests to remove the camps and exhaustive efforts to engage protestors to understand their perspective and explain campus safety policies.

Why is camping prohibited on the Auraria Campus?

The health and safety of our campus community is our top priority.

The camping ban is a time, place, and manner restriction under the First Amendment to ensure the campus's health, safety, and mission are not compromised.

Auraria Campus institutions have policies that protect the free exchange of ideas on campus while balancing the need to protect the health and safety of students, employees, and visitors and ensuring fulfillment of our mission. The policy that prohibits camping was established two decades ago to ensure a safe campus environment and our ability to operate and fulfill our academic mission.

As we saw with this current demonstration, encampments can force event cancellations and other campus disruptions. Encampments pose health and safety risks, as it is difficult to control their size, and the Auraria Campus does not have public facilities available 24-7.

Policies like the camping ban on the Auraria Campus align with the City of Denver's strategy to ensure the well-being of the homeless population and the broader community, including the recent All In Mile High initiative that further demonstrates the city's commitment to addressing homelessness comprehensively.

The Auraria Campus has not faced public health and safety issues due to the long-standing, consistent, and repeated enforcement of the Auraria Campus camping ban policy. The Auraria Campus Police Department diligently monitors and enforces this policy, regularly noticing and disbursing individuals attempting to camp on our campus.

By maintaining strict enforcement of the camping ban policy, we ensure a safer and more conducive environment for learning and community engagement on the Auraria Campus, contributing to our mission of academic excellence and student well-being.

Why was there such a large police presence on campus?

The police presence was proportional to the situation for the safety of everyone involved. Police responded to the recent demonstration only after protesters failed to comply with numerous

written and verbal requests to remove their encampment and disperse. The police presence on campus was necessary to reduce the potential for injury and ensure a safer environment as they worked to remove the camps.

Do police typically respond to campus protests?

No. As a public campus, we are committed to the principles of free speech and peaceful assembly. Since October 2023, the campus has had more than 20 peaceful protests on campus without the need for significant intervention from law enforcement. None of these prior protests involved camping.

Who were the protesters and why were some of them arrested?

Protesters included students, faculty members, and many others not affiliated with our Auraria Campus institutions, including protesters who are part of a national campaign organized on college campuses nationwide.

About 40 protestors who did not comply with requests to remove their camps and disperse or actively interfered with police operations were arrested after repeatedly being made aware of their violation. Nearly half of those arrested were unaffiliated with Auraria Campus institutions.

What have you done to resolve disagreements with protesters peacefully?

In the weeks and months leading up to the April 25 demonstration, campus administrators met with student organizers of previous demonstrations to discuss concerns, understand their perspectives, and explain campus policies.

After the gathering began on April 25, campus administrators spoke with protesters on site and advised them repeatedly of the camping-ban policy, including providing written copies of the policy itself various times that day and written notice that continued violation of the policy would result in the encampment being considered trespassing.

Several state and city officials and law enforcement professionals also recently met with protesters to seek a resolution. For example, Dr. Angie Paccione, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education and a member of the Governor's Cabinet met with the protesters on Thursday, April 25. Denver Mayor Mike Johnston visited the Tivoli Quad on Friday, April 26 to ask participants to remove their tents to continue their peaceful protest.

How have you responded to your students?

Campus leaders and professional staff have engaged and met with relevant student group leaders, as well as student government leaders, several times.

When was the AHEC camping ban established and why?

The Auraria Campus policy banning camping on the property was established May 18, 2004. Other colleges and universities locally and nationally have similar policies in place to ensure a safe campus environment and our ability to operate and fulfill our academic mission.

Fact vs. Fiction

With the ongoing demonstration, the leadership on the Auraria Campus has received messages with a range of questions. We are here to help answer some of the most frequently asked questions and keep you updated on what we know.

TRUE OR FALSE: The Auraria Campus allows peaceful protest.

TRUE. As a public campus, we are committed to the principles of free speech and peaceful assembly. Since October 2023, the campus has had more than 20 peaceful protests on campus without the need for significant intervention from law enforcement. None of these prior protests involved camping.

TRUE OR FALSE: Auraria Campus has a policy that does not allow camping.

TRUE. The policy that prohibits camping was established two decades ago to ensure a safe campus environment and our ability to operate and fulfill our academic mission. The policy states that facilities and grounds cannot be used for camping, regardless of duration or purpose, due to health and safety concerns. We cannot allow any camping on campus. There are a more than a few reasons why camping on Auraria Campus is unsafe: crowd sizes can grow very quickly and impede the community's ability to have clear walkways and the community's ability to traverse campus easily and safely; personal hygiene and public health can become problematic quickly as the campus is not equipped with outdoor bathrooms or showers and uncollected trash and vermin can lead to illness and other unsanitary conditions; we cannot prevent external community members from joining our campus affiliated members in an encampment, which causes additional safety concerns; and a sizeable crowd creates a strain on internal resources that should otherwise be focused on educating our students and supporting our academic mission.

TRUE OR FALSE: Once the demonstration turned into an encampment, it was considered to be an unlawful assembly because of the campus policy that bans camping.

TRUE. When protestors did not comply after exhaustive written and verbal requests (that began on Thursday, April 25 and continued into Friday, April 26) to adhere to the Campus non-camping policy and disperse, law enforcement intervened Friday, April 26 to remove the encampments. There were approximately 40 arrests for trespassing and vandalism.

TRUE OR FALSE: Auraria Campus prioritizes my safety.

TRUE. Auraria Campus leadership's first goal is to maintain a safe campus where everyone is welcomed and belongs. If you are in immediate danger, call Auraria Police dispatch at 303-556-5000 or call 911. You can also Text-a-Tip to 720-593-TIPS (8477). For a list of campus resources, please visit the link below. If you do not feel comfortable contacting the police, please contact your institution's Student Life or HR teams.

TRUE OR FALSE: The National Guard was on campus on Friday.

FALSE. The National Guard was NOT on campus. Auraria Campus Police Department and Denver Police Department were on Campus due to the violation of Campus policy on camping.

TRUE OR FALSE: There was one instance of police enforcing trespassing laws and removing encampments on Thursday, April 25.

TRUE. Auraria Campus Police and Denver Police removed those cited for trespassing or interfering one time on Friday.

TRUE OR FALSE: An emergency alert was issued about “civil unrest” on the Tivoli Quad.

TRUE. The alert headlined “civil unrest” was distributed by the ACPD to indicate that events on the Tivoli Quad could become challenging once law enforcement assisted with those lawfully cited for trespassing. ACPD and Campus leadership realized that the language caused some confusion and made the necessary corrections to the alerts that followed.

TRUE OR FALSE: Auraria Campus was open during the demonstration.

TRUE. Auraria Campus was open all day Thursday, April 25 and Friday, April 26. Incoming traffic was limited on Friday, April 26 to ensure the safety of students and employees while ACPD and DPD enforced the violation of Campus policy, which resulted in some individuals being cited. Unfortunately, the demonstration resulted in the cancellation of other events because they were scheduled to take place on or around the Tivoli Quad.

TRUE OR FALSE: The Auraria Institutions have been communicating with demonstrators.

TRUE. We have been communicating and meeting with the involved student group for months including during the most recent demonstration.