

May 9, 2024

TO: Kevin Hall, University President

CC: Campus security, all VP's, Health and Safety Committee, Faculty and Staff Association, EQHR, Students Union

As members of the UVic community, we are calling on the university administration to rectify its failure to keep members of the UVic campus safe, after three violent assaults from a single male assailant have injured and adversely impacted students in the encampment, a faculty member, and a staff member over the past 24 hours.

As campus security, the private security, and local police know, the assailant has been circling the student encampment with between one and three large dogs every day since May 1st, often multiple times a day, typically shouting abusively, making anti-Palestinian, homophobic, misogynistic, and xenophobic comments, and posturing aggressively towards UVic community members. On several occasions, he has uttered threats of violence to students and has let his dogs loose without dog collars in the encampment without consent. Members and supporters of the People's Park encampment have used various de-escalation strategies in an attempt to calm this person down such as: walking away, ignoring, and listening quietly. These events have always occurred within immediate view and earshot of campus security, who have done nothing each time. However, as noted above, there have now been three incidents of physical violence against members of the UVic community over a 24-hour period, with full knowledge of campus security and without adequate safeguards from the University.

1st Incident of Assaults

On May 7th, 2024 at approximately 6:00pm, the assailant charged into the student encampment with one of his dogs and started attacking people. Multiple students were shoved out of his way, and a faculty member who was trying to stop the violence was thrown to the ground. Everyone required having cuts and bruises treated by camp medics.

All of this was video recorded.

After the incident, the student liaisons from the encampment spoke to campus security to report the incident, and to ask what could be done to prevent further violence. We are horrified to learn that campus security informed the students that they were aware of the assailant and had opened a file on him as of May 1st. As stated before, during every incident that has occurred between May 1 and the present, at least two members of campus security were watching this person verbally abuse and threaten students with violence from a UVic security vehicle parked in clear view of the camp entrance. Despite being in the vicinity, neither campus security nor the additional private security hired to keep students safe intervened to stop the assaults. Moreover, while campus security told the students

that they would increase surveillance around the campus for their safety, the same person attacked for a second time.

2nd Incident of Assaults

The same aggressor returned within 2 hours of the first assault. This time he assaulted even more people, including punching and hitting at least five people. During this attack, the person openly threatened to kill students, use “lethal force” on them, and never leave them in peace. He was witnessed as saying that he had trained his dogs (three of which he had with him) to hurt people. Injuries were sustained and medical attention was required for scrapes, soft tissue damage, whiplash, and concussive symptoms.

Again, all of this was video recorded.

For a second time on the same day, students from the encampment spoke to campus security and the police (who were called by campus security, not students), while the assailant sat on a fence watching. We are shocked to learn that the police told the students that they had to make an immediate decision about pressing charges, which we see as a ploy to gain names and addresses of the students in the encampment. It was unreasonable to press the students after facing violence and trauma, especially when many were still in shock and needed to address immediate medical injuries because of the assaults.

However, campus security informed students they gave the attacker a formal trespass notice and that they would be arrested if they came onto campus again.

3rd Incident of Assaults

While we recognize that the University may have increased policing and security during the night of May 7th, they failed to protect members of the UVic community again when on May 8th at approximately 12:30pm the same assailant attacked two members of the encampment for the third time.

This time, a member of the encampment was walking onto campus and was assaulted just off campus outside of Ring Road, resulting in multiple injuries including scratches, cuts, scrapes, bruising, bleeding nose, and a severe concussion. The encampment member made it to the encampment for safety, and the students immediately arranged for an on-site nursing assessment, first-aid treatment, and asked the injured person to seek further medical attention. Following this, the encampment member was taken to the emergency room. Because this event happened just off campus—directly at the entrance of the Ring Road—campus security did not intervene or inform any other authority about this third and most severe instance of violence against members of the campus community in less than 24 hours.

Since a by-stander (not from the encampment) witnessed the attack and called Oak Bay police, one of the student liaisons followed up with them, then campus security, and also Saanich police. To our dismay, each of these police forces informed the students that they were not permitted to tell them if the perpetrator was detained, which would have been

important information for the students who were rightly highly concerned for their own safety and the safety of others.

Following the lack of information from officials, a few hours later, it was confirmed he was still there – creating more risk for members of the UVic community as well as the wider community! They remain just outside of campus as of the writing of this letter.

Further, students took the initiative to check the criminal background of the assailant, whose name they had learned during their de-escalation encounters. We would like to understand if campus security was aware of this. ***We are very disturbed to learn the assailant has a history of assault and sexual violence.***

Failures of the University

We outline the incidents above to document the events. As noted above, video documentation is also available for the incidents and was shared with campus security immediately following each of them. We are truly disappointed and outraged that the University failed in its duty to provide a safe campus despite evidence of immediate and escalating threats.

- The University failed to follow University Policy No. SS9125, ‘Response to At-Risk Behaviour’, specifically in that it did not “respond immediately to at-risk behaviour” during every intimidation and harassment event (which occurred multiple times per day) between May 1st the third attack outlined above. Serving a trespass notice after many days of escalating threats of violence and several physical attacks did not ensure student safety leading up to the attacks and did not prevent the third and most recent attack.
- The University failed to follow University Policy No. SS9115, ‘Critical incident Response Procedures’, which should include the delivery of “a timely and coordinated response to critical incidents and urgent situations involving students, staff, faculty and visitors to the University”. This includes coordinating security, health, counselling, and student services, and also developing a Case Management Plan.
- The University failed to follow University Policy No. SS9120, ‘Policy on Prevention of Violence in the Workplace’, in that it failed to take “safe and effective steps to prevent or stop violence when it happens” during every instance of harassment and the attacks.
- The University has still failed to inform the campus community and wider public that multiple assaults had taken place on campus against members of the University, and that the assailant was known to have a history of assault and sexual violence.

- Despite the increased policing and security measures by the University since the encampment, and the associated increased costs during a time of austerity, the University has consistently failed in its obligations to provide a safe environment.

Calls for Action

We call for urgent action from the University administration:

1. For everyone's safety, we call on the University to ensure that the assailant does not return to campus or harm members of the campus community.
2. We further call on the University to notify the wider campus community and the general public of the assaults, so that others – whether they support the encampment or not – are aware of the dangers the assailant poses. Not only are students in the encampment at further risk of violence, but so is the wider campus and off-campus community.
3. In the event of a threat or incident, we call on the university to provide an accessible safe, warm indoor room on campus, for students, faculty and staff who are injured/facing post-traumatic stress because of the violence. This is especially important after a shock and to help people seek medical attention if they wish. People should be able to retreat for their wellness without threat of more violence, if need be.
4. We call on the University to follow-up with previous health and safety concerns expressed by students in the encampment regarding the University's practice to deny bathroom access to members of the encampment.
5. In the event of a threat or incident, we call on the University to ensure that all those injured/affected are offered the options of seeking medical attention and/or being assessed by a health professional. We ask that this not include police/campus security, as some members of the University, especially some BIPOC students and staff, find this to be unsafe.
6. We call on the University to recognize that members of the student encampment and its supporters have remained calm and are committed to fostering good relations with everyone. We ask that the university include language to this effect in its messaging to the campus community to ensure that community members know ***students did not instigate or encourage harassment and violence—nor did they escalate in response to it—in any way.*** In addition, they have cooperated with campus security and the police, who have been openly surveilling them 24/7 since May 1st.

7. We are also impressed by the continued commitment to learning that the students have demonstrated, with requests for academic books and papers and teach-ins. Therefore, we call on the University to engage meaningfully with students.
8. We call on the University to not spend additional funds on additional campus security, hiring of private security, and installation of surveillance technologies around the encampment. Instead, we urge the University to engage seriously with the five demands of the students, and open genuine dialogue.
9. We ask that the University publicly responds to the incidents described above and our calls to action within 48 hours.

In closing

We note that members of the student encampment remain steadfast that their primary concern is for the people experiencing genocide in Gaza and elsewhere. In speaking up against genocide and *for* liberation, they want everyone to be safe. In contrast, the level of egregious negligence by the University is stunning. Despite statements from the University that it is worried about the disruptions caused by the student encampment, and subsequently increasing police/security, it has utterly failed to keep our students, staff, and faculty safe as evidenced by three violent incidents on campus.

We urge you to take immediate action to protect and promote the safety of all members of the UVic community, as well as visitors to campus and members of the broader community. Thank you.

Signed,

 Christina Chakanyuka (Nursing Lecturer & PhD student)

 Dr. Simi Kang (Gender Studies)

 Dr. Shamma Boyarin (English & Religion, Culture, and Society)

 Dr. Niiyokamigaabaw Deondre Smiles (Geography)

 Dr. Damien Contandriopoulos (Nursing)

 Dr. Pierre-Luc Landry (French and Francophone Studies)

 Dr. Audrey Yap (Philosophy)

 Dr. Ann-Elise Lewallen (Pacific and Asian Studies)