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Media Release

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Protest

Update on a protest at the University of South Florida – April 30, 2024

TAMPA, Fla. – (April 30, 2024) - The University of South Florida values the right to free speech and protecting the constitutional right for individuals and groups on campus to express themselves. This includes peaceful protests and demonstrations that occur regularly on USF's three campuses without incident and are part of the public discourse of a university. However, the expression of free speech must remain peaceful and not violate the law or USF policies. The university has been clear that violence, threats, harassment and disruptions will not be tolerated.

Beginning in the morning of Tuesday, April 30, approximately 75-100 protestors, including some students and some individuals who are not affiliated with the university, arrived on campus with several items, including wood shields, umbrellas and tents. Throughout the day, USF staff members and university police remained in regular communication with protestors about the expectations for maintaining a peaceful event.

As the day progressed, police observed participants in person and through social media expressing their intent to use some of the items they brought on campus as weapons and to resist university staff members and law enforcement officers. As a result, USF police determined that the protest was no longer peaceful, and participants must leave the area.

At that point officers made multiple attempts to inform participants that the protest was ending, and they needed to disperse. Several times protestors were given verbal instructions by police that the assembly was now considered unlawful and warnings that failure to comply would result in further actions, including arrest. When participants refused to comply with the direction, university police with supporting law enforcement agencies dispersed the event. A number of individuals were taken into custody.

Additional updates will be provided as needed when more information is available.

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