



School of Communication Faculty Statement
Commending *The Lantern* Student-Journalists and Condemning Police Attacks

[Please review The Lantern coverage](#)

We commend our student-journalists working on behalf of *The Lantern* who have been reporting on the local protests in the wake of the death of George Floyd. The students have shown great courage, fortitude, resilience and professionalism, and in doing so reflect very well on the School of Communication and support the university's mission to serve the public interest. At the same time, these student-journalists have had to overcome far more adversity than we would have expected, in the form of overzealous police enforcement.

On June 1, student-journalists reporting on an active protest were confronted by police who mandated they vacate the campus area. These journalists showed their press credentials clearly, which were dismissed by police, who then responded with physical violence and assault by chemical deterrent. We deem these actions to be, without question or hesitation, completely unacceptable.

Journalists have a vital role in democratic society under the First Amendment, which provides important rights of freedom of expression and a free press. These rights include reporting about and filming the conduct of government agencies and law enforcement. Even under conditions of civil disturbances, officials are usually careful to exempt working journalists from restrictions. The order of Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther declaring a state of emergency in Columbus during widespread civil rights protests specifically exempts media personnel from enforcement during curfews.

Actions that interfere with the ability of citizens to be informed about vital issues of the day are damaging to our democratic system. A free society thrives on the free flow of information, which enables citizens to understand what is being done by government, business and other leaders. This vital work must go on without the threat of harm, harassment or arrest. This concern is heightened when the threats come from those who are charged with safeguarding people under their care. Accordingly, we call upon the city government and police leadership to improve the training and performance of police so that they can do their work of providing security for all and protect vital constitutional rights at the same time.

We stand firmly for the rights of all journalists to document the first draft of history. We call upon officials at all levels of the state and local governments to end attacks by police on journalists and their institutions, and to protect the First Amendment rights of all citizens, especially those from communities of color. This includes those who gather and engage in peaceful protest, those who report on such events, and those who rely on the



work of journalists to be informed about the actions of their officials and the conditions in their communities.

Signed by:

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