

Hey Cal Poly Humboldt!

We've only got a couple more of these for the Fall. We are totally going to make it through 2024, and I, for one, couldn't have done it without y'all. Thank you.

As many of you may have seen, there were a pair of acts of vandalism at Siemens Hall and Forbes Gym in the early morning hours of Saturday, November 2nd. These acts consisted of a series of broken windows at both sites, as well as a spray-painted message at one of the sites. The selection of Forbes Gym as one of the venues for destruction is thought to have been driven by a desire to catch the attention of prospective students who were in town for the Fall Preview.

Though I would thoroughly doubt that the party responsible for this vandalism reads my Senate Chair reports (I mean, does anybody?), I'm going to make a case to them here and maybe extend it to an overstretched metaphor.

Briefly, this is a school. Schools are a lot of things, simultaneously, and one of them, for sure, is that they are a symbol of established governmental/societal structures and positions. As such, they can be ripe targets for expression of opposition to aspects of that establishment. While I don't condone or support acts of destruction, I can genuinely say that I can sympathize with a felt desire to break stuff in the face of insurmountable injustice.

With that sympathy and understanding in place, I would ask that you not pursue this tactic moving forward. There are a number of reasons I would discourage this:

We are attempting to run an enormous and broadly accessible institution with a finite and decreasing budget, leaving our resource picture perpetually teetering on a razor's edge (in my nervous estimation), and as such, it would be preferable to apply window-fixing-monies to any of the many underfunded initiatives on campus that are in constant need and better alignment with community priorities. Frankly, I have a personal distaste for making arguments that forefront financial considerations, but given the current context, I would feel remiss in not pointing to it. We should be mindful of our shared resources.

Further, the folx that are tasked with fixing broken windows are doing hard work across our University, with more work on their shared docket than they are physically capable of keeping up with. We have millions of dollars of deferred maintenance (read: work we can't currently keep up with or afford to do) across campus, and adding anything to that pile that doesn't help to affect educational pursuits is not super awesome. Beyond that, it is likely demoralizing to those staff folx who are called in to fix intentionally broken stuff when they are in a constant battle with stuff that is degrading of its own accord. We should support these folx. We should support all members of our community in their work.

Finally (and this might be more of a "jim" thing), as stated above, this is a school. This is a space where people, on a base level, come together to expand understanding, knowledge, creative

expression, and acumen in a whole slew of skills and practices. Where we build friendships and find community amongst like-minded others. This is where we come to read and paint and write and experiment and play games and talk to smart people and imagine new ways for things to be, such that we can co-author a more just and equitable tomorrow. We need to protect places like this, not only from broken windows and spray paint, but from any of the forces leveled against our capacity to help folx learn and achieve their aspirations. We need to remind ourselves and others that spaces like this are sacrosanct, despite being viewed with skepticism by too many. We should honor schools and education.

So, though I guess this could be construed as a “please don’t break out stuff” rant, my intention is that we go an extra step beyond that, to a plea to honor and protect this space and its people. It is a complex and deeply flawed and infinitely frustrating structure, but it is worth our efforts to steward it, for the sake of its potentiality in the face of a deeply flawed and frustrating world. I thank you for your efforts to that end in advance.

Long story long, it’s been a weird coupla weeks. Take care of yourselves and each other, and by extension, this University.

Best,
jim