The controversy that erupted this summer over the University of NY’s decision to hire former General David Petraeus as a visiting professor continued with his arrival at Macaulay Honors College and “Petraeus Mania” hit the city. The campus was abuzz, and students were walking around campus with their cell phones out taking pictures of the former CIA director. In his Fox News show on September 23, Bill O’Reilly called for the firing of one of the protest organizers, Sándor John, an adjunct associate professor of history at Hunter. “Professor John does not have tenure. New Yorkers pay his salary,” said Fox correspondent Jesse Watters. “But the university...refuses to take disciplinary action against the professor.” O’Reilly was incredulous, saying “The school...they’re tolerating this! They should have fired this guy!”

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John told Clarion that while he has received a lot of hate mail, the call for his dismissal seems to have no traction. “It actually backfired,” he said. “A lot of students, faculty and fellow union activists reacted strongly against the attempt to whip up a campaign for me to be fired for expressing my views.”

Petraeus’s class has been moved from Macaulay to a building on West 57th Street, but the protests have shown no signs of dying down. On October 16, a CUNY fundraising gala with Petraeus at John Jay College drew a robust demonstration, and organizers said it would not be the last.

PSC demands respect for students’ First Amendment rights.

The PSC Delegate Assembly condemned the police action at its meeting on September 19. “We deplore the use of violence and brutal tactics against CUNY students and faculty who were peacefully protesting outside the college,” the DA resolution said. “We affirm the right of students, faculty and staff to engage in peaceful protest against actions of the City University of New York.” The union called for charges against those arrested to be dropped, and urged a formal investigation of the police use of force.

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