

Statement from Dean Ann Kirschner:

Macaulay Honors College
The City University of New York
September 12, 2013

Monday, Sept 9 2013 was a great day for learning. Millions of NYC school children returned to their classrooms. New Yorkers were preparing to exercise their right to vote. And in one classroom at Macaulay Honors College, Dr. David Petraeus, visiting professor of public policy at Macaulay Honors College for the 2013-14 academic year, taught the first session of his honors seminar: "Are We on the Threshold of the (North) American Decade?"

Before and during Dr. Petraeus' class, however, a group of protesters demonstrated in front of the college. That demonstration ended before the conclusion of the class. Sometime later, while walking off campus, Dr. Petraeus was confronted by a group of protesters, who surrounded him and persisted in following him, chanting as a group, shouting at him, and pounding on a car that he entered.

Harassment and abusive behavior toward a faculty member are antithetical to the university's mission of free and open dialogue. Although this may be obvious, this kind of behavior strikes more deeply at the heart of our cherished American right to express our beliefs without threats or fear of retribution.

As a result of this incident, I released the following statement on September 11, 2013:

"Our university is a place where complex issues and points of view across the political and cultural spectrum are considered and debated in the hope that we might offer solutions to the problems in our world. In order to advance reasoned debate on such issues, it is important that multiple points of view be heard.

"Great universities strive to connect their students with remarkable leaders and thinkers so students can examine a variety of ideas, debate them, and form their own opinions. Those perspectives find expression through discussion in and out of the classroom.

"We may disagree, but we must always do so in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. While the college supports the articulation of all points of view on critical issues, it is essential that dialogue within the academic setting always be conducted civilly."