

According to a Hillel of Westchester email dated March 19, 2015:

On the evening of Wednesday, March 18, 2015, multiple swastikas were found on the campus at SUNY Purchase College. The vandalism was isolated to doors and a stairwell in one dormitory. Our hopes regarding the response to any such egregious anti-Semitism are a swift, thorough and decisive response from the university, and exemplary leadership and peer support from Hillel student leaders. At present, we have both. Below are the details of the vandalism and response.

Immediately upon learning of the incident, affected students reported the crime to campus public safety, the Purchase Police Department. Hillel student leaders and staff – on campus that evening preparing food and clothes to deliver to homeless people in New York through Midnight Run – made subsequent reports to the police. An investigation was promptly initiated, treating this incident as a Hate or Bias Crime. Within 12 hours, university President Thomas Schwarz issued a statement reiterating that “prejudice of any form has no place in our community.” Personal communication between President Schwarz, HOW Executive Director Rachel Klein, and HOW President Jonathan Franklin affirmed the university’s treatment of this with the utmost seriousness and sensitivity to the campus community. We are hopeful in his commitment for action going forward and were reassured that HOW will play a direct role in discussions.

President Schwarz is also likely to attend the Interfaith Shabbat service at the JCC of Harrison, at the invitation of the Purchase student Board. The theme of the evening is tolerance and we hope it will be a healing experience for all in attendance. The service is at 8:00pm, and HOW Board members are invited to attend.

The Westchester Jewish Council, Hillel International and Yoav Cohen were notified. There has been no request for public comment yet.

In an exemplary and Judaic manner, Purchase Hillel student leaders immediately reached out to the victims to offer their support. Further, they reaffirmed their presence to the student body, inviting peers to bring concerns to Hillel, faculty and administration. Students also prepared a statement to President Schwarz and reached out to the leaders of all campus clubs asking for support.

Seemingly increasing incidents of anti-Semitism are an unfortunate reality on college campuses. We should not and will not tolerate such behavior.