General College supporters arrested in protest at U

May 5, 2005 PROTEST0505

Students objecting to the proposed elimination of the University of Minnesota's General College spent Wednesday sitting in or near President Robert Bruininks' office. But when about 10 refused to leave Morrill Hall at the 6 p.m. closing time, they were arrested by university police.

A crowd of more than 100 rallied outside and heard speakers supporting the role of General College as a helpful entry for low-income and minority students to the university.

Seven people began sitting in the president's outer office about 10:15 a.m., and another 10 to 12 reportedly sat or stood in the hall outside. He was not in his office Wednesday. Six of the seven in the president's office were arrested shortly after 6 p.m. on trespassing charges, as were three or four others. Police handcuffed them and led them to a van in a parking garage beneath Northrop Plaza, out of sight of the other protesters. Most were expected to be released Wednesday night.

University Police Chief Greg Hestness said some protesters near the van were sprayed with a chemical irritant. There were differing accounts of whether those sprayed were approaching or retreating from the van.

Dan Wascoe