

**University of Hartford
Report to the President
Of
Campus Safety Commission
November 1, 2007**

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND:

In May 2007 in the wake of the campus shootings at Virginia Tech University, President Walter Harrison called for a commission to study campus safety at the University of Hartford. He named Dr. J. Lee Peters, Vice President for Student Affairs, as chair of this commission, which included Public Safety Director Judy Carlson, Professor of Communication Dr. Lynne Kelly, and Student Regent Graziano DiCiaula.

The President requested that a report be delivered to him no later than November 1, 2007.

PRESIDENT'S CHARGE:

While we continue to grieve for our colleagues at Virginia Tech, it is also important for us to integrate the lessons we can learn from that tragedy to improve our own preparedness and safety on campus. We are already studying ways to do that, but our deliberations will be greatly improved by seeking advice and perceptions of safety from all segments of our community.

To that end, we have formed a Campus Safety Committee to collect impressions and advice from many groups on campus. **Dr. J. Lee Peters**, vice president of student affairs and dean of students, will chair this committee, and the following three members of our community have agreed to serve:

- Judy Carlson**, director of public safety
- Graziano DiCiaula**, junior in The Hartt School and student regent
- Dr. Lynne Kelly**, professor of communication and director of the School of Communication

The Campus Safety Committee will be meeting with a number of groups around campus in the coming weeks and months, and I have asked them to provide me with any interim reports they think are appropriate, with a final report due on November 1. If they have ideas that we can implement before then, we will certainly do so. I will continue to keep you updated.

METHOD OF THE COMMISSION:

Commission members reviewed the Report of the Review Panel of the shootings at Virginia Tech University and other emergency response literature. Members also took part in teleconferences and video conferences related to campus safety. One member participated in National Incident Management System training provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The Commission then began to meet with various constituent groups on campus including Council of Deans; Faculty Senate; Student Government Association;

Staff Association; Parents Association; and the Student Affairs department heads. At these meetings, the Commission listened to concerns, suggestions and accolades about campus safety and security. The results obtained from all the aforementioned research are outlined in this document.

CULTURE OF FEAR:

It should be noted that the Virginia Tech University shootings in May and the subsequent campus shootings at Delaware State University in September, in conjunction with the general unsettled feeling nationally of being at war and a potential target of terrorism, appear to have bred a “culture of fear” at many U.S. colleges and universities. The University of Hartford appears to have embraced this “culture of fear” as many more instances of unusual student behavior have been reported by students, faculty and staff in the fall of 2007 than during the previous five years.

During the meetings the commission had with constituent groups, this “culture of fear” was palpable. For instance, suggestions were made that were impractical at face value, but seemed that they would assuage this fear if enacted. A case in point is the suggestion to put a gate at the entrance to campus. This suggestion came up at least once in every group we listened to, even though a gate across a road with no accompanying fence would do nothing to stop someone bent on taking some kind of deadly or hurtful action. The gate idea also would have done nothing to stop the occurrences at either VTU or Delaware State, given that both crimes were perpetrated by campus community members.

We make this point because while we attempted to include all suggestions in this report, they should be viewed in the context of the atmosphere described above.

CURRENT CONDITIONS:

Generally, we found that campus community members feel safe on our campus. They believe that Public Safety does a good job and that the campus climate is good here. The campus community members tend to believe that if bad things do happen on campus, they are usually perpetrated by visitors to the campus.

A look at our campus crime statistics (Appendix A) appears to support the “visitors are the problem” theory, as the bulk of our crime involves burglary and auto theft, both of which are assumed by community members to be “outsider” crimes. While this is probably true for auto theft, we believe that many burglaries are convenience crimes perpetrated by our own students when presented with open or propped doors. The point of this discussion is that regardless of perception, we must be prepared for problems originating from both without and within our campus borders.

Our current training programs for Public Safety and Residential Life staff (normal first responders in a campus emergency or crisis) are at worst, adequate, and in most cases excellent. Our equipment is up to date and we are in the process of implementing the e2Campus emergency text messaging alert system. Our campus Public Safety officer presence ranges from six per first shift to a maximum of 10 per third shift on Thursday through Saturday.

Understanding these current conditions will illuminate many of the responses of the commission to the suggestions emerging from the campus constituent groups and our review of other relevant information.

CONCLUSIONS:

The following represent the major tactical considerations resulting from the work of the Commission:

As related to campus access, the Commission recommends that we continue a squad car presence at the main entrance at night as often as possible, barricade the entrance and use existing gates to “lock down” access to the campus if necessary, put prop-alarms on all residence hall doors that are not main entrances and explore the potential of making classroom doors lockable from the inside.

Many high and low tech tactics emerged during the work of the Commission in the arena of emergency communications. As stated earlier, we have already adopted a high-tech emergency text system, and are also working on pricing for a low tech siren system for the campus. Other tactical considerations in this arena include emergency procedure stickers on phones and backs of doors, and increasing our number of blue light kiosks and putting them on flash in an emergency.

While our current emergency response is considered very good, the Commission recommends the addition of University General Counsel as an “on-call” member of the Situation Management Team, that we put more comprehensive building plans than currently available in the hands of off-campus first responders, and work to improve the existing camera monitoring systems.

As related to dealing with individually troubled students or other community members, we recommend training and development in this arena for faculty and staff, and continued work on the campus-wide FERPA/HIPPA release, to take effect in January, 2008.

As related to training and education, we have a great many needs in terms of developing or acquiring training programs, delivering them and evaluating them.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Along with our support for the various tactical issues mentioned in the Emergent Issues and Conclusions sections, a major strategic recommendation emerged from the work of the Commission. Given the scope of the need for development of emergency plans, training materials and response tactics, along with delivery of training, no one office or department currently exists whose “job” it is to accomplish these tasks. In our experience, it would be fine to recommend that all these tactics be executed, but without a “champion” whose responsibility it is to carry out the recommendations, the odds that everything will get done are low.

With the above thoughts in mind, the Campus Safety Commission recommends consideration of the creation of a new position, tentatively titled University Safety Manager, whose job it would be to manage all campus safety risks, including not only emergency response, but hazardous materials, OSHA guidelines, etc. This position and support for it would cost between \$150k and \$175k/year, and would greatly increase our ability to effectively manage emergency and non-emergency risk. It would be the job of the person in this position to make the tactical recommendations of the Campus Safety Commission a reality.