

Campus Affairs Committee

Campus Safety Report FY 2008

This report was prepared by an *ad hoc* subcommittee of the Campus Affairs Committee consisting of Brandon Dula (Staff), Jose-Luis Riera (Graduate Student), Edward Walters (Faculty), and Agis Iliadis (Faculty), who drafted the original document. The subcommittee took into consideration 224 email messages received from students, faculty, and staff via the SafetyNotes email link, minutes of past committee meetings, comments received at an open forum, and briefings by Campus Police. In addition, comments were solicited from Brad Docherty of the Student Government Association and Linda Clement, Vice President of Student Affairs. An appendix contains copies of the email messages and the remarks of Dr. Clement and Mr. Docherty.

The prepared draft was circulated to members of the full committee and further comments were integrated into the report by Chair William Fennie.

Following are the recommendations arrived at after careful consideration of comments from all parties:

1. Facilities Management should review its regular inspection procedure to assure that lighting malfunctions be corrected on a 24-hour basis, that more light fixtures be added in badly lit areas and areas of frequent pedestrian traffic, and that key areas behind buildings and other strategic zones be addressed. FM should report its findings to the Senate by September 2008.

One of the major concerns expressed in the email messages and by the committee members is the state of lighting in various areas of the Campus, behind buildings, on walking paths, and areas of pedestrian traffic. Complaints varied from light bulbs being broken and inoperative to missing light fixtures. Most of the burned-out or broken lights appear to stay in that state of disrepair for long periods of time either unreported or neglected, according to the reports. Reports of malfunctioning lighting or dangerous areas could be reported using the University Safety web site.

2. Find a way to increase visible Police presence, especially after dark; plan for growing the ranks of the Police force; carefully review relationship between the University and PG County Police near campus.

Another prominent concern expressed is a need to increase Police presence, with more patrols by foot or bicycle suggested especially after dark. This, of course is not an easy task, and the committee is aware that staffing is a chronic problem. The committee feels this is a key point of concern and recommends that a long term plan be developed by review and evaluation of what is needed to enhance recruiting and retention rates and provide the necessary incentives.

The committee recognizes that consistent efforts on the part of the Police have had a significant impact in reducing crime in our community, and it was evident through our briefings by the Police that several important implementations were effected to arrive at the reduced crime figures.

The committee also recognized that many students live just outside Campus in the surrounding areas where jurisdiction falls to the PG County Police. This is an issue which bears continued consideration.

3. Increase Police Auxiliary and enhance its training; consider hiring contract security services using the unfilled police lines; take steps to address speeding on campus.

The committee also discussed the state of the Auxiliary Police force and how it can be increased and more broadly and effectively trained to support the emerging safety and security needs of Campus. One suggestion was to post sentries at the Gates earlier – say 9 p.m. – on all gates of the Campus. Another important suggestion is to have more escorts available, especially from the Libraries during late hours, and increased numbers and training.

The committee recognized the limitations of the Auxiliary Police but felt that sufficient Auxiliary Police presence in uniform on Campus throughout the year might deter crime and improve safety, filling somewhat the gap for the Campus Police until they are well staffed. Another suggestion was research into contract security services.

The committee further noted concerns about excessive driving speeds on campus in some of the well-travelled pedestrian crossings and pathways and suggests that this situation be studied.

4. Track Building Security System Work Orders to encourage quick response to and accountability for security lapses in building access.

The committee noted concern about malfunctioning electronic locks at the entry points of Campus buildings. In some cases door locks are disabled or broken, and complaints were received about the responsiveness of Building Security Services. One suggestion was the establishment of a Work Order tracking system for BSS similar to that used by Facilities Management. We agree and suggest also a program to raise the level of awareness to report such problems readily by phone or by email to an appropriate e-link on the Safety web page.

5. Initiate a feasibility study for a comprehensive plan to address the complex problem of catastrophic violence perpetrated by a disturbed individual; begin a campus-wide conversation about possible methodologies for early detection of personality and performance changes indicative of dangerous behavior, and the implications of such strategies for personal freedom in a university environment.

The tragic events at Virginia Tech and other schools brought important concerns as to how a "proper" or "acceptable" procedure or protocol for pre-emptive action can be developed in cases like these. It must be noted that the Incident Response Team has already developed a detailed plan to respond to such an incident, and another step has been taken with the security alerts through cell-phones Campus wide, an excellent warning system. It's not clear that the campus community is aware of this plan, which can be reviewed at the following URL :

www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/umeop/pdfs/relationship.pdf

The committee received suggestions such as the development of anonymous hot-lines, class room doors locking from inside, faculty training for emergency situations, gun detection devices, and others. We recognize the complexity of this problem and suggest a feasibility study for the development of a comprehensive plan focused on this problem from the pre-emptive side. This may include high tech electronic warning devices, more cameras, specific faculty and staff training to recognize early warning signs of emerging personality and performance changes, and other indicators. It is clear, too, that a conversation on the implications of these possibilities needs to begin.

6. Implement changes to the University Safety web site and incorporate links to it on the University home page and in every course syllabus.

The committee found that the suggestion accepted by the Senate in May 2007 for a "one-stop" site for safety matters had not been adequately realized.

The Department of Public Safety web site meets all of the legal criteria for making available the information that we are required to give our community. We suggest that its presentation be reviewed so that it is easily navigable; that it shows up quickly in an internet search using intuitive terms like "Maryland Safety" or "University of Maryland Police"; and that the information on the home page is of immediate relevance to a person seeking aid. It should furthermore function as a site where safety issues can be raised and responses posted, perhaps including a safety blog. Reporting burned-out lights and such would fit into this category.

Links to this web site should be prominently displayed on the UMD home page. It was also suggested that faculty be encouraged to include the "SafetyNotes" email link or the University Safety web site link on every course syllabus.

7. Encourage continuation of the current Safety Walk program undertaken by the Student Government Association.

The SGA Safety Walk is an excellent way for students, administrators, and any interested member of our community to learn about safety issues on campus. The SGA bases its decisions for the walk on data collected from the student body, which makes it extremely valuable grass-roots information. We encourage the Student Government Association to continue providing this important service.

Appendix A

Safety Fora during the 2007-2008 Academic Year

The Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Linda Clement, arranged for two fora on safety after a series peeping-tom / sexual assault incidents in College Park early in the 2007-2008 academic year. Dr. Clement reports :

One Campus-wide Safety forum was organized Friday, September 14, 2007, 3:00-4:30 pm, in the Colony Ballroom in the Stamp student union.

- 70-80 students, staff, faculty, parents and press attended
- Presentations by UMPD, PG Police, VP for Student Affairs, Office of the Victim Advocate were given
- Q & A from audience over recent peeping tom/sexual assault incidents in College Park were discussed

The second forum was on Monday, September 17, 2007, 12:00-1:30 pm, in the Colony Ballroom, in the Stamp student union.

- 75-80 students, staff, faculty and press attended
- Presentations by UMPD, PG Police, VP for Student Affairs, Office of the Victim Advocate
- Statements read from victims
- Q & A from audience followed

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The third Safety Forum was held on February 26, 2007, organized by the Campus Affairs Committee pursuant to its mandate to hold such a forum once per academic year. About 10 people attended, including members of the committee and Senate support staff. The Department of Public Safety sent a representative and several people made comments.

Appendix B : SGA Safety Review

DATE: April 18, 2008
TO: University Senate Campus Affairs Committee
FROM: Brad Docherty, Senior Vice President of the Student Government Association
SUBJECT: Campus Safety Concerns

The Student Government Association (SGA) has worked closely with the Department of Public Safety in the weeks leading up to and following its biggest safety initiative of the year—the Annual Safety Walk. Through this Safety Walk, students and administrators were able to identify a number of tangible safety improvements that could be made with little to no added costs. This effort was successful in getting new crosswalks, repairing old lights, trimming trees to improve existing lighting, and highlighting areas where students felt particularly vulnerable.

While the Department of Public Safety was extremely helpful in achieving these improvements, we feel that there is a need for more of these events. It is not often that students and administrators are sharing a journey across campus at night—to students, it often feels like they are the only ones around campus after dark. In conversations with public safety officials, it became apparent that many safety issues are checked regularly (i.e. blue light emergency phones and street lights). Students should regularly be encouraged to participate in these efforts. Whether it is walking around with the Auxiliary Police or just advertising what number to call in the event a student spots a burnt out street light or a broken blue light emergency phone, student vigilance can be supported by reaching out to those students interested in promoting their own safety. The end result of this outreach can only be faster response time in addressing issues as they arise.

In conducting our Bringing Safety Back event to prepare for the Safety Walk, we asked students to place a pin on a map where they felt unsafe on campus. Over two days of holding the event, the results became more and more conclusive. Students felt the least safe around the edges of the campus, particularly in periphery parking lots. Safety efforts should focus on how to improve the patrolling of these areas. Lots 1, 9, 11, and the Mowatt Parking garage are areas of strong unease among students, especially commuters. The combination of dim lighting and their proximity to entrances onto campus make these areas of particular concern.

As for residence halls, there arose a strong sentiment earlier in the year that there should be more swipe card access stairwells. However, we ultimately came to the conclusion that resident students should be armed with better information. RAs should encourage residents to report suspicious activity or the presence of individuals who appear to be unaffiliated with the University of Maryland. Residential Facilities employees should be held responsible for wearing proper identification in the residence halls, and residents should be taught what to look for in identifying them as such. RAs are a powerful tool for the University to use in disseminating information about keeping our residential communities safe.

Police presence on campus after dark is an area where many students feel underserved. While there is always a balance between safety and creating a police state, it is important that students feel there are people around if something were to happen. Several easily identifiable vehicles are supposed to patrol the campus on a nightly basis, but these patrol cars are not nearly as visible as

they should be. We encourage the Department of Public Safety to revisit their on-campus patrolling at night to ensure that the presence serves as a proper deterrent for potential criminals as well as something to make students feel safer.

Additionally, the police escort program needs to be revamped. Students consistently report wait times of thirty minutes or more and rude operators that make them feel badly about requesting the service. This results in students calling once and never doing so again due to a negative experience. Beyond this, the service is not properly advertised to students causing the awareness to be very low. We encouraged an extensive review of the police escort program to better serve the student body.

Since a large number of students are living immediately off-campus and that number seems to be growing tremendously on an annual basis, it is important that the Campus Affairs Committee consider these issues. The most important issue the Campus Affairs Committee can address is the need to increase the area of joint jurisdiction between the Department of Public Safety and Prince George's County Police. The memorandum of agreement does not cover areas with dense student populations, even including housing projects that the University took part in negotiating including the University View. It is imperative that the joint jurisdiction extend at the very least to cover such a large student housing property that only houses University of Maryland students. We encourage the review of the area of joint jurisdiction to more accurately reflect where students live.

With respect to the strategies mentioned above, the SGA feels that the tactics used to approach improving safety must be revisited. Merely posting flyers in residence halls or placing additional information on the Department of Public Safety's website will not suffice. In adopting a more creative, collaborative, and proactive approach, public safety officials can tap into students' desire to help improve their own safety. Police officers cannot be everywhere, nor should they be; however, taking actions to make the student body more vigilant will exponentially improve safety on campus. This effort is up to every member of the University community, student or administrator. Our safety depends on it.