

The President's Commission on University Security *In the Wake of the Virginia Tech Incident*

In April of 2007, University of Wisconsin System President Kevin Reilly formed a Commission on University Security. The charge of the Commission was to develop recommendations for how University of Wisconsin System institutions can prevent, intervene, respond, heal and resume operations when confronted with the threat, or actual incidence, of major violence at one or more of its campus locations, similar to the type experienced at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University on April 16, 2007. The Commission completed its charge and presented its final report at the July 13, 2007 meeting of the Board of Regents.

The Commission was comprised of the following:

- One member from each of the 13 four-year UW System institutions
- One member representing the UW Colleges (two-year institutions) and UW Extension
- One member representing the Board of Regents
- Two student representatives
- One member representing UW System

Susan Riseling, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief of Police at UW-Madison, was appointed by President Reilly to serve as chair.

In making its recommendations, the Commission used the following guiding principles:

- All persons should be treated fairly, with dignity and respect.
- Not all those who are mentally ill are violent and not all who are violent are mentally ill.
- A diagnosis of mental illness is not, in and of itself, a lens to screen for violence.
- Defining the behavior of concern should be tantamount to defining prevention and intervention.
- Students are free-thinking adults.
- "One size fits all" solutions rarely work.

Following is a summary of the Commission's recommendations:

Prevention

- 1. New administrative policies concerning behavior of members of the campus population should be established.**
- 2. UW System should facilitate the development of an "awareness" campaign to be conducted on each campus that is comprehensive and role-based. The campaign would focus on how the campus community reports problems, troubling behaviors, concerns, and what to do in the event of a shooting. Content would be tailored to an individual's role on campus.**
- 3. In concert with the "awareness" campaign, education and more advanced training are required to ensure that anyone (staff, counselors, medical practitioners) needing to make a decision regarding disclosure or intervention knows that they**

can (and, in most cases, should) disclose information about an individual or intervene as necessary and receive support.

4. **Campus safety information should be distributed broadly to all staff, faculty, students and parents on a regular basis.**
5. **The security/law enforcement needs of the two-year Colleges and Extension should be reviewed. The Commission has formed a sub-group for this purpose to make recommendations by September 7, 2007.**
6. **UW System President should assign ultimate responsibility for University and College public safety oversight to an existing Vice President.**

Pre-violence/Intervention

7. **Each College and University within the System should establish a multi-disciplinary "Review Team" that is responsible for creating and monitoring information (creating a behavioral "radar screen" in a secured database) to track troubling behavior of students, faculty and staff.**
8. **Counseling and mental health resource requirements for each campus should be thoroughly examined. The Commission has formed a sub-group for this purpose to make recommendations by September 7, 2007.**

Intervention During Violence

9. **All 26 campuses and System Administration should develop robust crisis and continuity of operation plans (COOP).**
10. **Full time 24/7 university police staffing at all four-year institutions, should be maintained consistent with national policing standards. Every four-year campus should have university law enforcement officers effectively armed, trained, and properly equipped to respond to law enforcement emergencies including active shooters.**
11. **In the event of an incident involving an active shooter and/or mass casualties on campus, the University Crisis Plan should be activated providing communications appropriate for the situation.**
12. **University law enforcement should have the responsibility and the authority to determine the appropriate time, place and manner in which tactical information during the dynamic phase of an incident is shared with the public.**

Aftermath

13. **Efforts should be made to minimize the length of time or the frequency of disruption to crisis communication systems by planning, proactive steps, advance information sharing and the use of multiple systems, including careful consideration of mass messaging devices. The Commission has formed a sub-group to review all technology available and make recommendations by September 7, 2007.**
14. **The affected institution should continue formally communicating after the incident has occurred and throughout the investigation.**

- 15. A post incident assessment should be implemented as soon after an incident as possible.**
- 16. Students should be directly involved in decision-making and implementation of post-violence “healing” measures.**
- 17. Proper response and follow up to the incident should continue for six months and longer.**

A full copy of the Final Report, July 2007, “University of Wisconsin System – President’s Commission on University Security (in the wake of the Virginia Tech incident)”, can be found by going to the University Police Department website homepage, www.uwpd.wisc.edu.