



Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

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Chairman and members of the Senate Education Committee, and the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. Good morning. My name is Steven Dupes. I am assistant vice chancellor for facilities for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). My duties include assisting with police, emergency operations, and related policy issues. With me today is Michael Bicking, the Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police for West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

We welcome this opportunity to discuss with you safety and security at our campuses. Campus security is a vital concern to everyone at PASSHE and our 14 universities, from our Board of Governors, to each police officer and, I am sure, to every student and his or her family.

Our universities enjoy a relatively low rate of crime, but we all recognize that we are not immune from violence or natural disasters. Crime rates at our universities continue to decline, and our universities continue to make improvements on preventing and responding to criminal activity and emergencies.

We regularly assess our readiness to deal with emergencies of all kinds, including active shooter events, pandemics, mass sheltering, or major weather events and flooding.

We constantly review and reassess our emergency operations plans and procedures, and routinely test those plans. In doing so, we also attempt to learn from events that happen around the country and implement lessons learned. For example, a few years ago we reassessed the procedures we follow at large events after a shooting occurred during a dance at a neighboring university. That reassessment resulted in policy changes on managing events, additional use of equipment such as metal detectors, and supplemental training for our police and security personnel.

Our university emergency personnel have extensive expertise that is frequently sought out by other university, municipal, state, and federal agencies. In addition to these internal resources and reviews, we also use external resources to help with planning and reviewing our procedures. These include the PA State Police and consultants.

A few years ago, we completed multi-hazard mitigation plans at each of our universities. We utilized a consultant with nationally recognized expertise in that area to assist with developing the plans and to complete detailed threat risk assessments for natural hazards and man-made risks. Currently, our universities are the only universities or colleges in PA with their own Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and PEMA approved plans. The planning also ensured that we had updated emergency operations plans in FEMA's preferred format. That effort was funded with a \$1.7 million FEMA grant. We recently received a grant to update our hazard mitigation plans.

Universities of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

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Each of our universities has in place fully equipped and trained commissioned police officers and security guards. PASSHE spends more than \$18 million a year on law enforcement and security. Combined, the PASSHE universities employ about 200 police and an additional 55 trained security guards. The universities work closely with the municipal police departments in their communities and the State Police to provide for the safety and security of our campuses. At times, they work with federal law enforcement agencies, as well.

Timely communication is an important part of our emergency preparedness, and we utilize a variety of tools, depending on the situation, including: text messages, email, webpages, voicemail, news media, flyers, public address systems, campus siren systems, electronic signage, and word of mouth. A couple universities also have reverse 911 capabilities.

We have made significant progress in the improvements on our campuses to prepare for emergencies and prevent criminal behavior. These improvements also include facilities enhancements with improved lighting, additional surveillance cameras, and lockdown capabilities. In recent years, we have been fortunate to receive Homeland Security Grants that have allowed us to purchase specialized equipment and provide additional training. Even with those resources, I am sure you are aware that you can never be too safe, and additional funding for further facilities improvements and emergency personnel can always be put to good use.

The biggest challenges for us involve the balancing acts we must manage, including the open-campus environment expectations of a public university and the acceptable forcefulness of the police presence. Our campuses are not military installations with clearly defined, fenced, gated, and patrolled perimeters, with strict command and controlled occupancy. They are open, free-flowing spaces that are usually integrated into the surrounding community to the point that it is often hard to distinguish where one starts and the other ends. On any given day, we may have major events that are open to the public, such as concerts, speaking engagements, and sporting events. We have very limited ability to restrict who is present on our campuses. At times, our police are thrust into the position of protecting unannounced demonstrators on campus who are permitted to stay because of their free speech rights.

Our police officers serve a constituency that includes a large population of mostly 18- to 25-year-olds. Their unique charge is to serve these young adults in such a way that fosters both trust and respect. The success of our officers is measured in the cooperation and willingness of the campus communities to assist them in creating a safe environment.

In closing, I would like to reassure you that we continue to improve our planning and our readiness to deal with major hazards and threats, and we maintain an open mind toward implementing new ideas to help reduce our risks.

At this time, we would be happy to respond to any questions you might have.