



# The Value of Campus Public Safety Agencies

The COVID-19 pandemic has created potentially unprecedented financial difficulties for colleges and universities. A decrease in tuition and other revenues may necessitate the reduction or elimination of services and resources on campuses, including for campus police and public safety agencies.

National attention has been focused on higher education with respect to student safety and the response to critical incidents. Key to the success of sustaining a vibrant, exciting college environment is the indisputable need to maintain a safe and secure campus community. The problems of crime and violence, disorder, behavioral issues, and harassment continue to occur on college campuses.

The purpose of this document is to help campus police and public safety agencies prepare and proactively address anticipated budget cuts and reduced funding, without diminishing their ability to serve the institutional mission and protect the campus community. The document is intended to encourage thinking and discussion among public safety administrators on how to best demonstrate the strategic value of their agencies to key stakeholders and offices throughout the college or university. Faced with possible requirements to cut budgets, the document can also assist in prioritizing operations in the search for potential cost savings while still fulfilling your agency's responsibilities to the campus.

## **Community Policing and Campus Engagement**

The fundamental value that any campus police or public safety agency provides is a singular focus on the needs of the campus community, including being responsive to the expectations for the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff. College police and public safety agencies can operate effectively only with the consent of the community and must rely on the community it serves for information to assist in deterring crime, investigating criminal acts and student code violations, addressing disorder, and enhancing safety and security. A police or public safety agency dedicated to a campus instills in its members a sense of ownership in the shared mission and pride in their work on behalf of students, staff, and faculty.

Campus safety and security are not the exclusive responsibilities of the campus police or public safety agency. The quality of the safety and security program on any college campus is directly related to the



effectiveness of the partnership that exists between the agency and other administrative units both on and off campus. Public safety agencies have invested in many formal relationships with other campus offices, such as student life, housing, etc., to play an active role in organizing cooperative programming. By establishing links with the community, the agency can learn of issues and respond to them before they become serious problems. Agencies should demonstrate the resources required to provide public safety consistent with the campus philosophy.

- Focus on student, faculty, and staff safety
- Managing parental expectations and perceptions of safety
- Partnerships/relationships with faculty, staff, students, and parents
- Accountability to campus stakeholders
- Maintain a balanced presence for First Amendment and social justice activities
- Collaboration with local law enforcement and first responders that respond to campus and surrounding neighborhoods

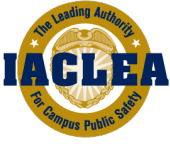
## **Calls for Service**

The day-to-day operation of a college police or public safety department, which involves vehicular and foot patrols, investigating reports of criminal activity, and traffic and parking enforcements, is the barometer used to measure department effectiveness. Workload analyses can determine the minimum number of staff to meet the needs of the campus, while considering sufficient staff to maintain acceptable response times to incidents and ensure officer safety on every shift across large or multiple campuses.

The role of the communications function is to receive phone calls for assistance, enter each into the computer aided dispatch system, dispatch the appropriate officer(s) and summon assistance or resources for the officers, where needed.

The communications function should consider the needs of the community it serves on a typical day, as well as during emergencies. Staffing the communications center is not as simple as assigning people to answer telephones. The staff members must be trained in standard law enforcement and security procedures as well as emergency response. They must be knowledgeable in campus policies for parking, maintenance reporting, and locking schedules. They must clearly understand the role, duties, and responsibilities of the department to provide quality service to the campus community. Agencies should be able to document:

- Calls and inquiries handled by call-takers/dispatchers
- Calls dispatched to officers
- Responses to campus emergencies
- Officer-initiated activities
- Notifications via a safety app



- Walks/escorts provided
- Student welfare checks
- Vehicle assistance: lockouts, unlocks and 'hot shots'

## Crime Prevention

Crime prevention activities are central to a safe campus. The visibility of officers on campus is important not only as a deterrent to criminal activity, but also as a means for reassuring the community.

Colleges and universities have characteristics that provide unique challenges to crime prevention efforts. Foremost among these is that a college community population changes dramatically each year, an average of 25 percent. In addition, this population typically is not especially concerned with safety until something affects them.

Crime prevention must be an ongoing and integral part of any viable public safety program. Critical programs can include:

- Security assessments
- Officers in residence halls
- Community surveys
- Blue light phones and apps
- Monitoring and patrolling facilities and equipment
- Personal protection and self-defense training

## Investigations

Many campus police and public safety agencies have the capability to investigate criminal complaints filed by community members and pursue investigations to their conclusion. Detectives may conduct follow-up investigations, with support when necessary from local and state law enforcement partners. Campus police also assist in administrative and internal investigations involving students, staff, and faculty members.

When a student is involved in an off-campus incident involving criminal behavior, investigators may assist the local police department in its investigation. Campus public safety agencies may share those reports with campus administrators for follow-up, potentially including disciplinary action.

- Conduct investigations of crimes committed on campus
- Coordinate investigations with campus administrators concerning student codes of conduct
- Collaborate with local and state law enforcement agencies when students are involved in criminal activity off-campus
- Collaborate with local and state law enforcement agencies on patterns of serious criminal activity on and around campuses



## **Threat Assessment and Risk Management**

Threat assessment and risk management processes enhance an institution's ability to identify persons or situations that present concerning or threatening behavior, assess their risk for engaging in harmful activities, and develop strategies to manage that risk. Campus police and public safety agencies fill an essential role in multidisciplinary threat assessment teams that facilitate the early identification of developing concerns and devise effective approaches to resolving concerns.

- Participate in multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams
- Identify potential victims and perpetrators
- Follow-up on potential threats
- Coordinate with, and marshal the resources of, other law enforcement agencies

## **Mental Health and Well-being Assistance**

As the suicide rate and the need for mental health resources increase in the general population, campuses are seeing corresponding increases as well. Police and public safety agencies fill important roles in collaborative initiatives to address the needs of individuals who require mental health assistance or have mental illnesses on campuses.

- Suicide prevention
- Welfare checks
- Participation in CARE Teams
- Tracking parents' reports of missing students
- Crisis intervention
- Collaboration with mental health providers voluntary and involuntary assessments

## **Trainings and Presentations**

A valuable and popular service that campus public safety agencies provide are crime prevention training classes and community engagement. Agencies should be able to demonstrate the different educational services they provide throughout the year:

- Sexual assault prevention
- Self-defense and personal safety
- Office safety/workplace violence
- Sexual violence prevention
- Vehicle security
- Road safety or safe driver training
- Residential security
- Managing aggressive behaviors
- Non-violent crisis intervention
- Active shooter or assailant incidents



## Compliance

Colleges and universities must comply with numerous federal and state requirements related to campus safety and security. The most well-known of these is the *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics* that requires colleges and universities to disclose both timely and specific information and annual summary information about campus crimes and security policies. Other requirements include the issuance of timely warnings and the maintenance of a daily crime log.

Although the ultimate burden of compliance with the Clery Act is institutional in scope, it is to be expected that the campus police and public safety agency will play a significant role in the achievement of compliance. Key to the achievement of compliance, therefore, is ensuring that all the elements of the law are being addressed and that the responsibilities of and relationships among the various on- and off-campus units have been clearly documented and understood. An agency should create an inventory of all compliance requirements for which it is responsible:

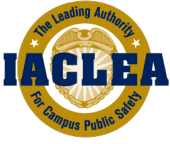
- Title IX
- Clery Act reporting/ASR; requirements for emergency alerts
- Drug Free Schools Act
- State-level requirements/certifications
- Accreditation

## Emergency Preparedness

For many years, colleges and universities have dealt with critical incidents such as weather emergencies in the form of hurricanes and tornadoes, power outages, lab explosions, fires and medical emergencies that threaten the very existence of the institution. Active shooter incidents have led colleges and universities to re-examine every facet of their emergency response plans including notification systems, business continuity plans, and National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command System (ICS) training.

Emergency preparedness mandates and expectations for reducing risks to the campus are a critical and time-consuming responsibility that campus police and public safety agencies are often tasked with and without receiving additional resources. Emergency preparedness is now a new division of all progressive campus police and public safety agencies. Most agencies have a minimum of a full-time manager/coordinator of emergency preparedness and requirements for all students, faculty, and staff to participate in on-going training. Inclusion of the entire campus community heightens awareness, reduces fears, relays expectations, gains support, and allows the campus to better respond to all levels of emergencies. Agencies should consider:

- Preparing critical incident plans and management



- Emergency operations center
- FEMA communications, trainings, and courses
- IACLEA training and services
- Collaboration with federal, state, and municipal agencies
- Public health emergencies
- Communications regarding emergencies and hazards
- Recovery

## **Special Events**

Campuses have a variety of special events throughout the academic calendar as well as during summer, winter, and other breaks. Many of these events would not be possible without the involvement of police and public safety agencies to plan, prepare, and provide staffing to ensure the safety and security of all involved. These “behind the scenes” preparations and a visible presence at the events can require significant work that is too often invisible to many on the campus. Some of these events include:

- Sporting event safety and crowd management
- Student and parent orientations
- Concerts
- Protests
- Special guests and dignitaries
- Move-in days
- Graduations

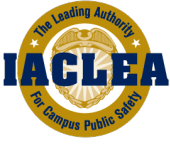
## **Technology and Specialized Equipment**

All police and public safety departments have varying equipment needs to support the mission of each unique organization, as well as the different types of personnel employed by an agency. Some of this equipment is mandatory and some optional. Mandatory equipment is defined as must-carry or must-wear fundamental tools to safely protect the individual and to perform basic police and security functions in both non-emergency and emergency situations. Consistently, vehicle purchases and maintenance take the largest portion of these budget allocations. Major equipment and technology expenses include:

- Communications equipment
- Weapons and related equipment
- Closed circuit cameras
- Access control/card readers
- License plate readers
- Specialized vehicles: golf carts, bicycles, Segway

## **Officer Training and Education**

Training is one of the most important requirements for any college police or public safety department. Public safety officers need to be trained in a variety of topics from critical encounters to professionalism and customer



service. Moreover, agencies are now being held legally accountable for the actions of their personnel and for failing to provide initial or remedial training. Well-trained officers are generally better prepared to act decisively and correctly in a broad spectrum of situations, and training results in greater productivity and effectiveness for the entire agency. Training programs occur at different levels, including basic, in-service, refresher, or specialized, and should include the civilian and non-sworn components of the agency. Potential training programs include:

- Conducting security surveys
- Trauma-based for preventing and responding to sexual assault
- Responding to active shooters
- First-line supervisor
- Management development

## **COVID-19 Response**

The unexpected nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused campus police and public safety agencies to implement emergency plans or to develop unique responses to unexpected circumstances. Agencies should be certain to document the activities and unplanned expenditures they have undertaken as well as constraints such as reduced staffing or working from remote locations. Examples would include:

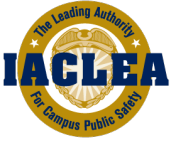
- PPE acquisition and rationing
- EOC staffing and operations
- Facility conversion
- Public/private and municipal partnerships
- Rapid student move-out coordination
- Reopening planning and implementation
- Site security for points of resource distribution or quarantine efforts
- Policy enforcement for social distancing, face coverings, etc.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our society in unimaginable ways, and colleges and universities are grappling with an uncertain future while hoping that all can soon return to normal operations. But it may be some time until that happens, and in the interim colleges and universities may face budget cuts that could affect campus police and public safety agencies.

Most campuses are virtually empty, and public safety calls for service on many campuses have decreased, but for others the number has increased substantially depending on their location and affiliation with medical systems.





The document is intended to encourage thinking and discussion among agency administrators on how to best demonstrate the strategic value of their agencies to key stakeholders and offices throughout the college or university.

As campus public safety administrators consider both short- and long-term implications, they may wish to consider some of these questions—and others—to guide them through this unprecedented time:

1. To what extent will campus budget shortfalls affect public safety agencies?
2. If faced with budget cuts, how will the reduction of operations, services and resources affect the safety and security of the campus?
3. Will campuses reduce or eliminate public safety agencies with the possible intent of relying upon local and state law enforcement agencies, and what are the complications associated with this reliance?
4. Do campus administrators realize that attempts to rely upon contract services will include an accompanying loss of ownership and pride that comes with a dedicated public safety agency whose members are campus employees?
5. Do campus police and public safety administrators need to think about new, presumably less costly, models for delivering campus public safety services?
6. What are minimum staffing levels to ensure officer safety and response times during normal operations, and responding to campus-wide emergencies?
7. What equipment is essential for compliance and safety purposes to support officer duties?
8. What new technologies are on the market and what new solutions could improve public safety services while reducing cost over time?
9. Should these technologies be purchased and what would be the short- and long-term savings and return on investment?
10. What is the cost of managing and maintaining safety equipment to ensure it is in good working condition?

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