

SECURITY 101 FOR SMALL COLLEGES

by **Maryann J. Terrana and Sandra R. Sabo**

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Like many small institutions, McKendree University touts its size (2,300 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students) and location in Lebanon, Illinois (pop. 4,000), as advantages to students. As the university's Web site notes, "McKendree students enjoy the security and sense of community a small town provides." In such an intimate setting, where people often know one another—by sight, if not by name—students may be less on guard than if they were on a megacampus that sprawls over numerous city blocks.



As quiet and safe as McKendree is, any perception that students may be completely isolated from crime should be tempered with caution, according to Sally Mayhew, vice president for administration and finance. She explains, "No matter how safe the environment, institutions must be alert and prepared for unexpected events."

PUT TO THE TEST

In other words, small institutions aren't immune from the same types of incidents that may occur at larger institutions. That message came through clearly in the responses to a short questionnaire circulated last fall among members of the NACUBO Small Institutions Council. It was also emphasized by Lisa Marie McCauley, of King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and Henry DeVries during their "Campus Safety Concerns for Small Colleges" presentation at NACUBO's 2008 Annual Meeting.

DeVries is vice president for administration, finance, and information services at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In October 2007, just six months after the shootings at Virginia Tech, the 400-acre suburban campus experienced its own crisis. A student at the neighboring seminary, which shares services with Calvin College, began expressing dangerous thoughts and publicizing the fact that he had a gun and many rounds of ammunition.

Fearing a copycat rampage, says DeVries, "Our campus security apprehended the student, who came quietly, and then provided him with care and counseling. Because we found illegal firearms and drugs in the student's residence, the local police followed up."

In defusing the situation, the college exercised its emergency plan. At the time, the plan did not include a fully developed scenario for an on-campus shooting—but it does now. The college's experience points out the need to periodically update your emergency response plan and its supporting policies and practices, especially after an incident has put it to the test.

For example, not long after 9/11, Calvin College received an anonymous voicemail message predicting "a big flame" on its campus the next day. Everything went according to plan for quickly evacuating the college's 2,400 residential students, but communication issues unexpectedly emerged. "We discovered immediately that none of the senior staff could talk to each other on cell phones because the kids had the towers all tied up," recalls DeVries. "We

ended up buying trunking radios rather than relying on landline and cell phones." Those radios worked fine during the shooting threat in 2007.

A WELL-CRAFTED PLAN

In addition to periodically revisiting your policies, DeVries recommends inviting executive leadership and upper management to attend incident response training. Last year Calvin College's cabinet and senior executives participated in a four-hour training course developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, titled "IS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System."

"It is critical that senior leadership understand the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS)," confirms Gary J. Margolis, chief of police at the University of Vermont, Burlington, and a participant in NACUBO's recent webcast on campus safety. "The goal of the campus first responders during the crisis phase is, in part, to isolate an event to keep it from spreading, stabilize the situation so it doesn't get worse, and set up an on-site command post."

Many public institutions are mandated by state and federal law to use NIMS/ICS, which provides tools for managing a critical incident. "Those tools, in the case of public safety response, are used by external first responders," says Margolis.

Depending on the size, scope, and seriousness of a critical incident, you may need to establish an emergency operations center (EOC) for larger resource coordination, he adds, so make sure your written plan has provisions for one. Often staffed by a designated emergency response group, an EOC provides coordination and networking with the incident scene while handling the logistics associated with continuing institutional operations.

"It's important that you designate and outfit space that can be quickly converted and easily accessed for such purposes during an emergency," Margolis adds. You should also have mutual aid agreements with first responders in the area and with nearby institutions to house students, for instance, or provide other assistance during an emergency.

Although he doesn't advocate a cookie-cutter approach to emergency response and recovery, Steven J. Healy, director of public safety at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, and another presenter during the webcast, offers a general framework for an emergency plan. It should include:

Descriptions of the types of emergencies the institution is likely to encounter,

THE PEER PERSPECTIVE

The Small Institutions Council extends its thanks to the survey respondents from nine participating member institutions:

Dolores Danser, director of public safety, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Henry DeVries, vice president for administration, finance, and information services, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

John T. Gildard, director of safety and security, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York

Sally Mayhew, vice president for administration and finance, McKendree University, Lebanon, Illinois

Lisa Marie McCauley, vice president for business affairs and treasurer, King's College, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Roy H. Merolli, executive vice president, Marist College

Chris Mulkey, coordinator of security, Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama

Annette Parker, vice president and treasurer, Dickinson College

Wilma Phillips, vice president for finance, Faulkner University

Chriselle Raguro, human resources coordinator, Dominican University of California, San Rafael

Julee Sherman, vice president for finance, Central Methodist University, Fayette, Missouri

Mike Ward, chief of security, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, Alabama

including the level of response for each. To formulate this list, conduct a safety and security vulnerability assessment in which campus leaders brainstorm potential threats, suggests Healy. (He and Margolis are also managing partners of Margolis, Healy & Associates, a firm specializing in campus safety and security.)

Explanations of the phases of an emergency, outlining general response action and decision-making authority depending on size, scope, and seriousness.

Definitions of common terms related to emergency situations. "You need to be speaking the same language as the first responders," says Healy. He notes that one strength of the National Incident Management System is its adherence to a common terminology.

Clarification of key roles. The president, cabinet, and first responders all have roles to play and need to understand those respective roles before an emergency. For example, says Healy, spell out who has the power to declare an emergency and who will coordinate the institution's response. "You don't want to be in the middle of an unfolding event and be deciding whether the chief of campus safety has the authority to make key decisions," he adds.

A description of the emergency operations center, including the types of events that would trigger its establishment.

To ensure that your emergency plan remains workable and effective, Healy emphasizes the need to annually test its operational components through simulated situations or exercises. Such testing, which is now federal law, will point out the areas in which people need additional training or clarification of their roles.

ALLAYING CONCERNS

Although she undoubtedly would have preferred a simulation, Lisa Marie McCauley had a real-life situation to deal with when a murder occurred in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, near King's College, where she serves as vice president for business affairs and treasurer. The one-on-one dispute that led to the tragic consequences did not have any campus connection, but it took place directly across from non-college student rental housing and within 50 yards of three college parking areas.

"We had a crisis plan in place, and we moved quickly to hire additional, temporary security officers and increase our escort service for students. Within one day, the sense of safety and security had been reinstilled on campus," says McCauley.

King's College also activated its mass-notification system. The message immediately alerted the campus community and parents to the assault and provided a link to the Web site of the local police. "The appropriate individuals need to be informed, even if it's just a heads-up with more information to follow," says McCauley.

Most mass-notification systems send text and voice messages along with e-mail alerts. Calvin

NACUBO RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Here are helpful reports, programs, and more to enhance your campus security work.

Help with new HEOA requirements. Go to www.nacubo.org/x10818.xml for a summary of new reporting and information-sharing requirements in the Higher Education Opportunity Act pertaining to fire safety, campus security, and missing persons, under Title IV, Part G—General Provisions.

Emergency readiness review. Go to NACUBO's Emergency Preparedness Resources page at www.nacubo.org/x2748.xml.

Archived podcast. To hear the 2008 NACUBO Annual Meeting podcast, "Campus Safety Concerns for Small Institutions," go to www.nacubo.org/x11045.xml.

On-demand webcasts. The following programs are available at www.nacubo.org/ondemand:

"Fall Check-up on Campus Safety for Small Institutions"

"Managing Emergency Notification Systems"

"Preventing Campus Violence: An Integrated Approach to Threat Assessment and Management"

Networking opportunities. To locate peers at other small institutions, including respondents to the council's survey, access the Online Member Directory at www.nacubo.org/x1560.xml.

Coming soon: Survey results and analysis from the 2008 National Campus Safety & Security Project.

College plans to do even more when crisis communications become a necessity. DeVries reports, "We are contemplating adding redundant multiple methods, including localized sirens, IP-based intercom warning systems, and an "emergency broadcast system" capability for our on-campus cable system." Also under consideration: enabling the college's digital signage system to display centrally activated emergency notification.

As taxing as all these steps may be on a small institution's finances, parents expect them. "Today's helicopter parents want to know everything happening on campus, and they're technologically savvy," says McCauley. "They don't care what it costs or how many hours it takes; they want something done quickly to protect their son or daughter.

"They also expect a 24/7 administrative response," she continues. "They want to see video cameras and card-swipe systems on campus."

According to respondents to the Small Institutions Council's questionnaire, cameras located in building lobbies and other open areas not only enable security personnel to review activities but also deter some would-be criminals. Small colleges have found that integrating security cameras with card-access control systems proves effective for monitoring residence hall exterior doors, as well as academic and administration buildings.

To enhance security on its campus in Poughkeepsie, New York, Marist College changed all locks on its classroom doors. The classrooms can now be locked from the inside and are equipped with telephones to contact the security office.

"We labeled all classrooms on the inside with the building name and room number, so a caller can provide the proper location of the emergency or incident," says Roy H. Merolli, executive vice president at Marist College. "Also, laminated placards are placed at all classroom podiums indicating what to do and who to call for a fire, medical emergency, or disruptive person."

The college posts security guards at the entrances of its five major residence halls; they check student IDs between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 a.m. Outside those hours, students must swipe their ID cards to gain access. Guests who want to enter a residence hall must first present a photo ID to obtain a guest pass from the guard.

SECURITY TIPS

Of course, students may circumvent the very security systems meant to protect them and their property—for example, by propping open doors in residence halls, by leaving their cars unlocked, or by neglecting to provide current contact information for the mass-notification system.

"A smaller college campus creates an environment within which students may become very comfortable," observes Dolores Danser, director of public safety at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. "In a close-knit college community, students may become less alert or watchful and may not practice the same safety behaviors they regularly practiced before arriving at college."

In fact, Danser says, her biggest challenge is convincing students to look out for themselves and their possessions as well as for the safety of others, both on and off campus. Student education may be as simple as posting reminders to lock up bikes and laptops or to report to campus security any suspicious vehicles, people, or behaviors. Calvin College occasionally holds fire drills as part of its training on how to handle crisis situations; Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama, requires all of its 1,000 students to have a personal plan in case of a campus evacuation.

Faulkner University, also located in Montgomery, publicly posts campus crime statistics on its Web site. There, any parent or student can see, for example, that larceny-theft offenses, although small in total number, doubled between 2006 and 2007. "The more informed that your residents are about the area, in reference to crime statistics," notes Chris Mulkey, Faulkner's coordinator of security, "the more secure and aware they will be with their own belongings." In fact, all institutions are required to make campus crime statistics and a crime log available to the public.

Here are some additional observations from respondents to the council's questionnaire:

Keep parents in the information loop. Even when a crisis isn't unfolding, communicate the college's preparations and readiness for handling safety concerns. During orientation sessions at King's College, members of the orientation team cover the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, talk about "what usually happens" in an emergency, review and distribute copies of the college's policies, and discuss privacy and security from the student data perspective.

Calvin College reports any incidents of concern in its weekly e-mail newsletter, so parents don't have to rely on students for updates. The college also has a parents' council that meets quarterly and provides another communication vehicle as well as a focus group for discussing safety issues.

Provide security staff with the necessary training and tools. "Today's rapidly changing threat conditions require a better-trained and -equipped officer than in past times," says McKendree's Mayhew. "Officers not only must be up-to-date with the latest assessment techniques and tools, but also physically capable of rapid response." She suggests contacting local or state academies about training opportunities and bringing standards for campus safety officers in line with local law enforcement standards.

"Once the officers are trained," Mayhew adds, "it's important to provide a pay and benefits package that allows the institution to retain them and keep them patrolling and visible to the public."

If you undertake a new security initiative, your college might be eligible for a federal grant. Do a little research, says Mulkey, and you might be able to work through your state's grant writer for the Homeland Security program.

Partner with local authorities. Establishing and maintaining a close relationship with local public safety authorities will keep information flowing to and from campus. For example, personal contact with local officers proves helpful for McKendree University, which conducts joint training exercises with local law enforcement, firefighting, and rescue agencies.

At Faulkner University, Mulkey invites local officials to attend campus events and consults with them when activities call for extra security measures. "I also have breakfast or lunch on occasion with the shift commanders and patrol officers," he says.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY

Colleges and universities today face a wide range of risks to human, physical, and cyber assets. Attend this special program on June 27 immediately preceding the 2009 NACUBO Annual Meeting, in Boston. The conference is designed to share insights and tools that you can use to create effective plans in response to these kinds of threats. Higher education administrators from across campus will benefit from learning how best to protect people and facilities that are at risk during emergencies that range from natural disasters to acts of violence.

The conference is organized around four key themes for successful engagement: student involvement; organizational structures and the roles and responsibilities for emergency preparedness; approaches to communication; and presidential involvement. Attend this conference to learn what the critical elements are for building effective prevention and response programs. Join others from institutions like yours to discuss how best to meet these challenges. For more information, go to <http://www.nacubo.org/x11433.xml>.

To maintain constant communication with local police, Marist College has provided space for a police substation on campus. And, as a means of expressing appreciation, the college hosts an annual picnic for fire, police, and medical service personnel.

Central Methodist University, Fayette, Missouri, involves local officers on its crisis committee, while Dickinson College has a designated liaison on the county detectives' task force and the Cumberland County Safe Schools Organization, as well as on a regional alcohol and drug coalition.

Assistance goes both ways, as McCauley discovered when a King's College student went missing one cold winter night. The parents contacted campus security just after midnight, after receiving a call from their son announcing he was lost somewhere in the city. Subsequent attempts to contact the student by phone and text message went unanswered, adding more intensity to the search efforts.

"We have a protocol for a missing student, so we immediately went into our crisis mode," says McCauley. That included contacting the local police, rousing RAs from their sleep to help, and initiating a grid search. "The local police linked their patrol cars' radios to our campus security radios, so we were in constant contact as we went up and down alleys and looked into cars," she continues. After almost two hours, a search team located the student—suffering from hypothermia, but otherwise safe.

Because the student had wandered eight blocks off campus, he was definitely in the police department's jurisdiction. But, says McCauley, "Let's be realistic—the parents called campus security, so we got involved. What would those parents think if the college had said, 'Sorry, we can't help you?'"

PLAYING IT SAFE

In the wake of well-publicized incidents at larger institutions, smaller colleges will undoubtedly hear from many parents who are concerned about their children's safety. As the survey respondents attest, you'll need to respond with a combination of proficiency, preparedness, and education.

Dickinson's Danser observes, "We need to help people understand that crime does not end at the campus sidewalk, that we are not immune to crime in the surrounding area, and that it's important to take personal responsibility for your own safety every day, no matter where you are in the world."

At the same time, colleges have the responsibility of protecting their most precious resource: their students. If students and their parents don't feel safe on your campus, the balance sheet will surely suffer. That reality sheds a new light and significance on investments in equipment, training, and policies. Even in these uncertain economic times, cutting back on security measures and initiatives isn't an option.

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