CAMPUS POLICING IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Findings from a Forum on
Critical Issues in Urban Campus Public Safety

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CAMPUS POLICING IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A Report for the

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CAMPUS PUBLIC SAFETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 1, 2017, a group of campus safety leaders, federal officials and subject-matter experts, with support from the National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS), gathered in Charlotte, North Carolina, for a one-day forum. The purpose of the forum was to identify challenges specific to campus policing in urban environments, as well as provide potential solutions and recommendations for addressing those challenges. The forum aligns with the NCCPS's role as a nationwide resource for addressing critical issues in campus safety.

Thirty-six (36) campus safety leaders came from 17 institutions of higher education (IHEs) across the country and included university and college chiefs of police, as well as student administrators. Representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and several campus safety-related professional associations also participated in the forum.

Facilitated discussions during the forum identified five areas in which urban campus police departments face special challenges:
1. Campus access
2. Resources
3. Relationships and partnerships
4. Student welfare off campus
5. Communications

The forum attendees discussed a broad array of factors, tactics, and strategies for addressing these challenges. Their discussion did not evaluate specific efforts or policies at particular IHEs, nor did it evaluate individual campus policing programs. However, a series of core principles emerged:
- Urban campus police departments face exceptional difficulties in managing access to campus facilities.
- Many urban campus police departments need more funding and leadership support to be effective and improve safety.
- Urban campus police departments typically must tend to safety concerns over geographical areas that can extend for miles off campus.
- Urban campus police departments must find ways to work more efficiently with local law enforcement agencies and community groups.
- Technology and urban infrastructure issues often interfere with campus police response and coordination with other local law enforcement agencies.

BACKGROUND

Most of America lives in urban areas, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2016, only about one in five people — about 19% of the population — lived in rural areas.[1]

Urban areas are also home to most of America's IHEs. In fact, about 68% of the nation's 7,000+ IHEs are in urban areas, according to the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. Together they educate about 20 million students per year.[2]

Urban IHEs do more than just hand out diplomas, however. In many cases, urban IHEs are the biggest employers in their cities, pumping millions of dollars directly and indirectly into local economies.[3] Many house state-of-the-art research facilities; others provide critical medical facilities, operate highly regarded cultural venues, fund vital community projects and advocate for various community-development initiatives.

Nonetheless, urban IHEs also face special challenges when it comes to safety and policing efforts. Denser populations, space constraints, infrastructure issues, and other characteristics common in urban areas are all factors.

Urban IHEs that fail to keep their campuses safe can jeopardize student admission and retention efforts, make it harder to attract and retain talented employees, and even endanger funding efforts, all of which can in turn threaten the surrounding community's economic vitality.

Urban campus police departments shoulder much of the burden to keep these campuses safe. Like most IHEs, they must balance their needs with funding constraints and the needs of a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Local police
- Fire departments
- City code-enforcement agencies
- Neighborhood associations
- Local media
- Landlords
- Off-campus housing managers
- Student Affairs departments
- Student governments
- Chambers of commerce
- Local business leaders
- Elected officials
- Insurance companies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Nearby military personnel
- Faith-based organizations

Accordingly, on August 1, 2017, a group of campus safety leaders, federal officials, and subject-matter experts, with support from the National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS), gathered in Charlotte, North Carolina, at Queens University to discuss the challenges urban campus police departments face and uncover promising practices for addressing them. Key questions included:

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-210.html
[2] Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. "Who We Are." Accessed 6/30/18. http://usucoalition.org/about/who-we-are
[3] Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. "Who We Are." Accessed 6/30/18. http://usucoalition.org/about/who-we-are

- What can urban campus police departments do to provide better safety services to students, faculty, and staff?
- How can urban campus police departments balance their IHEs' safety needs with the goals and needs of the surrounding communities?
- Are there other ways urban campus police departments can optimize their resources?

Established in 2013, the NCCPS is a clearinghouse for information, research, training, promising practices, and emerging issues in campus public safety. The NCCPS's mission is to provide useful resources and information to support safer campus communities. To this end, the NCCPS works to connect campus public safety officers, professional association members, advocates, community leaders, and others to improve and expand services to those who are charged with providing a safe environment for the nation's campus communities.

DISCUSSION

When IHEs operate campuses in urban areas, campus police leaders have a lot to think about as they work to improve and maintain safety. Questions like these are common:
- How can we tell who should and shouldn't be on a campus that's in such a busy area or is part of a major community thoroughfare?
- What can we do to help students stay safe when they're not on campus?
- Is there a better way to communicate with the local police and other law enforcement agencies when there's an emergency?
- How will we pay for necessary safety services?

Forum participants had these questions and more regarding policing campuses in urban areas. In general, their concerns fall into five categories:
1. Campus access
2. Resources
3. Relationships and partnerships
4. Student welfare off campus
5. Communications

Working through each of these areas with an experienced facilitator, the forum participants identified specific challenges in each category and evaluated potential solutions for helping urban campus police departments improve the safety of their campuses. This section summarizes their discussion.

Challenge area #1: Wide-open campuses

Urban campuses are by definition located in densely populated areas. In turn, many members of the general public may regularly go into, near, around, or through the campus and its facilities even if they have no direct affiliation with the institution. This can create substantial access-control issues for urban campus police departments and create opportunities for perpetrators to target routes between class buildings, administrative locations, and housing facilities. Participants said they are especially concerned about four issues in this area.

Spotty access control. Forum participants said having open campuses in urban locations often means anyone can access IHE facilities. In some cases, open access to certain facilities is intentional; in other cases, weak access control jeopardizes safety in facilities that should be restricted to students, faculty, staff members, or known visitors. Differences of opinion among campus police, administrators, faculty members, and student groups are common in urban campuses regarding the level of access to particular buildings or areas.

Heard in the forum:
"We did another customer satisfaction survey, and we got the results back, and the number one complaint for our university community is the perception of safety. Because of all the homeless people that mess with the campus and come through the campus…it impacts the perception of safety on our campus."

Issues with homelessness and mental illness. Forum participants reported that their urban campuses are often in areas with above-average populations of homeless and mentally ill people. In some cases, some of the homeless population also works for the IHEs. For campus police departments, these circumstances create a variety of additional training and response needs.

Higher risk of civil unrest. Forum participants said urban campuses are more likely to experience riots, protests, mass casualty incidents, or other mass disturbances that can spread quickly and affect campus facilities, students, faculty, or staff. Preparation and response for these events can drain budgets, jeopardize access to emergency services, and strain relationships with local law enforcement if not done well. In addition, forum participants said many urban campus police departments have not received response training that is tailored to urban environments, and many of their IHEs do not have memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with local law enforcement, which can hinder response and add expense.

Regulatory restrictions. Forum participants said certain regulations attached to government funding may force many IHEs to keep certain facilities open to the general public. Campus police departments are thus sometimes restricted in their efforts to control access, even if granting that access creates safety risks.

Challenge area #2: Limited resources
Forum participants said that urban campus police departments often do not have the funding or staffing to address many of the unique risks and challenges they face. These shortfalls tend to manifest themselves in two ways.

Low security budgets. Controlling access to buildings on open urban campuses often requires implementing swipe-card systems, closed-circuit camera networks, modern alarm systems, or other tools that can cost thousands of dollars. Technology needs, communications solutions, and assessments of various sorts also require resources. Forum participants noted that IHEs budgets often aren't able to include these costs.

> **Heard in the forum:**
> *"We have the perception of being viewed as security guards."*

Low pay and perceived value. Forum participants said urban campus police officers are regularly on the low end of the pay scale among IHE employees. Much of that may have to do with the perceived value of campus police departments; many forum participants said urban IHEs routinely do not regard their campus police officers as "real" police officers. This is especially the case for campuses that use private security firms or nonsworn officers.

Challenge area #3: Underdeveloped relationships and partnerships
Forum participants said urban IHEs often miss out on key intelligence, resources, training, strategic opportunities, and even funding because they aren't making the most of their connections — especially to local law enforcement agencies. There are two principal aspects of particular concern.

Poor information-sharing. Forum participants indicated that information-sharing between urban campus police and municipal police may not occur regularly. This in turn causes campus law enforcement to be less informed about off-campus student housing problem areas, difficult members of the IHE community, or other matters that could help urban campus police departments improve safety.

Inconsistent policies. Forum participants noted that urban campus police departments and local law enforcement agencies often react to incidents differently, even if those incidents occur in the same vicinity. For instance, one agency may forgive certain infractions; another may take harsher action. IHEs may suffer when this happens, because students or other members of the IHE community don't know what to expect, which in turn affects how they interact with law enforcement.

Challenge area #4: Student victimization off campus

Forum participants said urban campus police departments are often responsible for student safety even when those students are far beyond the campus perimeter. This creates two particularly concerning situations for urban campuses.

Expanding radius of activity. Although parking is a challenge for nearly all college and university campuses, it is an especially acute problem in many urban areas. This, combined with the gentrification of urban neighborhoods that historically housed students, tends to encourage students, faculty, and staff members to live farther from campus in order to avoid inconvenience and high rents. In turn, the geographical scope of concern for urban campus police departments can widen significantly, requiring IHEs to spread resources thin.

Suburban expectations in an urban setting. Forum participants noted that criminals frequently target students on urban campuses, but not all of those students come to campus with knowledge of how to stay aware of their surroundings, recognize threats, or avoid vulnerability to crime. There is a domino effect at play for many urban IHEs, because campuses that have persistent safety issues may suffer reputational risks and enrollment problems.

Challenge area #5: Outdated or incompatible communication technologies

Forum participants said that conflicting technology and incompatible urban infrastructures can significantly interfere with response and coordination on many urban campuses, jeopardizing safety.

Inconsistent radio channel use. Forum participants said campus police departments frequently have trouble communicating with local or state police via radio simply because different agencies use different radio frequencies. Some IHEs reported having no

Heard in the forum: *"We need to all get on the same page."*

protocols or agreements with local law enforcement regarding the use of certain radio channels.

Old or antagonistic infrastructure. Urban areas typically have a lot of buildings that are close together or especially large. Forum participants noted that radios and cell phones often don't work in portions of urban areas where reception may be impeded by the number of large buildings, and many buildings don't have Wi-Fi signals that facilitate radio communication. For urban campus police departments, these factors jeopardize effective response.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

The forum participants agreed that three strategies can significantly help IHEs address the challenges they face regarding campus policing in urban environments.

1. Modernize controls and communications
2. Prioritize partnerships
3. Strengthen budgets

Solution: Modernize controls and communications

Urban campuses can become safer if campus police departments strategically capitalize on new technology and safety innovations to meet their specific needs.

Inventory access needs and options. This often starts by conducting a thorough walkthrough and analysis of all campus facilities to determine the IHE's true access needs and shortfalls. Standards set forth in the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) program can help urban campus police departments evaluate safety opportunities.

Test all the communications hardware. Urban campus police departments must take steps to ensure that their radios operate in all campus facilities and that they can communicate with local law enforcement agencies during emergencies on every part of campus. That may require establishing common channel or frequency protocols, addressing old building technology, and even getting involved in city construction requirements.

Meet people where they are. Urban campus police departments can't rely on paper fliers to get the word out about their programs anymore. They must be savvy on social media and know how to develop apps that students and the surrounding community will actually use.

Solution: Prioritize partnerships

Urban campuses can become safer if campus police departments work closely with the other law enforcement agencies in the area. They can also improve training, work more efficiently, and even cut costs.

Host or attend regular interagency gatherings.
Forum participants who had successful relationships with local law enforcement agencies said they participated in large meetings of all area law enforcement agencies about once a month. Participation in those events can help urban IHEs bring their challenges to the table and form more productive relationships with other law enforcement agencies. Holding the meetings in different locations can help participants get more familiar with different IHE facilities and the routes to get there.

> **Heard in the forum:**
> *"Once we level the playing field…then we're going to see much safer not only college campuses but cities, because we're all trusting each other, we're all recognizing each other, and we all fight together."*

Get students more involved in safety programs. Forum participants said that many students need help preparing for life in an urban environment, and targeted safety training programs are a significant component of that preparation. Urban campus police departments that work with student government or student associations can develop a variety of effective programs that get students to work with campus police on safety issues, raise engagement and awareness of those issues, and use the resources available to address them.

Reach out to businesses beyond campus boundaries. Coordinating with area businesses — especially nightclubs and bars — could mitigate issues that threaten the safety of students, campus facilities, and the business owners themselves.

Solution: Strengthen budgets

Forum participants said urban campuses increase safety if their campus police departments are well-funded, and urban campus police departments likely have more work to do to get that funding.

Communicate and justify critical needs. Forum participants said that urban campus police departments that take charge by making their needs known to campus leaders early and often can increase their odds of getting more appropriate budgets. Those needs often must be substantiated with data and research to be persuasive.

Set more ground rules for spending. Forum participants said urban IHEs can improve safety if they establish standardized compensation programs for officers, which can help attract and retain talent. Urban campus police departments can raise buy-in for spending decisions if they establish a culture that is clear on the difference between the department's needs versus its wants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants defined a number of promising practices that urban campus police departments can implement to improve safety in their IHE communities.

Harden the targets

- ✓ **Do a thorough inventory of access controls.** Assuming doors and windows have locks is not enough. Campus police departments should know exactly what access controls are in place, add controls where needed, and maintain records and security camera footage for an agreed-upon period of time.
- ✓ **Take a meticulous look at campus infrastructure.** Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards can help urban campus police departments understand whether certain lighting, landscaping, or architectural elements are creating or encouraging safety problems. Involving students and facilities personnel can help uncover risks.
- ✓ **Work with research departments or outside consultants for help assessing specific safety issues.** Third-party assessments can also be more persuasive to decision-makers who hold the keys to resources and/or processes that improve urban campus safety.
- ✓ **Install security cameras in public areas of off-campus student housing.** This helps protect the students who live there and helps urban campus police departments virtually patrol large physical territories.
- ✓ **Go the extra mile on campus.** Install call boxes or emergency phones throughout the campus and in strategic locations, and/or utilize safety apps. Set up safety shuttles or safe escort options. Create "Welcome Centers" or "Information Centers" to establish points of contact for security. Consider a curfew if necessary.
- ✓ **Incorporate safety information and resources in student orientation.** This should include instructions about safe and unsafe areas, as well as information regarding risk reduction behaviors and strategies. It should also inform students of their rights in the criminal justice system and in the student-conduct disciplinary process.

Exploit technology and engineering

- ✓ **Upgrade portable radios and establish shared channel networks.** Campus police radios should be compatible with local agencies' radios, and all agencies should know how to use them to communicate during a joint response.
- ✓ **Develop and launch safety apps and social media efforts dedicated to campus safety.** IHEs should meet students where they are — online. In addition to traditional outreach methods, IHEs should build and capitalize on smartphone apps and social media to get the word out about safety programs, resources, and needs.
- ✓ **Get involved in local construction activity.** Urban campus police departments can improve the safety of their campuses by persuading cities to require area buildings to have Wi-Fi and other features that help radio communication, response, or crime-prevention.

Bolster partnerships with first responders and local law enforcement

- ✓ *Establish Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) or Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs).* These can help urban campus police departments ensure resources and help will be available when they most need it. These agreements can also set clear expectations about roles and responsibilities and control the financial impact of certain events. They should be reviewed and tested regularly.
- ✓ *Hold regular meetings with leaders of all local law enforcement agencies.* This is a productive way to build personal relationships and trust between departments, as well as share information. Scheduling the meetings in rotating locations helps participants get familiar with different areas of urban campuses and the routes to and from various locations.
- ✓ *Conduct joint training and details.* Campus and local police officers who train together, patrol together, and respond together are much more likely to form tighter relationships and mutual comprehension of Title IX and Clery reporting requirements. Joint "party patrols" can be especially useful, but joint details could also take the form of reserve officer programs or task forces.
- ✓ *Develop routine information-sharing processes.* Sharing dispatch information, records, and other data sources quickly highlights trends as well as problem locations and individuals. Engaging with state and local fusion centers is also useful.
- ✓ *Promote campus police as a "force multiplier."* IHEs may form closer partnerships and relationships with local law enforcement agencies if they present themselves as an extension of local law enforcement rather than as a secluded entity.

Tighten connections to students and community groups

- ✓ *Host regular safety forums and activities for student groups.* Recommended tactics include ride-alongs, seminars on personal safety and property protection, equipment registrations, student or citizen academies, and community walks. IHEs should use social media, email lists, and campus websites, as well as the campus public information officer to get the word out.
- ✓ *Create special units or a liaison program focused on nightlife or entertainment districts.* This can help enforce accountability among business owners by monitoring high-risk alcohol promotions near campus, persuading area bars to stagger closing times to avoid floods of intoxicated people spilling into the streets at the same time every night, and sharing information with other law enforcement agencies.
- ✓ *Offer multiple nonalcoholic activities during the first six weeks of the school year.* Forum participants said this may mitigate crime during the time at the start of the school year when a signification portion of campus crime occurs.
- ✓ *Embrace the campus newspaper and the local media.* Promote the work and needs of campus police by being available for or offering interviews, op-eds, tip sheets, and exclusives.

- ✓ **Establish homeless outreach programs.** Creating programs that connect the area's homeless population with community resources can help people in need and improve campus safety.
- ✓ **Start a ride-along program for campus leaders.** Exposure to real-world issues can prompt action and garner support.
- ✓ **Add faculty representatives to key committees.** Giving faculty a voice can increase buy-in and participation in safety efforts.

Strengthen budgets

- ✓ **Announce needs.** Forum participants said that the first step in obtaining resources often is to speak up and make the campus police department's resource needs known to campus leaders, other law enforcement agencies, and IHE supporters.
- ✓ **Get creative about resource-sharing.** Urban campus police departments that can't afford training may be able to obtain it by offering venue space or seat-sharing to local law enforcement agencies. Creating shared databases of surplus resources (such as extra equipment) can cut costs, as can sharing training facilities.
- ✓ **Learn about the grant system.** Working with the campus grant departments or others familiar with grants can increase access to local, regional, or federal grant opportunities that could significantly boost their resources.
- ✓ **Foster a culture of resource needs versus wants.** Knowing what the campus community wants from the campus police department helps establish resource priorities and increases buy-in on spending decisions. Identifying what's currently available from the surrounding jurisdictions is also important in prioritizing needs.

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APPENDIX: RESOURCES

Forum participants said urban campus police departments may find these organizations and programs helpful in addressing the challenges in this report.

Name	Description	URL
Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities	International affiliate organization of universities in large metropolitan areas that share common understandings of their institutional missions and values.	http://www.cumuonline.org/
Coalition of Urban Serving Universities	President-led organization committed to enhancing urban university engagement to increase prosperity and opportunity in the nation's cities, and to tackling key urban challenges.	http://usucoalition.org/
Department of Homeland Security Office for State and Local Law Enforcement	Provides the DHS with primary coordination, liaison, and advocacy for state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies	https://www.dhs.gov/office-state-and-local-law-enforcement
Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC)	Provides career-long training to law enforcement professionals to help them fulfill their responsibilities safely and proficiently.	https://www.fletc.gov/
Historically Black Colleges & Universities Law Enforcement Executives and Administrators (HBCU-LEEA)	Shares best practices and devises solutions that enhance student safety. Provides training opportunities; meets annually.	http://hbcu-leea.org/
International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA)	Advances public safety for educational institutions by providing educational resources, advocacy, and professional development services	https://www.iaclea.org/
International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) University and College Police Section	Represents the interests of sworn campus public safety within the IACP.	http://www.theiacp.org/University-College-Police-Section
International Town & Gown Association (ITGA)	Provides a network of professionals and resources, identifying and sharing promising practices, innovative solutions, and professional development opportunities for municipal and university communities.	http://www.itga.org/
Lindsey Bonistall Foundation/PEACE OUTside Campus	Program to advocate for the protection of students by providing information about rental rights and working with landlords and local college communities to develop and maintain improved safety measures in off-campus apartments.	http://www.peaceoutsidecampus.org/
National Guard Civil Support Team	Responds to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents throughout the homeland and advises and assists local and civil authorities on response measures.	https://www.nationalguard.com/guard-experience/civil-support-team
Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI)	Organizes alliances of nightlife businesses to formalize practices and improve communication with law enforcement; also organizes an interagency collaborative to collect and organize data to ID at-risk venues and patron behavior.	http://www.rhiweb.org/safety.html
White House Task Force on 21st Century Policing/Community Oriented Policing Services of the U.S. Department of Justice	Details 59 recommendations grouped under broad themes for how policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while building public trust.	https://cops.usdoj.gov/ http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/taskforce_finalreport.pdf