

Brown University Campus Safety Task Force

Interim Report

December 2013

I. INTRODUCTION AND CHARGE TO THE TASK FORCE

The Campus Safety Task Force was formed in September 2013 and charged by President Paxson to assess the campus safety resources Brown University currently has in place and determine and recommend areas for improvement. The Task Force was specifically asked to examine:

- tighter integration between Brown Shuttle, Brown OnCall and the Safewalk program;
- opportunities for better safety education for Brown students, faculty and staff;
- the possible expansion of law enforcement technology such as improved surveillance cameras to investigate and deter crime, campus lighting, and Blue Light emergency phones;
- the effectiveness and utilization of the Brown OnCall Pilot Program during the fall semester;
- other related issues and concerns identified by members of the Task Force and the Brown community.

The Task Force met five times during the semester, and convened two focus group discussions. The student, faculty and staff members have acquainted themselves with the patrol and related operations of the Department of Public Safety, reviewed crime incident data from the past several years, heard presentations about Safewalk and the extensive public safety education and awareness programs, Brown University Shuttle and public safety transportation resources (including assessments of the OnCall expansion pilot), campus lighting, Blue Light Phones, and camera and surveillance technology, both in place on the campus and proposed. The Task Force toured the Public Safety Communications Center, reviewed data gathered from University campus safety surveys and a survey conducted among undergraduate students by the Undergraduate Council of Students this Fall, and conducted a focus group discussion with approximately twenty undergraduate, graduate and medical students and a second focus group with a similar number of staff.

The work of the Task Force will continue into next semester, especially as we continue to focus on how best to communicate safety education and awareness information to the various audiences in the University community and consider opportunities to use technology, such as mobile applications, to streamline the variety of information related to campus safety in a single, convenient location. As a matter of first priority, we focused on the initiatives currently underway and proposed which require funding to both assess their effectiveness and make recommendations with regard to priorities. This interim report summarizes those recommendations, which reflect the unanimous consensus of the Task Force, and identifies other preliminary findings and areas of further exploration to be conducted in the spring semester.

II. CAMPUS SAFETY PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the survey results we reviewed, the student focus group discussion, and our own deliberations that concern regarding campus safety is high. 35% of the respondents to the UCS poll reported feeling very unsafe or somewhat unsafe on campus at night. As noted below, utilization of the fixed route shuttle and the OnCall service have increased dramatically this semester. Concerns have been expressed about lighting on and off the campus, and identifying strategies to address that concern will be a high priority of our continuing work. While the total number of robberies and other violent street crimes on and around campus to date is about half of last year's number of incidents, the use of weapons and physical violence has been higher this year and several troubling incidents this summer and fall contributed to a feeling among many of being unsafe. Our priority recommendations are offered in this context, and intended to address both the objective of reducing crime (by making the area on and around the campus less appealing to criminals by increasing the chances that they will be apprehended) and increasing the perception and reality of feeling safe among students, faculty and staff.

Campus Safety Priorities

APG Security Posts

Brown temporarily increased the number of APG (“yellow jacket”) security officers fixed posts from four to ten following the increase of violent crimes (assaults and robberies) which occurred during the start of this academic year. These additional posts are critical for reducing the fear of crime and to maintain a “Safe Corridors” concept for high visibility and deterrence. The contract officers also play a key role as observers and have been instrumental in spotting and reporting criminal activity and robbery suspects (including a significant arrest this semester). At the current time we only have permanent funding to staff four positions and are unable to assign an APG security officer near key walkways of the campus area where students are traveling to and from the residence halls. Members of the Task Force received consistent feedback regarding the value of these positions – they effectively (and at relatively modest expense) serve as both a deterrent to criminal activity and provide members of the Brown community with an increased sense of safety. Increased safety patrols on street corners (APG) was the highest priority identified by respondents to the UCS poll when asked which steps the University can take to make it easier for students to be safe on and around campus. The Task Force recommends increasing the number of APG posts on a permanent basis.

Transportation Services

On October 9, 2013 the University launched a pilot expansion of the OnCall safety transportation service. Previously that service only served registered Brown community members between campus and off-campus residences in the coverage area. Effective with the launch of the pilot, OnCall has been available to all community members without pre-registration for point-to-point transportation during the service hours (5:00 pm to 3:00 am) within the coverage area. While October did not see significant changes in utilization

from the prior year (we believe it took some time for community members to become aware of the change and OnCall use increases when the time changes and weather gets colder), the increase in utilization in November was dramatic, rising more than 60% over November 2012 (see Appendix A). We have received generally positive feedback about the service, the new vehicles, and the reduction in wait times – the average time from call to service completion has been reduced by 6+ minutes from previous year with the average total service time currently at 13.8 minutes.

The fixed route shuttle has also seen significant increases over last year, nearly tripling in November. We have heard anecdotally that first-year students in particular are making active use of the transportation services provided at night, a pattern we hope will continue as they become upper-class students. We attribute the overall increase to both the pilot expanded services and the change to larger and more clearly identified vehicles, and the results indicate a significant number of students are taking advantage of safer options for moving around campus and the community. Given the clear and resounding success of the OnCall pilot the Task Force strongly endorses the allocation of sufficient funds to make the expanded service permanent.

The Task Force also identified several critical gaps in the safety transportation services provided by the University. One such gap is the winter break (December 19 – January 1) when no services are currently provided at all, which is a serious concern for graduate and medical students and other community members who are on campus studying or conducting research during that period. The other critical service gaps affect students, faculty and staff who rely on SEAS disability shuttle support services. For both safety and academic reasons the Task Force supports the funding of services to fill these gaps.

Camera System Operation and Maintenance

Brown has made a substantial investment in the Department of Public Safety's Police Staffing and Security Technology over the past five years. Since 2011, the department has been able to add several new police officers, including four this year, and retooled the campus CCTV Camera System. The increase of police staffing and use of updated CCTV technology has proven to be an invaluable asset for the department in apprehending suspects and solving crimes. Several of our robbery arrests were a direct result of our camera system identifying suspects and/or vehicles during an investigation. Colonel Porter explained to the Task Force the importance of maintaining and renewing this technology on a regular basis consistent with best practices. Currently, the University's CCTV System consists of 430 cameras and 47 DVRs (digital video recorder and storage unit). In addition, several current renovation projects will add additional cameras to the system by the end of FY14. With the on-going campus expansion and facilities renovations, there has been a need to increase the number of cameras on campus to enhance overall building and campus security. Many existing and pending camera equipment have been installed without funding to cover ongoing operating and maintenance costs. The standard life cycle of each camera is three to five years and without the proper funding to repair and replace camera equipment, the system will quickly become obsolete and the poor quality camera equipment will not be useful for

police investigations and identifying suspects. Cameras older than five (5) years old from date of manufacture need to be replaced with new, manufacturer supported equipment. The Task Force supports the allocation of funding to address the current gap in maintenance and renewal funding for the University's security technology system.

License Plate Readers

In 2012 the University commissioned an external review of all campus safety services by the Koll-Bratton Group (who had previously assessed the University's safety programs in 2002 and recommended that Public Safety Officers be armed). The vast majority of the recommendations in the 2012 review have been implemented, but one that has not to date is the implementation of License Plate Readers (LPR) street cameras at strategic and selected high crime areas to assist police investigations in identifying suspect vehicles that are known to cruise the campus area seeking to rob and/or assault community members and visitors.

License plate reader technology is seeing increased utilization by law enforcement agencies in the United States. The cameras - in fixed locations and mobile (patrol car) applications - record images of license plates and check that information against a secure database to identify whether it has been reported stolen. In addition, license plate readers, mounted on police cars and placed in fixed positions at busy intersections can collect and store information on plates of cruising vehicles that may pass license plate readers multiple times. If, in the aftermath of a robbery, detectives are only able to obtain a partial description of a vehicle, a partial plate number, or an indistinct image, they can consult the license plate reader database. A vehicle of the same color and model as the video image may be recorded in the license plate reader database, providing ready access to a record of its license plate and owner. Many of the robberies which impact the Brown community follow the pattern of criminals on foot with a nearby vehicle for a quick escape, and Brown detectives frequently track the movement of such vehicles from our current cameras, but none of those cameras are designed or able to read license plate information.

The Task Force reviewed a 2013 report by the ACLU regarding the privacy concerns raised by this technology. The report concluded that there is a legitimate law enforcement purpose for such technology - which, like the University's existing 430 cameras - records information only in public places - and it can be supported as long as strict policies are followed with regard to the use and storage of information. Policies consistent with the Department of Public Safety's national accreditation standards would be promulgated to ensure compliance with best practices, including limitations on use and sharing of recorded data and storage of data for no more than thirty days. Given these provisions and the professional judgment of Colonel Porter and the Bratton Group that such technology would be effective in the focused campus environment and the types of crimes that affect Brown, the Task Force supports the implementation of this technology initiative.

III. OTHER FINDINGS AND COMMITTEE PLANS FOR SPRING 2014

In our focus group discussions, our deliberations, and surveys and other sources of information two consistent themes emerged: (1) concern about lighting on and off the campus; and (2) despite valiant and extensive efforts by many offices to disseminate safety information, many community members are unaware of the services available to them, including [Rave Guardian](#), [SafeWalk](#), and other programs designed to enhance campus safety.

With regard to lighting, we reviewed the planning work which has been done and continues to enhance lighting around the campus. A major project is underway to improve lighting on the College Green and Simmons Quadrangle, and we look forward to assessing the effectiveness of those improvements in the coming months. Closely related to lighting, we also discussed the challenges and opportunities presented by the University's [Blue Light Emergency Phone system](#). 134 phones around the campus provide immediate access to the Department of Public Safety. The newer equipment often integrates a security camera as well. However, much of the equipment is old and was installed at a time when the phones were also used for building access (being installed adjacent to exterior building entrances), a use long since replaced by cell phones. We learned about the challenges involved in maintaining some of the older phones, and while an emergency phone system remains important on the campus there may be opportunities to jointly approach the replacement of obsolete equipment with modern fixtures in strategic locations that also augment CCTV coverage and, perhaps, more effective lighting. At a minimum, the University's strategy for lighting, blue light phones, and CCTV needs to be considered in an integrated and coordinated manner. We plan to examine these issues further in the spring semester.

Lighting off the campus is even more challenging, given that the systems involved are not owned by the University. Most street lighting is owned and maintained by National Grid, funded by the City of Providence. Much of the equipment is old and the light fixtures become ineffective as they age. There are pilot programs in the State to replace street light fixtures with LEDs, which are more efficient and effective, and the University is exploring opportunities to collaborate with that partnership (Brown leases some street light fixtures from National Grid as well). There may be other strategies we can pursue to address lighting in the neighborhoods and along the corridors which many students, faculty and staff live in and traverse every day, but we anticipate it will be a challenging problem.

Safety education and awareness programs are under the control of the University, and represents an area we want to spend significant further time discussing in the spring. At nearly every meeting or focus group at least one community member heard about a safety program or initiative that he or she was previously unaware existed. Information about services and programs is maintained on different websites (SafeWalk and Brown University Shuttle being a prime example) and while we learned that the services are actually well coordinated and complementary, they may not appear to be so to the general community. We have discussed the idea of an integrated mobile application that could streamline the flow of information, and we look forward to investigating that further as we continue our work. Overall, it is clear to us that outreach and information to the community regarding safety services and crime prevention is critical to campus safety. The Task Force reviewed current educational and outreach methods

and invited input for effectiveness. A number of innovative suggestions for strengthening community awareness of safety services and impacting education around crime reduction behavior have been made, and we will continue that discussion.

IV. CONCLUSION

We believe the recommendations identified above will have a positive effect on the reality and perception of safety on the Brown campus. We look forward to continuing our work on these important issues over the upcoming semester.

Members of the Campus Safety Task Force

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Appendix A

OnCall Utilization - FY13 - FY14

	FY13	FY14	%
October	3,595	3,345	-7%
November	4,485	7,269	62%
Total	8,080	10,614	31%

Fxed-Route Utilization - FY13 - FY14

	FY13	FY14	%
October	4,453	10,274	131%
November	3,585	11,391	218%
Total	8,038	21,665	170%