

Smith, Dianne [BOARD]

From: Tuttle, Ilene [BOARD] [ituttle@iastate.edu] on behalf of Steinke, Gary W [BOARD] [gwstein@iastate.edu]
Sent: Friday, September 14, 2007 3:27 PM
To: Baumert, Andy [GOV R]; Campbell, Bonnie J.; Connolly, Jenny; Downer, Robert; Evans, Jack B.; Gartner, Michael; Harkin, Ruth; Lang, Craig A.; Miles, David W.; Vasquez, Rose
Subject: FW: [Fwd: RE: Comment on arming campus police--IMMEDIATE ATTENTION]
Attachments: Arming Campus Police-Ltr to Pres Geoffroy.doc

On behalf of Gary Steinke:

The attached information is being forwarded at the request of Senator Herman Quirnbach.

From: Herman Quirnbach [mailto:hcqbach@isunet.net]
Sent: Thursday, September 13, 2007 3:24 PM
To: gwstein@iastate.edu
Cc: Baumert, Andy [GOV R]
Subject: [Fwd: RE: Comment on arming campus police--IMMEDIATE ATTENTION]

Gary,

Per President Geoffroy's suggestion, please forward the attached to the members of the Board of Regents immediately so that they might have time to study it before next week's meeting.

Thanks,
 Sen. Herman C. Quirnbach

----- Original Message -----

Subject: RE: Comment on arming campus police--IMMEDIATE ATTENTION
Date: Tue, 11 Sep 2007 07:15:41 -0500
From: Geoffroy, Gregory L [PRES] <geoffroy@iastate.edu>
To: Quirnbach, Herman [ECONS] <hcqbach@iastate.edu>
References: <46E5CEF9.5040301@iastate.edu>

Herman,

Thanks much for sending me these very thoughtful comments about this issue which is so important for the campus. I am rushing out for a community visit to Creston and Atlantic and don't have time for a lengthy response right now, but I do agree with your view about the importance of informing decisions like this with relevant and carefully analyzed data. You are right about the Regents who will make this decision, with input from the Presidents, but I am sure based on their own individual opinions. This will be debated at their meeting next week, and you should try to get it to them before then. I think if you send it to Gary Steinke, he will distribute it to the Regents.

...Greg

-----Original Message-----

From: Quirnbach, Herman [ECONS]
Sent: Monday, September 10, 2007 6:11 PM
To: geoffroy@iastate.edu; president@iastate.edu
Subject: Comment on arming campus police--IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

Greg,

Please see the attached. I have addressed the letter to you, since you have asked for public comment to be directed to you. However, since it is the Board of Regents that is responsible for reporting to us in the legislature, I will probably be sending copies to some or all of them, too.

Please let me know what you think.

Regards,
 Herman Quirnbach
 292-8984

HERMAN C. QUIRMBACH

STATE SENATOR

Twenty-third District

Statehouse: (515) 281-3371

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The Senate

State of Iowa

Eighty-first General Assembly

STATEHOUSE

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

COMMITTEES

Education
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Judiciary
Local Government, *Co-chair*
Ways & Means
Education Appropriations
Subcommittee

September 10, 2007

President Gregory Geoffroy
Beardshear Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

Dear President Geoffroy:

I am writing to you today to express my concern about the issue of the arming of campus police. The Virginia Tech tragedy certainly warrants a review of campus security. Our responsibility to protect the safety of our students, our employees, and anyone else who may visit campus is paramount. Fulfilling that responsibility requires the most careful and thorough analysis of security matters.

My main concern is that the analysis undertaken so far falls far short of what the legislature anticipated last spring when we commissioned a review of this matter. I have read the June 1 memorandum to you and the other presidents from the vice presidents and the campus security personnel. I have also participated in one of the public forums and followed the discussion in the press. I am left with serious doubts.

It seems that at minimum a careful, thorough, and objective analysis would have systematically addressed three issues:

- a data-driven analysis of the threat,
- an analysis of the likely effectiveness of the proposal at meeting the threat identified, and
- an assessment of the downside risks of the change proposed

Regrettably, the June 1 memo fails in all three areas.

The Threat Analysis

I expected to find in the June 1 memo some statistical analysis of campus crime data and was quite disappointed to find none. Though U.S. universities have been required to collect and report data on serious campus crime since 1990 (the “Jeanne Clery Act”) and the data are readily available (see http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_09.html), there is no evidence in the June 1 memo that these data were accessed, let alone analyzed. The memo simply does not analyze either the rate of campus crime or the recent trends.

Had the relevant data been addressed, we would have learned that U.S. campuses are very safe places compared to most other venues in our society. That is not to say, of course, that campuses are totally safe nor that we should be lax in our concern about campus security, but the good news is that our students, faculty, and staff are probably safer on campus than off.

Consider, for example, the analysis of Prof. James Alan Fox, the Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University and former Dean of the College of Criminal Justice there. (See <http://www.jfox.neu.edu/> for his bio and links to his publications.) Prof. Fox, who has served also as a visiting fellow with the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice, acknowledges the horror of the Virginia Tech tragedy but wisely counsels that “emotions tend to cloud the facts, and the truth is, the risk on campus of murder in general—and mass murder, in particular—is so low that you almost need a course in college math to calibrate the odds.” (*USA Today*, 8/28/07). He continues, “When compared with virtually any metropolitan area, a student’s chances of dying by homicide actually decreases once he or she steps on campus.” He notes that fewer than 10 students were murdered on campus per year from 2001 to 2005. With 20 million college students in the U.S., the probability is thus less than one in a million.

Crime in the United States overall has generally decreased in recent decades. Though statistics fluctuate from year to year in individual categories, the FBI’s own web site states “Murder decreased 15.0 percent in 2005 compared with data from 10 years ago (1996). In this same time period, robbery offenses decreased 22.1 percent.” See http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_01.html

At least as troubling to me as the lack of systematic data analysis is the apparent lack of understanding of how to do a proper threat analysis. For example, ISU Director of Public Safety Jerry Stewart (*Ames Tribune*, 9/1/07) responded to a question at one forum that asked “Do criminal statistics show a need for ISU police to be armed?” His response, as quoted, “When you make this decision, you make it on possibility, not probability.” That response, which he repeated at the forum I attended on September 5, is simply inadequate. We simply cannot invest scarce resources or undertake policies that may have significant downside risks in response to every “possibility,” no matter how remote. Proper security planning cannot take place without a weighing of the *likelihood* of threats as well as their severity.

The June 1 memo observes that our campuses are larger than many municipalities in Iowa. Our campuses are indeed large. However, the memo fails to take into consideration the fact that our campuses are far more homogeneous in values, educational levels, social class, income levels, and a host of other variables than are our cities. Thus, though size may be comparable, other relevant sociological variables are not. Again, no data are presented to show that violent crime rates are comparable.

The Effectiveness of the Response

If a valid threat were identified, the next question should be the effectiveness of the proposed remedy in meeting that threat.

As you well know, campus police already have access to armed force when needed in several circumstances. At ISU, the campus police have a longstanding and excellent relationship with the Ames Police Department. The Ames PD is readily available to provide armed backup when called. Their response times are good, though, of course, we should always examine opportunities for further improvement. The other case is that the campus police can be authorized by university administration even now to carry firearms when circumstances warrant.

Appendix B of the memo reports a half dozen cases in which such authorization was successfully used. The fact that you have issued such authorization so rarely is itself a testimonial to the low probability of the need for armed force on campus. If circumstances are believed to warrant a more frequent issuance of such authorization, then you already have the power to do that.

In this context, then, the effectiveness question becomes one of the incremental benefit of campus police carrying firearms themselves on a regular basis beyond the benefit already attained of securing special authorization or using local backup. The June 1 memo does not really address this question. It does present a few anecdotes of cases where campus officers encountered individuals who had arms, but in all cases reported it appears that the situations were resolved successfully under the present policy. Furthermore, Prof. Fox (*op. cit.*) observes that “of the homicides reported on campuses, the majority were acquaintance killings or drug deals gone bad.” These are cases where an officer is unlikely even to be present. The same is likely to be true for most crimes. For the most part, people do not tend to commit crimes when an officer is present, whether armed or not.

The case is simply not made in the June 1 memo that adding to the current policy will produce a significant likelihood of better outcomes than are already achieved. Nor has the public discussion I have heard added any new evidence. In a response to a forum question of whether there was any relationship between arming campus police and deterring crime, ISU DPS Director Stewart said, “I don’t know of any.” (*Ames Tribune*, 9/1/07) Indeed, ISU police have not been armed for decades, but Director Stewart claims that the ISU campus is nevertheless safer than most.

Nor does the Virginia Tech tragedy provide any support. Simply put, campus police at Virginia Tech were armed and it did no good! It did nothing to deter the incident nor to stop the assailant in his initial assault at the dormitory.

The best that can be argued is that the shooter killed himself when he knew that officers were closing in on him. The problem with that argument is that it took *two hours* from the start of the killing for the police to close in. Armed backup from any number of local police agencies could have been called in at ISU within minutes, had the incident happened here. The failure at Virginia Tech was that the authorities apparently assumed the event was over after the dormitory shootings and did not respond with adequate warnings or personnel to the rest of campus. The Virginia Tech campus police being armed did nothing to avoid or correct this failure.

The Downside Risk

Escalating the level of armament on campus always carries the risk that that armament will be misused. I have every respect for the dedication and training of the ISU police officers, but we cannot responsibly ignore the fact that human mistakes can be made even by the most professional of people. Training notwithstanding, an officer may overreact to a situation. Force might be used when it is not actually necessary. Innocent bystanders may be shot, either by an officer or by a perpetrator exchanging fire. Incidents have also occurred where an officer’s weapon has been taken from him and used against him or others present.

These risks would substantially increase if officers were to carry firearms regularly, but the June 1 memo fails to address the increase in these downside risks. This is a particularly disturbing omission because it is exactly that risk that no doubt led to the adoption of the current policy in the first place several decades ago.

Previous experience with a similar issue is not reassuring. In 2002, when the university armed officers with Tasers, the *Inside Iowa State* publication carried a Q&A with DPS Director

Stewart and Gene Deisinger, the manager of the special operations unit of DPS. In response to the question “Why Taser weapons?” the answer given in part was “by design [they] shouldn’t cause serious or permanent injury.” (See <http://www.iastate.edu/Inside/2002/0201/tasers.shtml> .)

In its 2007 report, however, Amnesty International stated, “More than 70 people died [in 2006] after being shocked with tasers (dart-firing electro-shock weapons), bringing to more than 230 the number of such deaths since 2001.” In June the Justice Department announced that a two-year study of taser deaths would be undertaken by the National Institute of Justice.

In summary, previous reassurances from campus security officers seem to have under appreciated the serious adverse impact of the weaponry considered. That is surely not a mistake we want to make with guns.

Conclusion

Perhaps there is somehow a case to be made for changing campus police policy, but the June 1 memo does not make it, nor have the public presentations offered recently on campus. To justify such a policy change, a threat or threats would have to be documented in both likelihood and severity and a rigorous assessment of whether the effectiveness of the proposed response outweighed its likely risks would have to be undertaken. I am not convinced that any of this has yet occurred. Perhaps more time is needed, or perhaps different personnel with the relevant research background and skills need to be assigned the task. At this time, however, the analysis of the matter does not attain the level that I believe the legislature wanted.

We are all committed to maintaining the safety of our students and campus personnel. I recognize and salute the dedication of our campus police in pursuing that goal. But, we must learn the right lessons from Virginia Tech and not the wrong ones. Arming the campus police there did no good.

What would have done a lot of good would have been to have a more effective response to a student who was known to have psychological problems. That kind of reform here would directly benefit not just the very few students who may be inclined to hurt others but also to the vastly greater numbers inclined to hurt themselves either by violence or by substance abuse. The number of students who die each year by suicide is one hundredfold higher than the number of murder victims, and as you know the ISU campus recently suffered the loss of a student who died as a result of his untreated drinking problem. Let’s concentrate time and resources where we can do the most good.

Best wishes,

Herman C. Quirnbach
Iowa State Senate, District 23, and
Associate Professor of Economics, ISU