April 15, 2008

Dear Campus Community,

It has been a year since the tragedy at Virginia Tech University. As we are reminded of that day, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on efforts we are making to improve campus safety and emergency preparedness at UC Riverside.

Violence at other universities, such as the shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech, has offered lessons for all universities about how to best prepare to keep the campus community safe in a crisis. I assure you UC Riverside is devoting major attention to those lessons. We have taken significant steps to evaluate and develop UC Riverside’s preparedness for such emergencies as natural disasters, pandemic disease, and an active shooter or bomb threat situation.

In addition to UCR’s existing environmental safety program, full police department and fire marshal, in the past year a full-time emergency planner has been appointed, an emergency alert system has been introduced, officers have received additional training in rapid response to an active shooter, and mental health staff has been augmented. In addition, campus leadership has participated in tabletop drills to ensure a rapid response in the event of an emergency.

New Emergency Response Systems

Under the guidance of the emergency planner, the campus developed an emergency operations plan and a specially equipped emergency operations center to coordinate emergency response.

Additional steps:

- In October of 2007, UCR introduced an emergency alert system to provide faculty, staff and students with timely information and instructions during emergencies. This system can send simultaneous text messages to registered members of the university community. Currently, 61 percent of UCR students and 24 percent of faculty and staff have registered to receive messages. The system complements other communications, including use of the police bullhorns and sirens, fire alarms, e-mail, the Web, and news media.
- An Emergency Communications Workgroup was established in July 2006, which continually assesses available communications methods and equipment. Training sessions have been held on a web-based communications software called WebEOC that will provide additional resources for communication in the event of an emergency.
- Each building has a point person for emergency conditions. This person is responsible for developing specific emergency plans and providing on-site instruction and communications during building evacuations.
- Regular emergency drills are being held throughout the campus. An active shooter scenario exercise was completed in March of this year with UCR executive management. The campus will hold a full scale emergency drill by April 2010. Each campus department must have an updated emergency plan by that time.
Police Preparedness

- All UC Riverside police officers have completed a two-day active shooter training with the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department. The UCR police department now owns ballistic shields and helmets and is training to deploy them. While it was once standard for law enforcement to set up a perimeter and wait for a specially trained and equipped SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team to arrive, the active shooter procedures call for teams of trained patrol officers to move in immediately and neutralize the shooter. The department has also developed a crisis response presentation for faculty, staff, and students to learn strategies to increase the likelihood of surviving a shooting incident like Virginia Tech's.
- UCPD acquired a Mobile Command Post vehicle to assist with on-scene incident command in violent incidents involving multiple police agencies. The department has established relationships with other local, state, and jurisdictional police and fire agencies. The department conducts a multi-agency active shooter scenario training each year.
- UCPD has created a “Critical Incident Response Book”, detailing sensitive sites, command post locations, and aerial photographs of the campus to assist neighboring law enforcement agencies in responding to the campus.

Student Mental Health/Counseling

- The campus established a Critical Student Incident Team that includes Student Affairs, Police, Counseling and Housing, to discuss common concerns and to work with faculty and other instructors who are in contact with students who could be in serious distress.
- The UCR Counseling Center redesigned the center’s Web site to include mental health resources for the campus community, especially at times of heightened concern. The center also published a new edition of “Assisting the Emotionally Distressed Student” for faculty and staff. This is available to the campus community in hard copies or may be accessed via http://counseling.ucr.edu.
- UCR’s Counseling Center has established a 24-hour crisis counseling service at (951) 827-5531, and has developed - in conjunction with other campus departments - preventive programs for students, faculty and staff to help recognize students who may be experiencing distress. The Center is stocking a “Crash Cart” that will make it easier to respond quickly with the right materials to a campus emergency.
- The Office of Student Affairs received Mental Health funding to increase current minimal part-time psychiatry in both the Student Health Center and the Counseling Center to one full-time psychiatrist shared by the departments. Student Affairs is also recruiting a social worker to act as a case manager for students in mental distress. Student Affairs is currently developing a Wellness Center to foster holistic approaches to healthy living and offering educational mental health care to “at risk” populations on campus.
Website: Campus Emergency Status Page

- The campus home page (http://www.ucr.edu) provides a link to Campus Emergency Status page (http://campusstatus.ucr.edu) and Emergency Procedures Page (http://www.ehs.ucr.edu/ep/fp/) which provides guidance for a variety of emergency conditions and contact information for further assistance.

Campus Violence Prevention Program

- Last fall, the Campus Violence Prevention Program, a national leader in combating violence against women, was awarded a $1 million federal grant to help UC's 10 campuses improve their prevention and response programs. The three-year project aims to coordinate a model program to reduce the incidence of campus-based violence against women and to provide effective outreach programs and services that make it as comfortable as possible for victims to come forward.

Thank you for taking time to review UC Riverside’s ongoing efforts to protect all members of our community.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Robert. D. Grey
Acting Chancellor