

FLORIDA UNIVERSITY CHIEFS OF POLICE

Chief Thomas G. Longo, Chair

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS BASED UPON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FLORIDA GUBERNATORIAL TASK FORCE ON CAMPUS SAFETY

March 2008

On April 16, 2007, 32 students were fatally shot by a lone gunman at Virginia Polytechnic University in what is the worst campus related shooting in U. S. history. The reaction to this event was swift, with states reviewing the readiness of their campus police departments to deal effectively with such a situation. Governor Charlie Crist, in Executive Order 07-77 initiated a task force to examine the incident and the preparedness of Florida universities to respond to an “active shooter” situation. In its final report, the Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety made a series of recommendations addressed to various levels and components of state government, some of which directly concern the police departments of the eleven SUS campuses as part of a comprehensive strategy.

Upon the request of the Board of Governors, with the leadership of Governor Tico Perez chairing the Emergency Preparedness & Campus Safety Committee, Governor Ava Parker chairing the sub-committee on police, and Chancellor Mark B. Rosenberg, the chiefs of police of the eleven State University System campuses collaborated on recommendations for the consideration of the Governors regarding issues raised in the Task Force report on policing and safety on our campuses. These recommendations have been formulated with due regard to the diversity exhibited by our eleven campuses, the chief’s perception of the issues as raised by the Gubernatorial Task Force, and the unfolding budget challenges in Florida. These recommendations are restricted to police-related issues only, and do not include issues such as technology and public notification, which are the purview of specific committees. The issues and recommendations discussed herein are a follow-up to the presentation made to the Board of Governors on August 7, 2007 at the University of South Florida, Tampa, by the Chair of the Florida University Chiefs of Police.

The chiefs consider the issues raised by the Gubernatorial Task Force to be both vital and prescient. Indeed, the issue of mass shootings on college campuses has persisted since Virginia Tech,¹ and there is little cause to believe that such incidents will abate in the foreseeable future. While no level of planning or

¹ See appendix A

preparation can eliminate the potential for these incidents, a prudent investment in enhanced police capacity on our campuses can and will enable an effective response. In the final analysis, a sufficient force of police officers equipped to handle rapidly unfolding violent situations must be in place. It is our goal to ensure that our response is up to the task, and we commend the Board of Governors for their leadership in making this issue a priority during a very challenging period in Florida's economic history.

The following issues as presented in the Task Force report, in priority order, directly affect the ability of SUS police departments to effectively respond to such situations:

Issue 1:

That the State University System conduct a salary survey of Florida State University System police positions to develop a pay package to be proposed to the 2008 Florida Legislature.²

Discussion:

Compensation of sworn officers could improve in order to make SUS police positions more competitive with other law enforcement agencies. Sworn employee turnover has resulted in the appearance of persistent vacancies and inordinate energy is being expended in the recruitment process in attempts to refill them. The market for qualified sworn law enforcement officers has become remarkably competitive in recent years, due to a smaller pool of applicants who possess the requisite skills and can pass the intensive background investigation required for sworn positions of special trust and confidence. Moreover, law enforcement is a very dynamic profession and campus-based policing is often perceived to be less attractive to potential candidates who generally seek agencies as first choices that they perceive to be more prestigious. In addition to that challenge, the law of supply and demand has caused the best candidates to seek positions with agencies that offer the most attractive compensation plans, and those with police experience in less attractive departments to compete for higher-paying positions on other agencies. Many municipal and county departments offer higher salaries to incoming experienced officers, often having the effect of recruiting the best officers away from lower-paying agencies, especially in metropolitan areas of Florida. They then offer more attractive salary plans and perks in order to ensure the stability and effectiveness of their officer workforce.³ Although various compensation philosophies, such as pay for

² Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety final report page iii.

³ In general, local law enforcement agencies offer salary plans that enable sworn employees to move through their pay band in a predictable manner to a top salary in a finite period of time. Also, while benefits are comparable, local agencies often provide a Take Home Car plan, and an educational benefit that is not tied to any particular institution, but requires only that the credits be accredited and related to their positions.

performance can be employed, attractive candidates can be expected to gravitate to plans that offer the simplest route to the highest pay in their region. Many choices of police employer exist in most Florida regions without the need for relocation, thus empowering officers and candidates with multiple options.

Recommendation:

In conducting salary surveys of SUS police employee positions in preparation for proposals to the legislature or other funding consideration, we believe that each campus resides in a region of the state that is possessed of unique economic circumstances. Therefore, the chiefs believe the most efficacious compensation plans will closely reflect those of surrounding local law enforcement agencies to which our departments most typically lose officers. We see this both in terms of starting police officer salary, and compensation plan structure. We recognize that this will result in plans that look different on various campuses, but believe that such latitude is important in order to be competitive. Experienced officer retention is the most pressing issue for our departments, and stable, fully-staffed forces are unlikely to be maintained without due regard to longevity pay in some form. Municipal and county law enforcement remains the main competitors for SUS police departments, and we urge the adoption of pay plans that closely compete with, or exceed those of such agencies in our individual locales.

Issue 2:

That the State University System, working with the Chiefs of Police at Florida's 11 universities and with the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, develop a standard recommending the minimum level of officers for a campus and a standard of officers per 1,000 campus population. Both standards should be adaptable to the actual service population of the department and the geography of the campus.⁴

Discussion:

The minimum level of officers needed for a given campus should allow for coverage deemed sufficient for the safety and security of students as well as physical plant, with consideration given to officer safety. Although imperfect, the sworn officer to student ratio is a way to measure police presence on our campuses. Such measurement fails to account for all persons on our campuses at any given time, such as employees or visitors. However, the ratio utilizing student head count does provide a consistent measure for comparative purposes between campuses as well as a rough analogy to municipal jurisdictions that quantify residents. The standard published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for community oriented policing purposes is 2 officers per thousand, or a 1/500 ratio. Campus-based law enforcement is arguably the most intensive community oriented policing environment extant as the perception of a

⁴ Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety final report page iii-iv.

safe environment, as well as nuisance abatement, is closely intertwined with the academic success of the institution. This prominence related to institutional success is closely linked to the large presence of relatively young adults on our campuses, many of whom are away from home for their first time and easily victimized. An adequate, if not generous allotment of sworn police positions on each campus is directly related to academic success, risk management and institutional prestige.

Recommendation:

In order to maintain an adequate police presence on our campuses the chiefs recommend a minimum ratio of sworn law enforcement officers to students be established in the state. The nationally-recognized standard as proposed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) for community-oriented policing purposes is 2 officers per thousand (or 1/500). Respecting the environment in which we police, community-oriented policing is a prominent feature of campus-based policing in our overall strategy to foster student success. In consideration of the current staffing on various large campuses across the state, as well as the increasingly complex nature of policing and demands for service, the chiefs believe that the minimum officer to student ratio should be 1 sworn police officer per 600 students (1/600).⁵ However, some campuses may elect to exceed that ratio in order to meet their needs. The IACP community oriented policing ratio may prove to be a more advantageous goal to be pursued in the future as funding becomes attainable.⁶ However, where a limited student population makes the recommended ratio impracticable, we recommend that no fewer than two (2) sworn officers be on duty during any given shift. An adequate level of sworn police staffing is essential to a competent initial active shooter response.

The chiefs also consider implementation of regionally competitive compensation plans to be essential to maintaining these levels of staffing.

⁵ The current needs of each SUS campus to achieve this level are found in Appendix B.

⁶ According to a recent report by the US DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics, the average sworn officer to student ratio on campuses nationally has increased overall to 1.8 per thousand in 2005, or 1/555, see page 3 of report, located in Appendix E.

Issue 3:

That all agencies charged with responding to violent events on a university or college campus train and exercise their personnel in the Active Shooter response and that each agency develop and train to a protocol which will allow the integration of the medical response with the law enforcement response.⁷

Discussion:

As the phenomenon of active shooter is relatively new to university campuses, and SUS police budgets vary in their capacity to permit preparation, additional funding will be required to ensure each campus the ability to respond adequately. At least one SUS institution currently has a SWAT capability.⁸ A highly rapid response to such crises is indicated, which is best performed by the responding shift officers. One approach that has emerged is to identify selected officers to receive special weapons and tools, as well as training, who would then be deployed on shifts in a manner to ensure the capability can quickly respond to such calls whenever they occur. These specially trained officers would also deliver specialized training to the other officers with whom they serve on their respective shifts, ensuring an enhanced “team” approach in a crisis. The newly-formed Tactical Response Team at the University of South Florida Tampa campus is one such example. However, while a fiscal investment in some equipment has been made on some SUS campuses as a prudent measure, new funding is required in order to obtain the equipment and training that will be needed to ensure the team’s success should they be needed. This issue was discussed during a conference call initiated by the Chancellor with the vice presidents and chiefs of the SUS institutions that occurred on February 15, 2008 immediately after the shootings at Northern Illinois University.

Recommendation:

Each SUS campus should possess the capability of rapidly responding with enhanced tools and training to an active shooter situation or other violent crisis. Additional non-recurring funding⁹ sufficient to field an equipped and trained capability on each SUS campus is recommended for immediate consideration. These funds would cover the acquisition of equipment and current fiscal year training and overtime to offset officer absences for training. State-of-the-art training and equipment is indicated to allow responding teams of police officers to

⁷ Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety final report page ix.

⁸ The University of Central Florida has maintained a SWAT team for several years, and officers so trained and equipped working on-shift are capable of intervention as described.

⁹ While programs are developing and change is almost certain, the current needs of each SUS campus are listed in Appendix C. Non-recurring funds will provide for equipment, but recurring funding would be most appropriate for ongoing training.

prevail against possibly heavily armed, multiple and possibly barricaded assailants.

Issue 4:

That the State University System examine additional funding sources for mental health and safety activities, including modifying state fee caps to fund student counseling and health initiatives and assessing a security/technology fee.¹⁰

Discussion:

In order to support the recommendations made *supra*, additional funding to SUS police departments will be imperative. However the state budget is currently in a period of contraction rather than expansion. Another issue that has arisen during the ongoing conversation about campus safety in the wake of the Gubernatorial Task Force report, and in particular in discussions concerning the increasing fiscal challenges under which Florida government must operate, is the potential for budget cuts affecting SUS police departments.

Most, if not all of the SUS police department budgets possess very little capacity to experience budget cuts without an adverse impact on the delivery of services. Some are already behind in terms of even adequate funding. While this would be true of any service or entity within a university, the recent increase in on-campus violence, particularly mass shooting incidents, indicates that a continued emphasis on safety and police funding is advisable. Additionally, police budgets are relatively small in comparison with the overall budget of our SUS institutions, and are much smaller than key university components such as Academic Affairs. Therefore, significant gain can be achieved without significant outlay by holding police funding harmless.

Recommendation:

Chancellor Rosenberg has exhibited extraordinary leadership in asking each SUS institution to “hold harmless” the police budgets in any mandated cuts.¹¹ The chiefs believe that the security of our campuses should continue to receive the priority that has been extended by the Chancellor thus far, and we recommend that police funding remain held-harmless during any future budget cuts. We consider such a strategy to be prudent as well as highly cost-effective.

¹⁰ Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety final report page iii.

¹¹ See Appendix D.

Issue 5:

That the remaining universities in the State University System and any other institutions whose officers have full law enforcement authority be strongly encouraged to seek accreditation through the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.¹²

Discussion:

Law enforcement accreditation is considered the hallmark of modern, progressive police departments. Accreditation is valued by the chiefs as well as our local law enforcement peers and many of the SUS departments already possess some form of this recognition. Law enforcement accreditation is currently available from the following sources: the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA), the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators Accreditation (IACLEA) program. While the cost varies significantly, these programs are substantially similar and the chiefs have no preference with regard to which is pursued.

Recommendation:

The chiefs recommend that all SUS police departments be accredited by one of the three accrediting bodies offering law enforcement accreditation in Florida. We believe the decision of which provider to utilize is best left to the individual campus police chief as each requires a different fiscal commitment and various strategic goals may be better supported by individual or combinations of programs.

The members of the Florida University Chiefs of Police appreciate the opportunity to express our opinion on these vital issues, and wish to express our commitment to working with the Florida Board of Governors and the Office of the Chancellor in any way needed on these or other matters.

¹² Gubernatorial Task Force on University Campus Safety final report page ix.