

Arming Work Group – Final Report Summary

David Tedjeske, Chair, Director of Public Safety, Villanova University

January 2015

Background: In November 2013, then IACLEA President Vickie Weaver appointed a Work Group charged with developing resources and guidance for institutions considering the transition from an unarmed to an armed agency. The group also was asked to draft a revision to IACLEA's position statement on arming campus police and security officers.

Position Statement

IACLEA acknowledges that the decision to arm campus officers is an institutional decision and one that requires thoughtfulness and consideration of all campus constituencies. IACLEA seeks to provide resources to institutions considering this issue and has formed this position statement based on a review of relevant literature, lessons learned from incidents occurring on college campuses across the world, and the years of collective wisdom of campus public safety leaders that comprise IACLEA's membership. The concept of introducing firearms on a college campus causes high levels of dissension and upheaval, laced with philosophical, social, and perceptual tensions. IACLEA recognizes the intensity of the debate surrounding this issue, and understands the enormous responsibility that comes with having officers equipped with firearms. IACLEA believes that the emotional intensity of the debate over firearms can detract from the issue itself, and implores campus executives to base their decisions about arming campus officers on objective factors unique to each institution and not on speculative fears or passionate opposition.

College and university campuses are welcoming, open and accessible communities, designed to foster education, scholarly research, and student development. An unavoidable consequence of an open campus is the exposure of the campus community and its police or security officers to the risks of the outside world. At the same time, students, faculty, and staff on today's college campus deserve and expect the same or greater levels of protection on campus as they do in their own communities. It is therefore incumbent on higher education administrators to realistically assess and address the risks faced by the campus community, including the potential for violence on campus.

IACLEA believes that campus police and security officers face many of the same risks as their off-campus counterparts and are entitled to the same means of self-defense as their peers outside higher education. Colleges and universities should train and equip police or security personnel consistent with the expectations of their employment, and in a way that will realistically help ensure their own safety and the safety of those they are tasked with protecting. In other words, officers whose job responsibilities

involve response to potentially dangerous situations should be trained and equipped to deal with whatever circumstances they might reasonably expect to encounter. When put in the role of addressing crimes and suspicious circumstances, campus police or security officers face dynamic and dangerous situations, sometimes involving firearms and other deadly weapons. Faced with unlawful force being used against them, officers have little or no opportunity to retreat, and if able to do so, would leave bystanders vulnerable to harm.

Beyond the daily risks of life on campus lies the extraordinary threat of the active shooter. Although the risk of a mass shooting is remote, it remains very real and carries devastating consequences. Active shooting incidents are quickly evolving, unpredictable situations that end in a matter of minutes. The proven best response requires the first officers on the scene to locate and engage the active shooter. A response that is delayed by only minutes will almost certainly result in additional loss of life. As targets of these seemingly random acts of extreme violence, college administrators must ensure that campuses are prepared to quickly and effectively respond to active shooter situations. Blind faith and confidence that the local police will respond in time and with sufficient resources is insufficient. A realistic assessment of response time, capability, and knowledge of the campus and its buildings by local police should inform the decision as to whether armed campus officers are necessary to address or assist in addressing an active shooter situation.

Institution-specific considerations

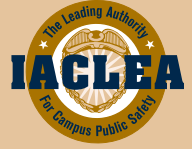
There are factors specific to each campus that will also guide decision makers in determining whether arming is an appropriate option.

I. Internal Departmental Issues

A critical first step is to ensure that the campus police or security department is fundamentally sound and operating properly. Issues and questions to consider include:

- Is the campus community currently satisfied with the services being provided?
- Consider a security and safety climate survey that also seeks feedback on the performance of the department and its officers.

Arming Work Group – Final Report Summary



- Has the Departmental undergone a program review? Are there other areas within the Department that should be addressed prior to or in conjunction with the transition to an armed campus?
- Are current staff qualified? What will happen to officers who are unable or not interested in transitioning?

II. Local Police/Community Considerations

Detractors from arming will quickly point to reliance upon local police to handle extraordinarily dangerous calls.

- Response time of local police – What is their proximity to campus, are they likely to be tied up with other calls, do they know the campus and its buildings well enough to quickly get to the location of the incident (not just to the entrance of campus)?
- Capability of local police – Are they adequately staffed, how many officers are available to respond to campus, what level of training have they received, do they have the confidence of the community? Has local police engaged in tactical planning, training, and exercises that include campus constituents?
- Support of local police – Are the local police positively engaged in campus, is there a strong anti-campus sentiment among local police, do local police support arming, is there a written agreement or understanding in place?
- Expectations – Are the campus police or security unit currently patrolling or responding to calls off campus? Will that expectation change if the department becomes armed?

III. Budget considerations

- Is the police or security budget currently adequate?
- Is the university prepared to provide additional adequate resources? Expect to spend an additional \$1,000 per officer per year.
- Is pay for officers sufficient to attract quality candidates?

IV. Past incidents of weapons on or near campus

- What is the history of weapons incidents and “close calls” on or near campus?
- Have officers or members of the campus community been assaulted or threatened with a weapon in recent years?
- Based on the history, is it reasonably foreseeable that an officer could be faced with an individual with a weapon in the course of responding to a call?

Research and Evaluation Process

While the process in making this transition can vary from campus to campus, several tasks are common.

I. Development of a white paper

- A proposal or white paper that describes the proposed changes as well as the rationale.

II. Initial meeting with Vice President, President, or President’s Cabinet

- The introduction of the topic at the executive level is often a first step.
- University executives are able to understand the issue and provide direction for next steps.

III. Conduct Open Forums

- Open forums give members of the campus community an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns and/or support.

IV. Survey of the campus community

- A campus wide survey is another way to give community members a voice in the process.
- Can be used in conjunction with a safety and security climate survey.

V. Internal task force

- A task force consisting of students, faculty, and staff is often formed to study the proposal and make recommendations.

VI. External Consultant

Implementation

- I. Updated or new policies – reference IACLEA standards
- II. Internal oversight committee
- III. Psychological testing of employees
- IV. Physical/medical testing
- V. Updated job descriptions
- VI. Firearms Training (initial and on-going) – Beyond state requirements.
- VII. Cultural sensitivity training
- VIII. Equipment acquisition
- IX. Additional space needs (i.e., gun room, clearing station).
- X. Strengthen relationship, develop MOU’s, with local police
- XI. Protocols to periodically review policies and procedures. (Accreditation)
- XII. Process for external review of weapons-related incidents.

For more information or a copy of the Arming White Paper, please contact IACLEA staff: info@iaclea.org