

Email from Willamette University president Lee Pelton
Date: April 18, 2007

Dear Trustees,

Even though the tragedy at Virginia Tech occurred several thousand miles from the Willamette campus, it has had a significant emotional impact on our community. While no one has reported that one of the victims was a relative or loved one, a faculty member did tell me that a murdered professor was a research colleague and friend.

I am writing to inform you of the action that we have taken on campus in the wake of this profoundly tragic event:

(1) We have sent two campus emails to the community offering safe spaces for counseling and reflection as well as suggested a set of individual behaviors that would enhance safety.

(2) We have begun a process to review our emergency response plan. (We have an emergency response leadership team that is responsible for developing our response plan.)

(3) Coincidentally, we recently contracted for an upgrade to our door-access software that will give us the capacity to lock down buildings immediately. Another initiative is in process which will allow mass-notification if an incident arises. A third plan is being considered that would sound an audible signal throughout campus to notify everyone that an incident has occurred. This would notify people to go inside and access the e-mail notification.

Our hearts go out to the students, faculty and staff of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) who have suffered a terrible loss. The loss of life and casualties at this point are unprecedented in U.S. higher education history, and our thoughts are with President Charles W. Steger as he guides his campus through this terrible time.

Incidents such as these are as tragic as they are rare on American college campuses. Unfortunately, it seems no workplace or community institution is immune from random gun violence--whether it is a local school, small business, shopping mall, or place of worship. College campuses remain vulnerable, despite state-of-the-art security efforts, because they remain free and open places of discourse that preclude total control of movement on campus. Obviously, other campus officials around the country will use this incident as an occasion to revisit their own security and emergency preparedness policies.

Whenever we have any incident that is a threat to people's personal safety on our campus, we immediately call 911 and enlist the help of police, fire and EMS providers. University responders assist these other professionals in helping to locate those in need, unlocking doors and providing campus resources to assist.

Campus safety staffing levels have the capacity to assist competently, but have not been staffed to be the primary response to a large incident. Our University responders are trained to communicate our needs clearly and solicit a larger support team from the University.

Campus Safety has the responsibility to notify the University's Emergency Management Team that is largely made up of senior level administrators. This team assembles and determines what additional

campus resources are needed to provide assistance to those in need and notify the campus and outside community of the status of the situation that we are working to resolve.

Communications, Campus Safety and WITS continually work on protocols that will provide regular updates to the community through WEB and phone technology. This will continue to be a priority, and we will strive to make improvements that assist the community by providing clear and informed communication.

The Emergency Response Plan is available online at:

<http://willamette.edu/dept/safety/emergency/guide>

This plan assists all staff in understanding how the University may respond in a variety of situations.

The following article appeared in today's edition of the Salem Statesman Journal:

<http://statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070418/NEWS/704180331>

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Lee