Preliminary Report:
A Reported Individual with a Gun
Chafee Social Science Center
April 4, 2013

April 29, 2013

Prepared by
Robert A. Weygand, J. Vernon Wyman, Stephen Baker, Shad Ahmed, Linda Acciardo, Kerrie Bennett, Kerri Hicks, David Lavallee with contributions from URI staff.
Chafee Social Science Center
Report of an Individual with a Gun on Campus
April 4, 2013

Background

On Thursday morning, April 4, 2013 at 11:19 AM, URI Police at the Kingston Campus and other police departments received a report of an individual with a gun at Chafee Social Science Center room 271, a large lecture hall. Approximately 300 students were in the lecture room and hundreds of other students, staff and faculty were present throughout the eight-story building. The Kingston Fire District, URI Emergency Management, URI Parking Services, URI Police, South Kingstown Police, Rhode Island State Police, North Kingstown Police, Narragansett Police, Charlestown Police, Westerly Police, URI Emergency Medical Services, South Kingstown Emergency Medical Services and URI Marketing and Communications all responded to the incident. The building was evacuated and the campus was placed in ‘lock-down mode.’ See Appendix A for Incident Timeline.

The incident resulted in a large scale police response, a lock-down condition on the campus, the activation of our URI emergency alert system (used multiple times that day), an extensive response to students, staff, faculty, family members, media and public officials. Health and counseling services tended to students and others in need. (State Police investigation and report has not been finalized at the time of this report)

Fortunately, the State Police investigation on that day concluded that no gun or active shooter had been located. The outcome, however, was a very real test of the readiness and effectiveness of our emergency preparedness, response, and communications. URI must be vigilant in its public safety preparedness and response efforts. It is incumbent upon the University to review this and every incident, identify challenges, implement improvements and learn from each experience.

While the rapid response and cooperation experienced during this event was largely successful, a preliminary review has identified a series of improvements that would enhance the readiness of the institution and its response to such incidents should they occur in the future.
Initial Recommendations

The following are the major recommendations for improvement to the systems and practices as determined from the initial review of the Chafee Social Science Center incident. There are other small, internal improvements, not outlined in this report, that are being implemented concurrently. Additional improvements may be identified as we further examine the incident and conduct a thorough ‘After-Action’ assessment. A more formal report based on all feedback, reviews, investigations, and inter-agency discussions of the incident will then be prepared.

1. Improve the capabilities of University Police as first responders to life-threatening emergency situations.

   a. Arm Campus Police Officers at the University of Rhode Island.
   University campus police officers responding to the emergency call at Chafee could not enter the building until armed officers were present (South Kingstown). This resulted in an approximate five minute delay to entering the building (see Appendix A for time line of response). Arming URI officers would improve the response time to an emergency situation involving weapons.
   Current law permits the new Board of Education (formerly the Board of Governors for Higher Education) the authority to arm campus police officers at any or all of the three colleges within their jurisdiction.
   URI will request approval from the Board to allow the arming of URI Police Officers.

   b. Provide the necessary infrastructure, financial support and training to arm sworn Campus Police Officers.
   Sworn Campus Police Officers will need to be equipped and re-trained in order to be qualified. The University will need to provide physical improvements and equipment (one-time-only) and annual training for police officers. We are updating current information to support this recommendation to the Board of Education (see attached Appendix B for Cost Estimate).

2. Improve the campus community’s education and training for responding to an emergency situation.

   a. Improve and refine the URI Emergency Procedures/Policies.
   URI will fully implement the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) by collaborating across the institution to facilitate understanding of roles and responsibilities. The EOP will incorporate comprehensive Emergency Protective Actions to cover procedures for
lockdown, shelter, shelter-in-place, evacuation, etc. In addition, Public Safety Institutional Procedures will be formalized, adopted, and implemented to support institution-wide safety programs, procedures, and mechanisms. A focused effort to accurately define the terms, roles and responsibilities of all members of the University community in supporting these important emergency response procedures within the Emergency Operations Plan is being developed for presentation and publication to the URI community.

b. **Institute a comprehensive training and exercise strategy for all students, faculty and staff about the proper means and methods for dealing with emergency situations.** URI will implement a training strategy that will outline a synchronized public education, public awareness, and exercise program for the University. It will incorporate multi-media interactive and other learning opportunities for all students, faculty, staff, and emergency responders. Routine and regular training and exercise can lead to a vastly improved response as well as realistic expectations for all students, faculty, staff, and emergency responders involved.

c. **Improve multi-agency response strategies and operations through training and discussion.** As part of a comprehensive training strategy, URI will invite external stakeholders to participate in our training opportunities. It is critical to include URI, local and state police to discuss public safety procedures and expectations, as well as an overview of communications processes during an emergency. A thorough exercise and evaluation program, based upon the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program principles and concepts will be implemented to conduct routine drills. A framework based on national core capabilities for exercise will be developed to conduct routine University-wide and targeted audience drills and exercises.

3. **Improve the emergency notification (Alert) system.**

   a. **Improve the policies, procedures and systems for emergency notifications**
   URI is in the process of improving remote access to the Emergency Alert system for first responders and expanding the number of trained Alert message originators. The Department of Public Safety (Office of Emergency Management) will be in charge of the emergency alerting systems and will develop appropriate protocols to promote best practices to be implemented and continually maintained. Immediate practices to be implemented include reducing the number of approvals required prior to dissemination of the emergency message and implementing system integrators that would interconnect email, text, and reverse 911 systems with audio broadcast, variable messaging, and other alert mechanisms together. A synchronized and streamlined alert and notifications website will also be deployed to integrate all these mechanisms.

   b. **Increase the frequency of Alert notices.**
During the emergency, five Emergency Alerts were sent to registered recipients (15,000) over a two-hour period to each mode of communication the recipients identified (email, voice mail and text). New notices were sent only when new information became available.

The University will now keep recipients informed on a more frequent (regular intervals) basis even if it is to reiterate or stress previous information. We have already accelerated the Emergency Alert transmission capabilities of email communications to all recipients. In addition to frequent updates, the University has now instituted the means to cease an outgoing (old) message to commence transmission of an urgent (updated) message when deemed necessary. This second (updated) transmission can use all communication modes available and reach recipients more rapidly.

c. **Communications Infrastructure**

During the incident, transmission to cell phones within the incident area, were slow and/or appeared non-functional. URI will work with telecommunications providers to improve the communications infrastructure on campus so that alert messaging can reach the community in a more effective manner and improve cell phone servicing capacity. URI has now expanded Alert transmission capability to enable faster receipt of phone contacts.

URI is working with Verizon to bring a cell tower site to URI with upgraded bandwidth and will work with other providers to increase bandwidth and capacity.

d. **Improve and increase visibility and awareness of our Emergency Alert system.**

Currently 75 to 80 percent of the community is registered, which is above the norm, but our goal must be to register all members of the community and external users (family members, etc.).

Marketing and Communications, Emergency Management, and Public Safety will work with campus groups and stakeholders to develop a strategy for awareness and education about the alerting systems. As part of a promotional communication to further increase URI Emergency Alert participation, the fastest mode to receive Alert messages has been identified and communicated to University recipients and will be used for the most urgent messages.

In addition, a dedicated space on the URI website for emergency information will be developed utilizing university best practices. Alerting procedures will be continually advertised and incorporated into orientations and other venues to re-emphasize its importance.

4. **Improve communications to the community during emergency situation(s)**

a. **Incorporate a mechanism for external stakeholders to receive emergency information.**

Community organizations, parents, and visitors will have a mechanism for receiving alert information and procedures to stay updated about emergency conditions on campus.

A system has been identified that has the capability to pass on text messages of URI
Emergency Alert system notifications to external stakeholders, without interfering with the timeliness of message transmission to University students, faculty, and staff. Instructions will be provided and widely disseminated to students’ parents, visitors, and community interests on how to subscribe to this system. In addition, we will be working with surrounding communities and state agencies to improve their protocols to monitor statewide communications mechanisms that we utilize during emergency incidents.

b. **A new emergency home page template has been developed for emergency situations, which will vastly improve our service availability under a heavy user load.**

While the URI server never crashed, the heavy traffic load caused many users to experience intermittent page loads, sometimes with unexpected display results, or no display at all. This issue was identified and rectified immediately, with a new template to minimize the effects of heavy server load. The template will continue to be used in the future. We will utilize this template as a basis for the alert and notification website and we will explore alternative off-site hosting for the main web server which will allow for redundancy in the event of a local network failure.

c. **Continue to improve the use and frequency of notices and responses to the community.**

Social media became a valuable tool to communicate with the campus community and the public. We will increase the frequency of providing information and updates. Communications and Community Relations will develop a timeline (as a guide) to accompany a crisis communications plan.

d. **Establish a vendor-provided ‘call-in-center’ to respond to telephone inquiries about emergency incidents in a coordinated manner.**

Telephone calls from concerned students, staff, and faculty and family members to the various colleges and offices of the University were overwhelming during the emergency. Information was released by URI offices as best as they could but the message was not provided in a coordinated manner, possibly causing undue confusion and concerns by callers. The issues were (1) the staff responding believed they were unable to provide messages that satisfied the callers, (2) there was a lack of a central place that parents and community members could seek information and (3) the University staff did not have the capacity to handle a large number of incoming calls. We will explore options for establishing call centers and develop protocol for coordinated messaging to concerned callers.

e. **Adopt established federal communications standards**

Follow U.S. Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency standards for communications among the incident command center, the emergency operations center and Marketing and Communications to ensure adherence to federal standards, consistent messaging and a more efficient flow of information.
5. Improve Physical Security Program

a. Physical Security Systems
   Improve and better coordinate physical security resources such as video monitoring, locking, and access control infrastructure in classroom and other facilities. The University’s outdoor Blue-light Phone, associated “All Campus Alert” outdoor speaker and audio message system has been tested and is being expanded to improve Kingston Campus coverage to notify pedestrians of emergency conditions. Integration of notifications with the URI Emergency Alert System are being explored. Door locking mechanisms on classrooms have been inventoried and assessed for their ability to be promptly locked against hallway entry. Limited improvements are being put into place prior to the development and documentation of locking procedures and related “lock-down” steps for posting in each of the classroom facilities on all Campuses. (In process)
   A newly hired public safety technology expert is reviewing and updating security camera system components to improve coverage and performance. Integrated policies and protocols are being explored to better integrate various disparate physical security measures.

b. Building Safety and Physical Security Procedures
   Improve upon and expand in scope the existing building manager program to incorporate emergency and safety procedures and outline a comprehensive physical security program. A review of the ramp-up of responsibilities and back-up assignments of the current voluntary building manager assignment protocols in place are under review by Facility Services and Public Safety to determine whether this mechanism can be amended effectively to support building-based emergency procedures implementation.

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Appendix A

Police Response Timeline

From: Major Stephen Baker
Date: April 11, 2013
Re: Timeline of Police Response to Chafee Social Science Center on April 4, 2013

11:19:14 am Dispatch receives first call of something happening in Chafee 271.

11:19:20 am Custodian from Woodward Hall calls Dispatch to report group of students running in from Chafee Social Science Center.

11:19:50 am Dispatcher Wilkinson requests any available officers to Chafee Room 271—“Something happened in this room, unclear at this time…the other dispatcher is receiving a call that there was threat of a gun”.

At this time, the following police officers were on duty: Major Stephen Baker, Captain John Carey, Lieutenant Michael Donohue, Officer Debra Sheldon, Officer Mark Chearino, Officer Michael Novak and Officer Frank Pascale.

Major Baker was at 85 Briar Lane when the call came over the radio. He was conducting an interview with two students. He immediately ended the interview and advised Officer Sheldon to respond to Dispatch to assist. He then started his response to the scene. Lt. Donohue was at 44 Lower College Road and he went to assist Dispatch.

11:20:30 am Officers Chearino and Pascale arrived at the tunnel entrance of Chafee (west side) simultaneously about 30-40 seconds from receiving the radio call. Officer Chearino had been patrolling in the Plains Road parking lot when the radio call was received.

11:22 am Officer Mike Novak was at the Police Station when he heard and acknowledged the radio call. He grabbed his bullet proof vest from his locker and responded with lights and siren via Upper College Road and East Alumni Avenue. He proceeded along the sidewalk toward the east side of Chafee Hall and parked his cruiser near the east entrance. He estimated that it took him one minute to respond once he left the police station making his time of arrival close to 11:22 am.

11:25 am-As Major Baker was leaving the police station he was attempting to call Emergency Management to activate the Emergency Alert System. This was documented at 11:22:32. He responded via Upper College Road to East Alumni. He went past the Woodward Gate and parked his vehicle near the main shuttle stop area on the south side of
Chafee. His estimated time of arrival was no later than 11:25am. He spent several minutes running to the steps of Chafee and clearing a large number of people from that area. After asking for assistance in keeping the crowd away he responded to the west side of Chafee where he encountered Lt. Paul Horoho. Lt. Horoho, had arrived at Chafee at 11:33pm.

11:25am According to a memo to Major Baker from Lt. Paul Horoho of the South Kingstown Police (attached), their first two officers arrived at the scene at 11:25am. Four more officers arrived at 11:26am and Captain Joel Ewing-Chow arrived at 11:28. Arriving officers immediately made an entry into the building and began to clear all floors of Chafee other than locked rooms. By 11:33 South Kingstown Police had seventeen officers on the scene. Their Dispatch notes show that they had cleared Chafee Hall by 11:46.

11:33am Captain John Carey arrives on the northwest side of Chafee. Captain Carey had responded from his office at 85 Briar Lane and explained that he had not heard the original radio transmissions about the incident.

11:50am Corporal Conlon arrived from the Wickford Barracks along with Troopers Brisson, O’Neil and Marchand. They were the first members of the State Police on the scene. Eventually, approximately twenty-five State Police officers responded to the scene.

11:50am First MIR3 message is sent.

11:58am The All-Call-Alert message initiated from 44 Lower College Rd. was sent over the Blue Light phone system at 11:58am after an initial attempt to send the message failed.

At this point, all other URI Police responders responded from off-duty.

11:55pm Officer Paul Hanrahan arrived at the Command Post. Officer Hanrahan assisted in securing White Hall and later assisted in Chafee 271.

12:35pm Lieutenant Richard Moniz arrived at the Command Post and assisted State Police Officers with the investigation.

1:00pm Officer Kennedy and Officer McCabe arrive at the Command Post. They were posted to the east side of White Hall. They later assisted inside Chafee Room 271.

1:00pm Sergeant Erica Vieira responded to the Command Post. She was later advised to take command of the URI officers going to Chafee Room 271. Those officers assisted State Police while they interviewed students and returned items left behind in Rm. 271 and Rm. 277. All items still left were brought to the URI Police Station.
## Appendix B

### Estimated costs for Arming URI Police

April 22, 2013

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<th>Initial Expenditures (one time only)</th>
<th>cost</th>
<th>quantity</th>
<th>total cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extensive background check</td>
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<td>Psychological test and evaluation</td>
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<td>Handgun, holster and pouch</td>
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<td>Firearms training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc. equipment and facility repairs</td>
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<td><strong>subtotal</strong></td>
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<td>Additional CPO (Providence and Narragansett)</td>
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<td>Duty ammunition</td>
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<td>Bulletproof vests (5 vest replacements/year)</td>
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**Anticipated Costs if Arming is implemented in FY2014**  

$498,254

This report does not include the costs of any capital improvements other than the armory. Potential salary increases require further negotiation with bargaining unit and therefore may increase or decrease.