Report of the Chair of the Government Relations Committee on Arming of Campus Police

Introduction

Shortly after being appointed, members of the Government Relations Committee received and reviewed an earlier study addressing the issue of whether or not to arm campus police. Members of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) Government Relations Committee continued this analysis and were in the process of completing an action plan toward making recommendations to the full board to implement polices and procedures for arming our campus police. At the direction of the Committee, the committee chair and OHE staff conducted several meetings as well as a comprehensive review of the issues associated with arming.

This review included:

- Meetings with representatives of each institution’s police force
- Meeting and consultation with Colonel Steve O’Donnell of the Rhode Island State Police
- Meeting with the Chief of the Brown University police department
- Review of a 2010 study of campus security at URI, RIC and CCRI
- Review of literature describing the experience of other public higher education systems on this topic
- Review of existing law enforcement officer legislative protections and mandates

However, because of the decision by the Rhode Island General Assembly to consolidate the RIBGHE and the Board of Regents into a new 11-member Board of Education as of January 1, 2013, it is recommended that this report be used as a reference point for the new Board, rather than a recommendation for action by the RIBGHE at this time.
Synopsis of 2010 Study on Campus Security

This 2010 report assessed the then-status of campus security and found that, while an emphasis on better preventative policing, student security outreach and counseling services had been introduced, much more needed to be accomplished.

The report reached several findings, as follows:

- Increase resources, policies, and personnel involved in campus policing and security
- Assess the capabilities of each school’s mental health system, safety net, and responsiveness
- Improve training and advanced personnel education for security and police staffs

This study stopped well short of recommending the arming of campus police, citing “prohibitive” costs associated with arming and positioning the three findings bulleted above as a suitable alternative to arming.

The report did, however, charge the presidents of URI, RIC and CCRI to assess the feasibility of arming of campus police – a task that was subsequently assigned to the RIBGHE Government Relations Committee.

Description of the Existing Structure of the Campus Police Function

The current structures of the police function within the public higher education system are completely de-centralized. Each school has separate police staffing, individual command and supervision structures and individual policies for personnel and policing practice including multiple collective bargaining units to which members of the three campus police force belong. While this structure is beneficial to the orderly administration of the nuances of each institution, it needs centralized policy and command structures that would apply uniformly to each institution. Currently URI and CCRI each maintain a police force as well as a security force. The key distinction between the two is that sworn police have arrest powers whereas campus security personnel maintain order and do not have arrest powers. RIC has only sworn police officers.
In addition, there are significant variances in support for law enforcement among the public higher education institutions, including holding cell facilities, dispatch, and armory capabilities.

**Description of Opportunities Associated With Arming of Campus Police**

There are several opportunities for improvement that are associated with a decision to arm campus police. They are as follows:

- Development of an integrated, system-wide police and security unit to maximize productivity and operating flexibility
- Improve and standardize training, policies and HR support
- Seek comprehensive legislation that would transfer campus police to the RI Department of Public Safety for training and management while leaving the operational function at each institution
- Request funding from federal grants as well as existing funds from federal programs

**Steps Needed to Move Forward**

While the Government Relations Committee is not, as previously noted, going to make a recommendation on the arming of campus police at this time, it does wish to provide a blueprint of the steps that, in its view, would need to be taken by the new Board of Education should it decide to implement the arming of campus police.

These steps, in outline forms, follow:

1) Step One: Campus Police Security Function consolidated under one Director
   a) Create a system level police and security head until legislation is passed to have campus police under the RI Department of Public Safety
   b) Retain tactical command and control for incident response on each campus
   c) Evaluate creation of centralized dispatch
   d) Centralize procurement, HR and administrative infrastructure as well as parity in pay and benefits. All sworn, armed police officers would have the same pay, benefits and basic job duties
e) All sworn, armed police officers would be available to work at any of the institutions on an as-needed basis. For instance, if there is an event at one of the institutions, police could be pulled from one of the other institutions.
f) Standardize administrative and response policies as well as federal and state reporting.
g) Standardize training

2) Step Two: Implementation
   a) Schedule phases of firearms and scenario training
   b) Determine funding source for training by the RI State Police
   c) Purchase firearms storage facilities
   d) Purchase firearms
   e) Orientation of campus faculty, staff and students

3) Step Three: Plan for transfer to RI Department of Public Safety
   a) Resolve collective bargaining unit issues
   b) Present centralized plan to legislature, governors office and department of administration and gather consensus on the major components of the plan
   c) Seek input from the institutional decision makers as well as the police forces so that all stakeholders have input into the process.

Summary and Conclusion

RI remains the last state not to arm its campus police. It is time that we implement a plan within the next year to begin the process for arming. It will take more than a year to complete the training if everything moves smoothly. If an institution does not want to have sworn, armed police officers, the unarmed campus security force would remain available to provide security.
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Respectfully submitted,

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