

# Special Report



## Some Simple Steps for Campus Administrators

The news reports are a little overwhelming. The FBI has publicly announced that college campuses might fit the profile for "soft targets" and therefore might be terror targets. Most of us are unprepared to consider ourselves part of the "international stage" and therefore real terror targets. However, there are some compelling reasons why campuses might be targeted.

Colleges are:

- State and federally funded
- Sometimes religiously affiliated
- Important political institutions
- Home to political pundits, economic theorists and religious scholars
- Home to research and lab experiments
- Generally open and easily accessible
- Representative of the power, prestige, economics and influence of the U.S.

While it may take significant planning, extensive policy changes and even dramatic changes in physical plant design to truly protect your campus from terrorism, there are some simple things you can do in the short term to protect the campus and ease anxieties. Here are a few ideas.

### Communicate Proactively

Parents, students, faculty and staff are nervous and anxious. You may not be able to assure them of their complete safety, but there are some strong messages you can send. For example, let them know that the college is aware of the heightened threat level and that the appropriate campus administrators are taking practical and logical steps to ensure safety. Another reassuring message is to remind your audience that statistics show that it is unlikely they will be harmed in a terror incident.

It's also a good idea to proactively communicate whatever emergency plans your institution does have. Even if your institution does not specifically have a "terrorism plan" you may want to focus on basic emergency plans you have in place for fire emergencies or weather

emergencies. These plans are full of good common sense ideas that will likely be effective in any emergency.

### Enforce Campus Policy

Some campus policies that you have in place might actually be very effective in helping to protect your campus. A good example is your campus ID policy. Most campuses require students to carry their ID with them at all times. This might be a good time to remind students of that policy and to begin active enforcement of that policy. It can help you quickly identify who belongs on campus and who does not. Another policy to look at are campus visitation and guest policies. Again, these policies are sometimes sporadically enforced but they are a good tool for helping you maintain traffic flow on campus. It might be a good idea to examine your student handbooks and identify other policies that might be important today than ever before.

### Form a Task Force

No one wants to sit on another committee, but creating an ad-hoc group (even if it's very informal) is a good way to get dialogue started on how the campus could and should respond to any incidents. It's also a good idea for this group to spend some time doing some "brainstorming" about what types of incidents the campus might be vulnerable to. It's a morose and vile thought process, but thinking "like a terrorist" might help you identify problem areas you had not considered before.

### Create New Policy

If you and other senior administrators on campus feel there is a way to increase safety by enacting a policy, you may want to consider implementing the policy. For example, certain parking spaces or roadways might be restricted or closed completely. Buildings may become less accessible and even campus visitors may be subject to slightly more scrutiny. The challenge is balancing safety with paranoia. The better option seems to be to enact a policy, which can be retracted later than to be regretful that the policy was never considered.

## **Avoid Profiling**

It is tempting to consider certain races, religions and genders as suspicious characters. However, it is well documented that terrorists come in all shapes, sizes, colors and creeds. Make certain that you communicate to students, staff and faculty that the college is an open and welcoming place and that any attempts to further secure the campus are not targeted at any one group.

## **Reassess Policies Concerning Radiological and Biological Materials**

You may not even know what's on your campus. Ten years ago, it was commonplace to experiment with Anthrax. Now, it's dangerous to have it lying around. Revisit any policies for buildings that house dangerous materials and people that have access to those materials. If you and other senior administrators have doubts or concerns about the safety of those materials, don't be coy about talking with state and federal agencies to secure those materials.

## **Confirm and Reconfirm Policies and Procedures with Local Officials**

Meet with the mayor, police chief and fire chief. Perhaps you might even find out where your local FBI office is and who is in charge there. Opening a dialogue now is a good idea. You will find that local agencies will be enthusiastic about protecting your campus and helping you identify things your campus can do. It may also be a good idea to be in touch with other college campuses in the area so that you can pool resources and ideas.

## **Involve Faculty**

We often forget that faculty has significant "face time" with our students. It's a good idea to engage faculty and ask them to discuss personal safety and the prospect of terrorism with their students. Take the next step and prepare a few key notes or bullet points for faculty members so that they can remind students about personal safety and the colleges' emergency plans.

## **Interact with Campus Media and Local Media**

Again, being proactive and engaging the campus radio station, TV station and newspaper as well as local media is a good way to get the message out that the institution is doing everything it can to provide for the safety and security of the campus and its community. It's also important that you and other campus representatives be honest with the media. You can't guarantee that an incident will not take place, you can only assure people that all conceivable contingencies are being considered.

## **Be Well Informed**

As the world changes dramatically around us each day, it's critical that you stay aware of the unfolding situation. Check the web frequently or keep your radio tuned to a news station. As we all learned on September 11th, even an event 3000 miles away can have a deep and traumatic effect on your campus. By being well informed you'll be in the best position to help your campus act and react.