

IPSAC Meeting Notes

December 9, 2024

Agenda

- Welcome, Introductions, and aims for our time
- Review of feedback from IPSAC portal
- Guest Presentation & Discussion: Special Projects Advisor Anne Waters, Ph.D.
- Next Steps and close

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

- Melissa Begg opened the meeting with introductions and acknowledged guest Anne Waters. She highlighted the focus of the meeting, which is to assess research done on other campuses (presented by Anne Waters) that have teams similar to the Campus Community Support Team proposed for Columbia.
- Conversation guidelines and the IPSAC charge were reiterated to foster a constructive discussion environment.

2. **Website Portal Feedback**

Recent Feedback Summary

Gate Closures and Restricted Entrances: Campus gate closures and limited entry points disrupted navigation for commuters, students living off-campus, and disabled individuals, increasing travel times and causing delays.

Guest Access Issues: An overly complex guest registration process discouraged visitors and hindered spontaneous campus interactions.

Excessive Security Measures: Heightened security measures, such as ID checkpoints, barricades, and restricted access, were seen as overly authoritarian, ineffective, and unwelcoming. Many found the campus atmosphere to feel "prison-like."

Impact on Daily Life: Security protocols disrupted spontaneity in academic and social activities, increasing stress for students and faculty.

Student Alienation: Students reported feeling distrusted and surveilled, with some describing the administration's actions as punitive and disconnected from student concerns.

Behavioral Concerns: Security personnel were criticized for unprofessional conduct, such as inattentiveness, excessive phone use, and disrespectful actions (e.g., catcalling). Contracted personnel's behavior was seen as undermining safety and trust on campus.

Call for investing funds elsewhere: Feedback criticized the emphasis on security spending over improvements to housing, dining, and academic facilities. Suggestions included reallocating security budgets to directly benefit student and faculty experiences.

Isolation from the Harlem Community: Restricted access diminished connections with the Harlem neighborhood, excluding locals from shared spaces.

Loss of Campus Vibrancy: Students noted underutilization of iconic spaces, such as the Butler lawns and Low steps, and the absence of families, children, and pets. These changes have contributed to a campus environment described as "cold" and "harsh."

3. Discussion of Website Portal Feedback

- Public Safety team noted the following updates expected for contracted personnel
 - Adding of the greeter at the gates
 - Implementing customer service training in January
 - Fair and impartial police training to be conducted
 - Goal is for treatment to be the same whether it is a CU guard or a contracted guard
- Is there a way to report issues with personnel?
 - Guards should all be wearing name tags
 - Two security firms contracted by Columbia
 - Attrition rate for contracted personnel is higher than Columbia guards
 - To report, you can do so in a few ways:
 - Fill out a complaint digitally or via paper form at the Public Safety desk at Low Library
 - Visit PS website - tab there for compliment or complaint online
 - Email publicsafety@columbia.edu
 - Option to report via Office of Institutional Equity as well
 - 24/7- 365 service complaint number, if it's a customer service issue 212-854-2222, all hours, not the same thing as Maxient, message with a live person not a form
 - If a resident came to an RA, an incident report on Maxient would be submitted regarding something that has happened with a guard

4. Anne Waters, Ph.D. - Special Projects Advisor for Facilities & Operations continues discussion of CCST

- **Columbia University's official actions in response to any incident on campus follow three guiding principles.** Actions taken in response to a specific incident are to preserve the University's ability to return to a full, safe operations as soon as possible:
 - Protect life, health, and safety
 - Ensure continuity of the University's mission: education, research, patient care
 - Safeguard University property and infrastructure
- **Recent approaches to campus safety support**
 - Interdisciplinary approach
 - Negotiation, de-escalation techniques
 - Anti-bias training
 - First responder experience (e.g., Social Work; Counseling; ER staff)
 - Student life/Residential Life training and experience
 - Always ready to respond

- Well-prepared to manage crisis with leadership skills to defuse, de-escalate incidents
 - Training to respond to civil disobedience, non-violent direct-action events
 - Responses can range from a small team of two persons or a broad group, depending on incident scale and severity.
- Focus on individual safety, community values
 - Support persons in significant distress or crisis
 - Restore calm environment as soon as possible
 - Prioritize well-being of individuals and community
- *Anne provided an overview of innovative campus safety programs implemented at peer institutions. Key features:*

Johns Hopkins University (JHU):

- Hybrid structure combining sworn officers, non-sworn officers, and contract guards.
- Behavioral Health Crisis Support Team (BHCST) staffed with licensed clinicians and crisis-trained personnel, providing immediate and follow-up support.
- Limited contract with Baltimore Police for certain hours, with oversight by an advisory committee.
- Transition from a non-sworn public safety model to a police force requiring state approval.

University of Pennsylvania (UPenn):

- Long-standing police force supplemented by non-sworn officers and contract guards.
- Campus Support Team pilot in 2023 targeted situational events (e.g., on-campus parties, fights), with limited hours and reactive rather than preventive focus.
- Engagement efforts with international student services and community outreach emphasized.

Oregon State University (OSU):

- Shift from state police to campus public safety structure, including sworn and non-sworn officers.
- Limited hours focused on highest call volume.
- Teams' focus is on response to students in need.
- Other efforts on campus focus on prevention, well-being
- OSU Assist program focused on student health and crisis response, integrating academic and departmental collaboration.
- Emphasis on transitioning routine campus operations to a non-policing public safety model.

- **Discussion of Anne Waters' Presentation:**

Guiding Principles for Campus Safety:

- A committee member noted that the current framework does not explicitly address individual student comfort and feelings toward safety and Public Safety policies.
- Anne clarified that the terms "safety" and "health" in the guidelines are intended to encompass dignity, respect, and individual well-being.
- The full university community is the focus of Public Safety; in addition to student concerns, must include faculty, staff and community members
- Potential edits included replacing "Protect" with "Ensure" and explicitly mentioning dignity and respect in the principles.
- Anne Waters clarified that this is a framework for discussion, not official policy. Editing suggestions are noted.

Institutional Comparisons and Key Insights:

- **Johns Hopkins University:**
 - Discussion centered on the challenges of transitioning to a hybrid safety model with a police force. A member raised questions about similarities and differences between Columbia and JHU.
 - Anne highlighted JHU's struggles to implement a police force, noting differences in governance and community sentiment.
- **University of Pennsylvania:**
 - Questions arose about crime rates in West Philadelphia and how this context influenced UPenn's safety structure.
 - A member asked if there was an increase in punitive measures (arrests, trials, cases) by the University since implementing the support team.
 - Anne noted UPenn's reactive approach to situational events and limited hours of operation for its Campus Support Team.
 - A member asked about proportional staffing across institutions, noting that UPenn has the highest ratio of sworn officers compared to others like JHU.
- **Oregon State University:**
 - Focus on OSU's move to a non-policing safety model and integration of OSU Assist, a student health-focused response team.
 - Discussion addressed challenges in cross-training and the cultural clash among staff.
- **Broader Observations:**
 - A member raised questions about the ratio of contracted personnel to sworn officers at Harvard, noting that contractors respond to incidents far more frequently than police.
 - Anne acknowledged the absence of examples from universities without sworn officers, highlighting the need for broader research to incorporate more diverse safety models.

5. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

- The committee emphasized the importance of understanding incident frequency and type to guide Columbia's safety team composition.
- Anne committed to sharing the full document of all schools researched, including those without sworn officers.

- 2025 IPSAC meeting dates to be announced