

Columbia University Inclusive Public Safety Working Group
Meeting Notes for
September 11, 2020 - 9:30-10:30 AM

Agenda

1. Welcome and Charge of the Working Group
2. Charge, Meeting Structure and Deliverables
3. Discussion of Public Safety's Goals for the Working Group
4. Meeting Norms and Discussion of the Types of Work We Will Do
5. Discussion of Goals and Working to Define Inclusive Public Safety

1. Welcome and Introductions

Suzanne Goldberg, Flores Forbes and Jim McShane opened the working group meeting with a welcome and thanks to all, situating the group's work in a broader range of efforts across the University and within each school to challenge racism, including anti-Black racism, as set out in President Bollinger's July 22, 2020 message to the community on Columbia's commitment to anti-racism. That message also set out the charge for this working group.

The working group, which is comprised of students, faculty and staff from various parts of the institution, spent a few minutes on personal introductions where each member introduced themselves.

2. Charge of the Working Group, Meeting Structure and Deliverables

The working group's charge from President Bollinger: To work with the leadership of our Office of Public Safety to examine existing trainings and practices, and to recommend concrete strategies for ensuring that we can have truly inclusive safety for all who are on Columbia's campuses.

The Working Group expects to meet throughout Fall 2020 on a bi-weekly basis. To complete the work, the Working Group will break into subcommittees on key priority areas, which will be identified in the coming meetings. Each larger group meeting will include some group dialogue and breakout sessions for small group conversation on critical topics.

The key deliverable will be a report to President Bollinger and the Columbia community at the end of this semester that will include recommendations of concrete strategies and next

steps for ensuring inclusive public safety on our campuses. In addition, the Working Group intends to provide more frequent updates to the Columbia Community through University Life's dedicated web page, including meeting agendas and synopses to foster transparency with the community.

3. Public Safety's Goals for the Working Group

Jim McShane, Vice President for Public Safety, expressed appreciation for the Working Group as an opportunity to learn, hear new ideas, and share information about Public Safety and its role and function on campus with the broader community.

4. Meeting Norms, Conversation Guidelines, and Tentative Subcommittee Structure

In keeping with our charge, the Working Group will guide its work to ensure a thoughtful exchange of ideas that build concrete strategies and recommendations on inclusive public safety. To support this free exchange of ideas, we will not record meetings and ask Working Group members not to record either so that everyone can feel free to participate fully without concern about being recorded. University Life will prepare and circulate synopses after each meeting, and post a brief summary of each meeting on the University Life website.

Recognizing the importance of gathering experiences and ideas from outside of the Working Group and establishing a framework for longer term efforts to support the goal of inclusive public safety for all, the Working Group subcommittees will likely have these focuses:

- provide opportunities for Columbia community members, members of Public Safety, recent alumni and others to share their experiences, ideas and suggestions about inclusive public safety;
- identify concrete steps – including consideration of innovations at other schools and in other settings; and
- plan for evaluation and future efforts

In addition, a subcommittee may be dedicated to ongoing development and consolidation of ideas around the elements of inclusive public safety.

5. Working to Define Inclusive Public Safety

To meet the goal and deliverables of this group, the Working Group began the discussion of what inclusive public safety means: What are the elements of inclusive public safety? What does inclusive public safety look like and feel like to members of our group and others in the community?

Jim McShane and other Working Group members from Public Safety's leadership addressed several questions about Public Safety at Columbia:

- In response to questions about the difference between Public Safety and policing/NYPD: At Columbia, public safety officers are not sworn officers, meaning that they do not have arrest powers and do not carry weapons. While some university campuses have their own police departments, Columbia does not. Public Safety at Columbia is comprised primarily of security officers, technicians and investigators. When the University requires police services, such as for investigation and arrest of people accused of crimes, it relies on the New York City Police Department. Public Safety's services include crime prevention, personal safety training, active shooter seminars and recently rolled out the rideshare service through Via. Public safety officers offer services when people are in need, regardless of their affiliation with the University. This includes dispatching Emergency Medical Services through our own CUEMS. Columbia Public Safety officers also assist people in mental distress and have administered Narcan to people overdosing in the community.
- At the Medical Center, Columbia's Public Safety has staff, including security officers. New York Presbyterian hospital has a separate public safety unit for the hospital and does not share the same jurisdiction, meaning that Columbia and NY Presbyterian cover different physical areas of the Medical Center. NY Presbyterian has some officers who are peace officers for the hospital. Among these officers, those who staff the Emergency Room and some other settings carry weapons because there are sometimes weapons brought into the emergency room. These NY Presbyterian officers are separate and apart from Columbia University Public Safety and they do not share the same jurisdiction.
- Similarly, Barnard College has its own Public Safety office with its own policies and procedures that are separate from Columbia University.
- In response to questions about Public Safety's relationship with members of the surrounding communities who are not Columbia affiliates: Public safety officers offer services and assistance when people are in need, regardless of their affiliation with the University. This includes dispatching Emergency Medical Services through CUEMS. Columbia Public Safety offices have also assisted people in distress and administered Narcan to people overdosing in the community, including very recently.

Additional issues raised in this initial discussion of inclusive public safety included:

- The varied perceptions of Public Safety officers, and how those perceptions are shaped. The discussion touched on what it means to have officers at student events, the presence of officers in uniforms at campus security desks, the experiences of people in the surrounding communities of Washington Heights and Harlem, the perceptions of the relationship between policing and public safety, and experiences of community members with policing.
- Perceptions and the experience of safety may be different for people based on their past experiences and their identities. How can inclusive public safety take this into account? Related ideas included: open communication and transparency in processes related to Public Safety; a welcoming campus that includes welcoming people outside of the University; removing assumptions and profiling about who belongs on campus.

The following meeting is set for Friday, September 25. At that meeting, the group will continue discussion of what inclusive public safety means and establish the Working Group's subcommittees.