

East Carolina University

East Carolina, a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina, is a doctoral/research university with 19,000 students and a budget of \$400 million. The university was established in 1907 in Greenville, North Carolina, as East Carolina Teachers Training School. Today it is home to 13 professional schools, including medicine, business and education, and internationally known scholars.

Dr. William V. Muse became the 10th chief executive of East Carolina University on August 1, 2001. Mr. Richard Brown is the Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance.

Though still a thriving and safe university, our well-being has been affected by economic woes. The fiscal condition of our State, as with the nation, has declined over the past 18 months. This decline has resulted in rather severe constraints on State appropriated funds for our colleges and universities. East Carolina University was no exception as is evidenced by the 2.7% reversion plan under which we are currently operating. Acquisitions of or replacement of acquisitions that might, in better times, have come with relative ease no longer come with ease.

One problem associated with economic down turn is an increase in crime, particularly property crime. Our University became a target for major property crime. The budget constraints, coupled with the events of 9-11-01, created a sense of urgency on the part of the police department not only to address the theft problem, but also to increase overall security of our

campus using the most cost efficient methods possible.

The Problem

To discover the root of the theft problem, we used a relatively well-know technique called the SARA Model of problem solving. The SARA Model involves: **S**canning, **A**nalysis, **R**esponse, and **A**ssessment. In the **scanning** stage, we simply identified the problem, which, in this case, was the enormous increase in thefts. In the **analysis** stage, we had to determine the causes and scope of the problem and look at what the effects of a continual increase in theft would hold for the university. The foundation of our "best practices" submission was developed almost entirely from the analysis findings. In studying the analysis, we quickly realized several conditions that contributed to the ease with which items were being stolen. It was obvious that the pattern of incidents was symptomatic of deeper problems. To put it bluntly, "we" (the campus community) were the problem. We were "inviting" thefts through careless behaviors that provided opportunity. Our **response** was to formulate a plan that would eliminate opportunity. We are currently in the **assessment** stage of the SARA Model which will indicate the effectiveness of our response.

Planning

During the planning phase, we recognized that this problem demanded more than just a police presence or police response. The limitations of the police to adequately address the problem became increasingly obvious as we considered the officer-to-building ratio. To station officers

in all of our academic and administrative buildings (in an effort to prevent theft) would be an enormous undertaking in terms of resource deployment. We simply had to find a way to gain the support and assistance from other members of the campus community.

Knowing that crime is indeed opportunistic, we thought that anything the police and the community could do to make it tougher for the "bad guys" to commit crimes and get away with them, held at least a promise of reducing the theft problem. The idea was to develop a team effort between the police and other key players of the campus community to jointly find a means to reduce opportunity. First, we needed to eliminate apathy shown by staff and faculty regarding the loss of university property. Secondly, we had to educate officers regarding the unique requirements of an academic environment. Both endeavors proved to be harder than anticipated.

Implementation

The first step to successful program implementation is to sell the program to key players. As alluded to earlier, this undertaking was much more difficult than we imagined. Officers had the attitude that they were being held accountable for thefts that they alone could not prevent. It was a very common practice for those occupying academic and administrative buildings to leave items of value unattended and exposed to theft. The police felt that faculty and staff could be more diligent in securing their offices and belongings. The opinion held by faculty and staff was that the police were not patrolling the buildings with the degree of frequency that would prevent thefts from occurring. By explaining the merits of the program, we were able to get the majority of the officers to buy into the plan.

Next we met with deans and department heads to discuss program initiatives. We provided statistical information on the extent of the thefts and the monetary losses the university incurred. It was critical that we gained support from this group, as they were considered key players in selling the program to their colleagues. The program would require total commitment from all involved as we move toward changing behaviors. Unquestionably, some aspects of the program would interfere with "business as usual," thus creating mild inconveniences for faculty and staff.

Response: Staff and Faculty Eyes (S.A.F.E.)

Our response to the problem was to create a Campus Community Watch Program. The community watch program came to be known as the **S.A.F.E.** (Staff & Faculty Eyes) Program. One objective of the program was to encourage faculty and staff to act as eyes and ears for the police department. Another objective, and perhaps one of the most critical, was to increase and maintain awareness levels of how vulnerable we all are to crime, even in a college campus environment.

Responding to the problem using a team approach rested on establishing a positive relationship between the building liaison officers and faculty and staff. This meant assigning the same officers to patrol the same buildings on a day-to-day basis where thefts were occurring. We asked for volunteers from staff and faculty to become building captains for their building. The responsibilities of the building captains would mirror those of a typical Community Neighborhood Watch organization. Building captains were provided eight hours of training in

basic crime prevention, as well as training that clearly outlined the extent of their responsibilities. Their main focus was to immediately summon the police when observing suspicious persons and/or activity. They were also asked to act as the liaison between occupants of their building and the police department. Finally, they were asked to complete a monthly crime prevention checklist, describing any crime prevention or safety concerns with regards to their building or its occupants. The liaison officer is responsible for collecting the checklist and taking whatever actions necessary to address the problem(s) or refer the problem to the proper department.

S.A.F.E. Building posters were placed throughout all buildings associated with the program. These posters identify the building captain and provide contact information.

As a part of the response plan, the police liaison officers walk through their assigned buildings two to three times per day. They look for suspicious persons or activity and security breaches. If a security breach is detected, it is recorded on an activity log detailing the breach and noting items of value left vulnerable to theft. The staff or faculty member responsible for the breach is notified that a breach has occurred through the use of a Security Breach Card. The breach is then reported to the building captain for his or her review.

Although daily crime information is posted on our web page, the **S.A.F.E.** Program also requires that our crime prevention officer produce a bi-monthly report of all crimes occurring on campus. The report contains the *when, where, and why* the crime occurred and also lists *what* steps, if any, could have been taken to prevent the crime. The report is disseminated to the building captains who then share the information with building co-workers.

Assessment

To determine program effectiveness, the Police Department compiles statistics on the number of Security Breach Cards left in offices and buildings. If we determine that leaving the card had little or no effect on changing behaviors, i.e. securing offices and personal items, we send a Security Breach Report to both the building captain and the department head. We request that they review the report and ask for their assistance in resolving the problem.

The effectiveness of the program is gauged by comparing the number of thefts prior to program inception to the number of thefts that occurred after the program began. Six months prior to the program's inception, the university experienced \$99,433 in thefts from buildings. This is an average of \$16,572 per month. It was realized that the theft problem had reached a critical stage when it was shown that we incurred \$69,067 in thefts from buildings within a two-month period. This averages to \$34,533 per month. In the four months after the program's implementation, we began to see a decline in the amount of thefts from buildings. In this time period, there was \$38,996 in thefts. This figure shows an average monthly decrease of 72%.

The cost involved with implementing the program was minimal. Our only expenses were incurred from printing posters (\$312.50), Security Breach Cards (\$23.17), and the cost of copying Bi-monthly Crime Prevention Reports (\$20.00 per month). Based on the average figures shown above with regards to the reduction in thefts, the university stands to save \$135,762 per year.

