

Terrorism: Meeting the Challenge through Innovative Ideas and New Approaches

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Abstract

The events of September 11, 2001, have forever changed the way academia views campus security. No longer can campus security and preparedness be an afterthought. Campus security will never be “business as usual” again. A new vocabulary has emerged as students, faculty, and staff now use words like terrorism, bioterrorism, soft targets, weapons of mass destruction, the USA Patriot Act, and other terminology dealing with homeland security. We have all been shaken from our easy chairs by the terrorist acts perpetrated on September 11.

Few, if any, colleges or universities had an office specifically dedicated to addressing these new threats. Real-time security alerts and up-to-date security preparedness information for campuses were scarce. The University of Georgia embarked on an aggressive effort in 2002 to change this paradigm. It was crucial that this new initiative of campus security preparedness be developed quickly in order to provide training and information to a nervous community. Plans were put in place for a stand-alone office that would use existing personnel and expertise in order to maximize resources in getting the office “up and running” as soon as possible.

By the summer of 2002, plans were well underway to establish goals addressing the challenges. The University Office of Security Preparedness (UOSP) was created, and a new website, www.uosp.uga.edu, was designed that would become the basis of public information for the office. The addition of a real-time threat alert status and the ability for authorized personnel quickly to receive critical information soon became integral parts of the web design. It wasn't long before the prototype website became a fully integrated 24/7 homeland security information source consisting of the three components of the UOSP logo—Information, Awareness, and Readiness. Universities and colleges, both regional and national, sought out the website as a model for campus homeland security issues.

The office emerged as a leader in the campus security arena. Staff members were invited to participate in national workshops to present campus security issues. Articles were provided for publication in national magazines and journals. A series of brochures was developed as quick reference guides in preparation for terrorist attacks. These brochures were posted in downloadable form on the UOSP website in order to reach the masses efficiently. The UOSP has become a catalyst for change in the way the University community approaches campus security. The success of the office is a direct result of innovative initiatives, administrative involvement, strong staff support, and the ability to be flexible in an ever-changing environment.

Introduction of the Organization

The University of Georgia is a proven leader in the campus security arena, having received nine National Safety Council Awards of Honor. The best practice initiative in this proposal was designed and implemented at the University of Georgia as a direct result of the events of September 11, 2001 and subsequent threats.

The University of Georgia, chartered in 1785 as the nation's first state-supported university, is located in Athens, Georgia and covers 605 acres with 313 buildings. To its immediate north, the campus adjoins historic downtown Athens, which features many boutiques, restaurants, entertainment, and service businesses. The University of Georgia covers 4,308 acres in Clarke County and owns a total of 43,261 acres throughout the state, making the provision of information challenging.

The main campus, with an enrollment of over 33,000 students, has 14 colleges and schools, with auxiliary divisions, which conduct the University's programs of teaching, research, and service. The campus is divided into four sections: North Campus, the most historic section, noted for the "Arch" and centuries-old buildings including the Chapel, Old College, and New College as well as newer facilities such as the Law School, the Main Library, and the heralded Sanford Stadium (holding 92,000 plus screaming fans); South Campus, consisting mostly of the scientific and mathematical departments with a liberal sprinkling of agriculture, computer science, and athletics including Stegeman Coliseum; West Campus, with a variety of residence halls and dining halls; and East Campus, the newest section, featuring the state of Georgia's official art museum, a 5.5 acre exercise facility (Ramsey Center—named the best student recreation center in the country by *Sports Illustrated*), several sophisticated research and

biobusiness complexes, and the new East Campus Village student resident halls and dining facilities.

In July 2002, the administration identified an immediate need to create a stand-alone office that would encompass planning for the campus and its security needs should there be threats or actual terrorist activity. This initiative reflects the commitment of the administration to provide an expanded emphasis on planning and managing the University of Georgia's security needs and to address the need for a broader and more focused effort in the area of security preparedness.

Statement (restatement) of the Problem/Initiative

The threat of terrorism has changed the way academia provides security. If campuses are to preserve the open exchange of information, there must be a careful examination of how the campus is to be protected.

The challenges of safeguarding a campus, from providing day-to-day routine security to handling the potential threat of terrorism, demand a new mindset. Administrators at the University of Georgia recognize that campus security now encompasses much more than previous security issues. New and innovative programs must be designed to deal with unique issues never before considered in the realm of campus life. At the University of Georgia, a vision emerged in the form of a new office on campus, University Office of Security Preparedness (UOSP), specifically dedicated to addressing potential terrorist threats.

Monumental problems had to be overcome quickly in order for the new office to function in providing real-time, easily accessible preparedness information and to support a somewhat apathetic, but nervous campus. Problems included the lack of security programs that dealt

specifically with terrorist threats, particularly on campuses, and the fact that few institutions had programs which could be used as a pattern. The sheer volume of information on general preparedness had to be filtered and adapted in order to make it relevant for campus dissemination. Only a stand-alone office would have the time, expertise, and means to bring this information to the campus community in a timely fashion. Establishing a new office required a focused effort in multiple areas: the development of the office; personnel assignment; creation of the budget; office space allocation; logo and web design development; and specification of the goals.

In addition, security and access control issues in new construction and renovation of facilities were initial and ongoing factors to be considered. The security of facilities is the first step in a program aimed at minimizing or eliminating threats of terrorism. The absence of 24/7 security provides too many opportunities for terrorists to select targets. The inclusion of security principles in facility design was seen as the best method of providing the openness unique to a campus setting while maintaining security of the vast resources of the university.

The UOSP is the tangible result of a new vision of total security. Problems, questions, and technical design issues have been tackled, and the new office has emerged as a worthy approach in the campus security arena.

Design

The design of the security preparedness initiative proved to be the most challenging element of its creation, although it was also the most rewarding aspect of the 2002 start-up phase. It is critical that the security preparedness office function with other departments on campus such as the police department, physical plant, campus planning, and environmental safety, as well as

many others. To this end, departments with responsibilities for emergency response were included in a Security Council, which meets regularly to eliminate conflict and establish protocols in responding to threats.

To make the creation of the UOSP cost-effective, the Associate Vice President for Public Safety was reassigned to duties of security preparedness. His background in law enforcement and his clearance to receive confidential information was critical to the ability to establish such an innovative program. The new position carried a title, Associate Vice President for Security Preparedness, which allowed for interaction with key University administrators. This relationship was imperative in establishing policies and procedures aimed at changing the culture of academia from open and dependent to secure and self-sufficient. It was expected that in instituting the elements for the new office, changing the culture would be an evolutionary process, requiring years of a steady diet of education and awareness.

Personnel in the Public Safety Division, who possessed extensive knowledge of the campus and emergency planning, had proper law enforcement clearance to receive confidential information, and who interacted with University departments and administrators on a daily basis, were also reassigned to the new UOSP. This combination of skills provided a basis of credibility.

Implementation

By the summer of 2002, physical space for a stand-alone office specifically dedicated to preparedness issues was selected and prepared on campus. This move allowed for a separate, but connected campus identity. An important aspect of the relocation was the retention of existing departmental phone and fax numbers associated with reassigned staff. Current campus phone directory listings would continue to be relevant for contacting staff once the office moved to its

new location. Office equipment, furniture, office supplies, files, and computer equipment also followed staff to the new location, thereby eliminating additional cost outlay for start-up.

An immediate hurdle that had to be overcome was the lack of computer support to accompany the staff. Without the support of an in-house technical computer resource, the UOSP had to look outside for other options. Fortunately, this concern was taken into consideration in site selection. The facility designated on campus for the new office already had a secure computer network system and computer support staff which the new office could tap into for immediate computer security, web and logo design, and computer operational support. The nature of the UOSP's work dictated the need for a secure computer network. Using existing staff to minimize cost, it was not surprising that the majority of the start-up expenditures were in the area of computer programming and technical web design support.

The need for a new focus on security included a new logo and web design that would be easily recognizable, representative of the department's mission, easily interpreted as security-related, uncluttered and user-friendly, and flexible enough for the ever-changing environment. Design was critical and played an integral part in the success of the new logo and website. Staff reviewed a myriad of prototypes of logos and web designs, which were developed in-house, before making the final selection. Staff attended numerous national, state and local workshops and meetings to gain insight into programs and ideas that could be incorporated as part of the website to address security issues. This exposure and training enabled UOSP staff to provide expertise in the area of homeland security. There was a learning curve moving from ideas on paper to a full-service, in-house security preparedness office with an easily accessible website containing real-time information available 24/7.

Once the logo was developed, it was included as part of the UOSP home webpage, www.uosp.uga.edu. The three broad areas of focus—Information, Awareness, and Readiness—were featured on the homepage as headings for specific information categories, such as types of terrorism (bioterrorism, agroterrorism, etc.), how to prepare an emergency kit, updates on world developments, organizations involved in preparedness, and a listing of campus emergency phone numbers. The homepage incorporated easily accessible, user-friendly links to federal, state, campus, and other security preparedness websites. In order to provide up-to-date information, new links were added as state and federal agencies expanded the scope of information on homeland security and preparedness. The alert status on the UOSP homepage, linked to the Department of Homeland Security, provides a continuous visual reference and was designed to change automatically whenever the National Alert Status changed.

The development phase, from concept to implementation, took only a few short months. As the UOSP logo and the core design for the website was completed in the first months of start-up, the development of the identity of the office itself emerged.

The next vital part of the website creation was the development, testing, and successful implementation of a “secure login” feature. Decisions were made as to who would be the appropriate candidates on campus to access this feature in the event of the need to distribute sensitive information regarding threats to campus in a timely manner. Potentially sensitive information and the need for immediate, accurate changes/updates to the website dictated that the most efficient and prudent consideration of managing the website be directly linked to the UOSP staff.

The concept of addressing homeland security issues on a university campus via a dedicated campus website, accessible 24/7, was an innovative initiative. Adjustments continue to

be made to the website as information and subject matter are requested from the site users. Information is only added to the website after rigorous review for relevancy dealing with security preparedness issues for the University campus. Staff make significant administrative enhancements to the webpage behind the scenes in order to provide the viewer with a user-friendly website with real-time information.

The absence of reference materials that directly related to campus security or preparedness made it necessary for the office to produce a series of brochures to fill this gap. A bimonthly bulletin, *Readiness Rules*, is produced to assist in disseminating current security preparedness information. *Readiness Rules* features articles by other University units about their contributions to campus security issues, campus photos, and interesting tips, as well as help in identifying security risks to the University community. Anyone can automatically receive bulletins by e-mail simply by subscribing via the link provided on the UOSP webpage. Publications, presentations, and digital photos are produced in-house in order to minimize the impact on a limited operational budget. Staff accumulates an extensive file of reference materials on security preparedness issues that are readily available for information requests, presentations, articles, and publications.

Once the groundwork for the webpage was completed, the office focused on one of the biggest challenges of implementation—the dichotomy of providing up-to-date security preparedness information without unnecessarily alarming the campus community. Campus apathy had to be overcome. Introducing the UOSP to the University community and the inclusion of faculty, students, and staff in training programs and presentations helped bridge the gap from indifference to a greater understanding of the need for personal preparedness in the event of a disaster or terrorist threat.

The next challenge for the University Office of Security Preparedness was the creation of a Security Council. The Council, made up of various units on campus that deal with University operations, began the task of implementing security measures on campus. The safety and security of the University is dependent upon the coordination of a group such as this. The UOSP also helped in the development of a “Code Red Scenario” that would serve as a plan of action in the event of a terrorist attack.

Benefits

Implementing a new initiative for campus safety has been successfully accomplished for the University of Georgia through the commitment of the administration and the combined efforts of many units working together towards a more secure campus. Without the ongoing development of a stand-alone office, critical security and preparedness information may be delayed or, worse, not made available to the campus community. The UOSP has made a difference in how students, faculty, and staff deal with threats and personal preparedness. As a result of the operating posture of the office, a grant in the amount of \$115,000 was received to provide security for select agents in research laboratories on campus. This is just the first of a number of possible grants that will be used to secure the University.

The UOSP has benefited the University in that students, faculty, and staff now have easy access to up-to-date information, 24/7, on threats affecting campus security through the UOSP website. In addition, the website’s homepage features the National Alert Status in real-time and provides a secure login for specific information on possible affected departments of the University state-wide. An added benefit is that the UOSP publications, such as brochures and pamphlets on emergencies and threats, are available for quick and easy downloading from the

UOSP website. For the past two years, incoming freshmen at the University have received the UOSP brochure, *University Emergencies and You*, designed specifically to inform students how to prepare for emergencies and potential terrorist threats.

The creation of the “Grab and Go” emergency supply kit for display and training increases the benefits that the UOSP brings to the University. The UOSP has been instrumental in raising the awareness level of the University community and others regarding personal preparedness by providing pertinent information, as evidenced by the significant number of visits to the UOSP website.

Positive feedback from the University community confirms the impact of the efforts of the UOSP. Across campus, greater openness and communication are reflected in the willingness of the University community to be involved in seminars, classes, workshops, and groups that explore topics related to security and preparedness. Communication has resulted in greater security awareness on campus involving building security, access control, landscape design, new and renovated construction, research laboratories, and mass gatherings such as athletic events and conferences.

Training, presentations, and publications in security preparedness are readily available at no cost to the campus community, and student organizations and departments across campus have taken advantage of them. The UOSP has the advantage of being cleared to receive sensitive, up-to-date law enforcement information regarding terrorism. This enables the office to be informed quickly of changes in information that may affect the campus without the delay of filtering the information through other departments.

Ultimately, the initiative presented in this proposal benefits not only the University, other colleges and universities, and the surrounding community, but also anyone in the general public

accessing the UOSP website for information to prepare them for emergencies, disasters, or even a potential terrorist attack.

Finally, the success of the UOSP and the respect held for the office by a wide group of professionals is reflected in the number of invitations extended to the Associate Vice President for Security Preparedness to address meetings held by the U.S. Office of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Association of State Land Grant Colleges and Universities. Presentations at these meetings have brought credit to the University of Georgia.

Retrospect

A retrospective look at the University Office of Security Preparedness allows near perfect vision in outlining steps to be taken in creating an office to address security preparedness and terroristic threats. The creation of a new office during tough budget times was not the most opportune time to embark on such a mission; however, that is the situation the USOP faced. It is difficult to maintain existing offices when funds are tight, and the creation of a new office, with requisite start-up costs, produced an additional level of frustration and missed opportunities.

For example, a shortage of funding resulted in the failure to gather pertinent information leading to the application for and possible receipt of grant funds from the Office of Homeland Security or the state office of emergency management. During the early stages of the UOSP's existence, grants were available that could have been obtained by the University if the office had been staffed sufficiently to send personnel to meetings where agencies discussed their grant programs. Limited funding meant that progress was made in small steps.

An important component of installing security systems is the completion of security assessments to identify needs and determine the proper application of security technology to address those needs. Initially, it was expected that staff shortages were to be negated through the employment of private consultants to accomplish assessments. However, because of the lack of funding, this had to be deferred. Fortunately, the UOSP was successful in having a private security firm complete a security assessment on one research complex, which posed security problems for other parts of the campus, at no charge.

A number of operational expenses resulted in limited funding for education and training programs. Where possible, the staff of the UOSP conducted training and seminars. It must be considered that since campuses are generally accustomed to doing business in an open atmosphere, additional effort is required to set the standards which will change the culture to one that recognizes and accepts responsibility for security. The extra resources needed to conduct such educational seminars for multiple groups were not available.

In retrospect, the work of the UOSP would have been made easier had a general policy statement been released from the University Cabinet, endorsing the need for campus security preparedness. Such a centralized overall policy would have set the tone and the expectations that the University had for every administrator or manager with responsibilities for making the University operate effectively, efficiently, and securely. It would have functioned as an introduction for the UOSP to work with the various departments to achieve the goal of providing a safe and secure campus.

Even considering all the distractions encountered in making the University Office of Security Preparedness operational, it must be clear that matters affecting the life and safety of a

university community take a high priority. With threats of terrorism looming large, there is no better time to improve security than the present.