

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 23, 2022; updated November 2, 2022

TO: Shane C. Burgess, Vice President for Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension; Dean, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

FROM: Jean McLain, Asst. Dean for Faculty Advancement, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)

SUBJECT: Faculty Concerns Related to Campus Safety

Executive Summary: The following is a synopsis of emails and phone conversations that resulted from my information-gathering about faculty concerns following the October 5 campus shooting. Many of the concerns relayed below by faculty should not come as a surprise; these have been voiced on- and off-campus since the incident. However, I urge you to pay particular attention to concern #7 on the final pages of this memo, which relays incidents that clearly convey that the faculty do not trust the Dean of Students office and that response to faculty reports to the Dean of Students is either unknown (to protect student privacy) or futile (with the Dean of Students only asking faculty to *let them know if things escalate*). For obvious reasons, this is not acceptable – the mistrust has resulted in instances of faculty not reporting concerning student behavior, because *the Dean of Students does nothing* [please note that throughout this report, italicized segments are quotes from emails]. The final section of the report has suggestions relayed by faculty who experienced poor interactions with the Dean of Students office, but aspire to improved relations with that office.

I hope that this report will be useful in identifying productive paths forward to ensure enhanced safety within and beyond CALS. Two additional faculty comments that are not included in the report below should be passed along to UA Administration: two faculty suggested that a ceremonial “cleanse” of the Harshbarger Building would be appropriate and may allow some healing to begin. Other emails suggested that an endowed chair be established in honor of Dr. Meixner.

In response to the campus shooting that occurred on October 5, I (in my role as Asst. Dean for Faculty Advancement) sent an email to all CALS faculty on October 11. The purpose of this email was, in part, information-gathering: *What message would you like to relay to UA Administration about events that happened before the shooting on Wednesday? What would you like to relay about what you, or staff, or students, are feeling – or concerns or fears you may have – since last*

week? The email inquiry was also designed to support the faculty, who reported to me that they were angry, confused, and needing to vent and/or provide messages to UA Administration.

I received nearly 70 email responses from CALS faculty. Their concerns related to 7 general areas, below. Many of these suggestions have already been voiced to UA Administration and, I am certain, are being acted upon. However, I would like to stress the final point below (#7), regarding faculty reporting of disruptive or aggressive students. The response (or lack of response) of the Dean of Students to these reports is deeply disturbing – it has led to a mistrust of that office and a subsequent decision by some faculty not to report these incidents. This absolutely must be addressed to ensure the safety of UA faculty, staff, and students.

The following concerns were voiced, and suggestions were offered, by faculty:

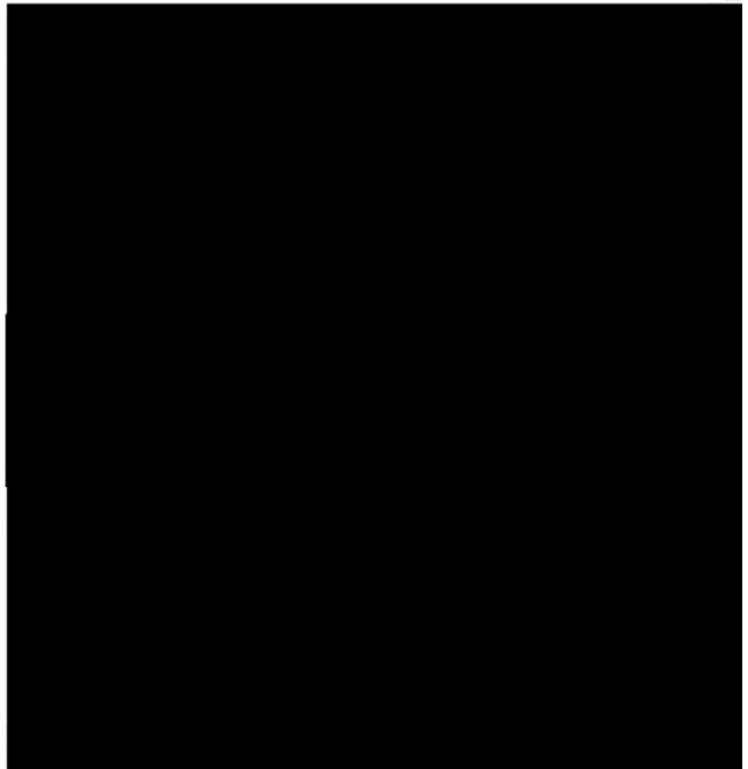
- 1. The current functionality and effectiveness of the UA Alert system must be assessed.**
 - Enrollment in the UA Alert system must be mandatory for all students and faculty and once an individual has opted in, this should not expire
 - UA Alerts must make it very clear as to whether action is necessary. Faculty reported feeling confused about sheltering in place vs. releasing students. UA Alerts must also be very clear about the location of the emergency. Many faculty reported not knowing where Harshbarger Hall is located.
 - Other, more effective, alert systems could be implemented. One suggestion was SHU SAFE (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/shu-safe/id888697548>) – a Google search revealed that this app is being utilized across multiple universities.
- 2. Police background checks on prospective students and staff must be mandated.**
 - *Faculty involved in selections of graduate students should have this information available and be able to weigh criminal history, especially violent crime, in their decision to admit someone or not.*
- 3. Training for faculty and staff on active shooter and emergency situations must be provided.**
 - Current training on the UA website, consisting of a single video, *is theatrical, not informative*
 - Offer the “Stop the Bleed” course to provide minimal training in emergency medical care – not just for gun violence; this training will help anyone who finds themselves in a situation where someone has suffered a traumatic injury
 - Install a bleeding control kit in a central location in each building
- 4. Establish an “emergency plan” for all buildings, including installation of panic buttons in key areas**
 - Implement CAT Card security for limited entry into buildings
 - Many classrooms cannot be locked from the inside; this must be rectified to ensure that doors can be secured in emergency situations
- 5. Reassess the need for faculty to be armed on campus** (3 emails supported this idea; 2 other emails identified this as a potential danger)

6. It was noted that **resuming normal operations on Thursday as if nothing had happened was incredibly disrespectful to the victim and the UA faculty, staff, and students**

The seventh concern is set apart from the six above, due to the need for UA Administration to recognize that there is a serious lack of institutional response to concerns about threatening behavior. **CALS faculty request the adoption of a “zero tolerance” policy to address aggressive students.** At this time, faculty feel that UA students are viewed as *valued customers*, supported by *the administration’s message that the faculty “are here to serve you, in any way you want.”*

Below I relay five instances of CALS faculty experiences with aggressive or disturbing behavior. In each case, you will see that UA Administrative response was minimal, unknown, or non-existent.

- In Fall 2018, a female faculty member was faced with aggressive behavior from a much larger male student. This behavior escalated to the student barring the faculty member (and their TA) from leaving the classroom following lecture. After this behavior was reported to the Dean of Students, an intervention specialist was assigned to the student but this arrangement did not address the safety of the other students in the classroom, or the security of the instructor or the TA. In a follow-up meeting with the Vice Provost for Faculty affairs, the faculty member was informed that *until the student sexually or physically assaulted someone, there was nothing that would be done.*
- In Spring 2019, a female faculty member was teaching class when a student became enraged and began cursing at her. After being extremely disruptive and loud, the student left the classroom, yelling threats as he left. Shortly thereafter, the faculty member was informed of a disturbing Facebook post in which the student is holding an AR15 weapon (photo has been redacted). At this point, the faculty member became fearful of further contact with the student. These facts were reported to the Dean of Students, but any follow-up on their part is unknown. The



faculty member's Unit Head sat in on the course final because the instructor was *terrified of this student*.

- Also in Spring 2019, a male professor received the following disturbing email from a student (below, highlighted in yellow). After consulting with me, the faculty member reported this incident to UAPD and to the Dean of Students. UAPD did not follow up, saying that no crime had occurred. The Dean of Students office investigated and later reported that the student had admitted sending the email but would not be asked to apologize and no further actions would be taken because the student was *embarrassed and contrite*. In essence, we are sending students into the world following graduation with the mindset that sending these types of emails is okay! Further, the faculty member reported that it was relayed to him (by the Dean of Students) that he (the faculty member) *bore the responsibility for the student sending this email*.

Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Subject: RE: Requesting a meeting with

You're a shitty person and nobody gives two fucks about your wife when you bring her up during class. Obviously she, just like yourself suck. Fuck you for making this class so hard.

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

- I received two emails from faculty who had experienced aggressive behavior in their classrooms from students who appeared to be *unhinged*. In both cases, the faculty member went to their Unit Head and to CALS Administration (Mike Staten, Jim Hunt) and received strong support, with Dr. Staten even offering to sit in on the class of one of the faculty. Both cases were reported to the Dean of Students, whereupon the Dean of Students claimed that they had sanctioned the students but could share nothing. Furthermore, the Dean of Students stated, *if something more happens, please let us know*. The following are excerpts from the emails from these two faculty: *As a faculty member, [it feels as if] student privacy trumps everything; and So when I see these emails from UIA coming out talking about how they take stuff seriously and notify dean of students etc - it feels like a farce. They didn't do anything that made me feel like they cared about my safety. In fact - they didn't do anything at all except document stuff. I am thankful to have administrators in CALS that handled the situation in a way that was appropriate - but I worry about people in other colleges - if they don't have that support, they have to rely on DOS, which is basically no support at all.*

The above illustrate the intense need for addressing the seventh concern: the need for a very clear and effective reporting system for a faculty member who is confronted with a student who is unstable or threatening. **Faculty MUST know that their concerns have been acted upon and exactly what those actions are.** Very disturbingly, I received anecdotes from faculty members about interactions that were very clearly violations of the code of conduct, but that were not reported because the faculty member was not clear on how to report the issue and/or did not feel as if their report would be acted upon.

Rather than end this report with a bashing of the Dean of Students office, I reached out to the faculty who had reported poor interactions to ask what could have been done differently to make them (faculty) feel confident that their concerns were being heard. All of the responses were similar – the current reporting system, in its protection of student privacy, creates a system in which faculty feel unheard. One respondent stated: *in the two times I have reported threatening communication with students to the Dean of Students, I was never given a status report. I was told it was to protect the student's right to privacy. WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS?* Another faculty member pointed out that *the requirement of 4-5 notices before anything happens to the student does nothing to make faculty feel safe. In cases of student misconduct, we are required to first set a meeting with students, then send an email warning, all before the Dean of Students will even entertain a complaint, never mind an intervention. In one case where three students harassed and ultimately physically threatened me it was 8 weeks before the Dean of Students intervened and even then I had to push them to interview a student and my TA and listen to audio before they did anything. I also had to refuse to enter my classroom again unless the students were removed. The students were on tape saying I could go ahead and report them to the Dean of Students because they knew nothing would come of it.* While we realize that there are legal reasons for protecting student privacy, the development of a system of immediate action upon receiving reports from faculty, combined with maintaining communication with the faculty member to assure them that their report is being addressed appropriately, is past due. If the Dean of Students or the Provost's office were interested in meeting with the CALS faculty who provided commentary for this report in order to get more information on recommended changes to reporting, I would be pleased to facilitate such a meeting.

Cc: Jeffrey Ratje, CALS Associate Dean