TO: Gary Steinke
FROM: Sally Mason
DATE: September 11, 2007
RE: SUI Arming Recommendation

PROCESS

The University of Iowa, in conjunction with Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa, has undertaken a rigorous examination of the issue of arming university police officers. This examination resulted in the preparation of a joint recommendation by the chief business officers and directors of public safety from the three universities. The recommendation was delivered to my predecessor in June of this year. I received a copy of the document upon my arrival at the University.

The recommendation was provided to the leadership of the Faculty Senate, Staff Council and Student Government. A copy was also provided to AFSCME's local leadership which represents UI Police officers. The UI Assistant Vice President and Director of Public Safety and the UI Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel have met with the leadership of these constituency groups on numerous occasions over the last several weeks to discuss the contents of the report/recommendation. A campus-wide forum on the issue of arming University Police was sponsored by the constituency groups on September 6. The Director of Public Safety also attended the August meeting of the University of Iowa Parents Association Advisory Board to address campus security concerns.

I have met with and have received information from these same constituency leaders, community leaders and others while beginning my responsibilities as President of the University of Iowa. The issue of arming University Police has been a regular topic of discussion in these meetings. The recommendation below is based upon these interactions, the background material contained in the report prepared jointly by the three universities, and my personal experience on large university campuses.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend to the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, that sworn and certified police officers employed by the police division at the University of Iowa be authorized to carry firearms as standard equipment when serving as a police officer, subject to stringent training and firearms recertification requirements.
RATIONALE

The University community embraces and celebrates openness, yet also understands that there are people who will take advantage of that openness, including people with weapons. We must find the appropriate balance between the openness we cherish and our responsibility to protect students, faculty and staff, and our visitors – and the protection of the police officers we ask to assure our safety. All University constituents expect and deserve adequate and timely protection when faced with potentially dangerous situations.

- All law enforcement officers at the three Regent universities are “peace officers” as defined in Section 262.13 of the Code of Iowa, and must meet the same standards and receive the same training and certification as all other law enforcement officers in the State of Iowa; this includes firearms training.
- Police departments at Regent universities have comprehensive policies addressing all law enforcement functions. Included are training requirements and policies regarding the use of force and authorized weapons.
- The current policy of arming officers only in situations involving readily foreseeable extreme danger does not recognize that peace officers routinely function in an environment with the potential for extreme danger.
- Regent police officers encountering suspects with weapons cannot reasonably be expected to remove themselves from the situation to request authorization, and then if authorized, obtain a firearm to defend against and stop a deadly threat.
- The respective municipal and county law enforcement agencies support the arming of Regent police officers and consider the current policy inadequate and potentially dangerous not only to Regent police officers but to their officers and the communities they serve when engaged in mutual aid.
- The Regents universities in Iowa have common responsibilities with peer universities yet are the only universities in their respective conferences and among other benchmarked universities that do not allow their police officers to carry firearms as standard equipment.