

Testimony of

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before

The House Committee on Homeland Security

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“Protecting Our Schools:
Federal Efforts to Strengthen Community Preparedness and
Response”

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the timely and critical matter of how best to protect our schools in this post-9/11 world. My name is Dr. James C. Renick. I am the Senior Vice President for Programs and Research at the American Council on Education (ACE), which represents more than 1,800 two- and four-year, public and private institutions of higher education throughout the United States. Formerly, I served as Chancellor at both North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

As a former chancellor who has spent the bulk of his professional career in campus administration and teaching, I can tell you that the safety of students, faculty and staff is a fundamental, ongoing concern of every college and university president. Without security, our institutions' educational missions cannot flourish. For that reason, whether the risk emanates from an act of terrorism like 9/11, a natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina, a potential public health emergency like avian flu, or gun violence like the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech, campus presidents go to great lengths to develop, maintain and continuously assess emergency preparedness plans that will be effective at both preventing and responding to an exceptionally wide range of potential hazards.

This planning is necessary, but it is not easy. Colleges and universities are large, diverse and complex places that are open by design. To take an example I am intimately familiar with, North Carolina A&T enrolls over 11,000 students and employs over 1,700 faculty and staff across a sprawling 800 acre campus located in downtown Greensboro, N.C. whose physical plant encompasses over 80 buildings — including dormitories,

classrooms, laboratories, cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums, parking decks, electrical towers, hazardous waste storage facilities and livestock barns. On any given day, many hundreds of additional visitors make their way across A&T's largely urban campus via multiple points of entry to attend meetings, events or other functions. This kind of free-flowing mobility occurs at every hour of the day and night, all week long, throughout the entire year. Moreover, it involves a population of predominantly young adults whose habits, attitudes and behaviors differ significantly from both elementary and secondary students and workplace employees.

In short, many college campuses can be thought of — and accurately compared to — self-contained, small- to medium-sized cities – with all the activity, vibrancy and, sadly, vulnerability associated with cities. Unfortunately, inasmuch as campuses are very much a part of the communities they inhabit, they can never be totally insulated from the full panoply of risks found in society as a whole. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that colleges and universities are among the safest places to be for young adults in America.

In its most recent 2001 Report to Congress, “The Incidence of Crime on the Campuses of U.S. Postsecondary Education Institutions,” the Department of Education found that the overall rate of criminal homicide at postsecondary institutions was .07 per 100,000 students enrolled, compared to a criminal homicide rate of 14.1 per 100,000 17-29 year olds in society at large — making college students 200 times safer than their off-campus peers with respect to this kind of violence. Based on these findings, the Department of Education concluded that “students on the campuses of postsecondary institutions [are] significantly safer than the nation as a whole.”

Since this is the House Committee on Homeland Security, I have been asked to reflect on how well the Department of Homeland Security specifically – as well as the federal government generally – has been addressing emergency preparedness on college campuses.

In response, I would tell you that, without question, all stakeholders involved in these efforts — including our campuses, state and local authorities, as well as the federal government — have been noticeably more focused regarding matters of emergency preparedness since the events of September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina. To offer one of many possible examples, the University of Florida drew on its own experience — as well as the experience of other institutions — to develop hurricane evacuation models that have become widely adopted by institutions along the Gulf plain. In one of the largely unheralded success stories of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, our 30 New Orleans and Gulf Coast institutions were subsequently able to use those models to evacuate more than 100,000 students and staff during Hurricane Katrina without a single loss of life.

At the federal level, I would commend the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for its recent partnership with the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). Through a grant from DHS, IACLEA has been able to develop a state of the art suite of emergency preparedness tools designed to help campus administrators evaluate threats on their campuses and implement best practices to address them. Shortly after the tragedy at Virginia Tech, the American Council on Education (ACE) worked with IACLEA to broadly disseminate these DHS-funded planning and training materials to our presidents and chancellors, along with a list of

jointly developed security and emergency preparedness questions all campus leaders should ask (see attachment).

Of course, more can and should be done.

First, the value, and corresponding cost, of deploying ever more sophisticated technology to effectively deter and mitigate the full range of threats facing college campuses today clearly makes this an area worthy of increased federal investment.

Second, it is worth noting that, unlike other specialized security professionals like transit or tribal security, campus security personnel are currently not eligible to receive grant funds directly from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the Department of Justice (DoJ). Instead, campus officials must rely on state or local law enforcement to include campus security departments in their own emergency planning, which in many cases does not happen. While the American Council on Education (ACE) honors the efforts of law enforcement and first responders at all levels of government, we believe the federal government should recognize the unique and vital role that campus security must play in any comprehensive homeland security plan by enabling campus police to receive emergency preparedness funds directly from DHS and DoJ.

Third, ACE fully supports the creation of a National Center for Campus Public Safety, as recommended by the 2004 Department of Justice Summit. We believe such a center would promote needed collaboration between national and local law enforcement while strengthening the administrative and operational components of campus security systems across the country.

Fourth, and finally, we respectfully request that the committee re-examine the way in which higher education is currently being incorporated into the Department of

Homeland Security's National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP). Specifically, we are concerned that the NIPP's Educational Facilities Sub-Sector Plan shoehorns institutions of higher education alongside elementary and secondary schools under the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools without regard to the vast differences between these entities with respect to funding, governance, size and physical infrastructure. Additionally, the Educational Facilities Sub-Sector Plan to which our institutions have been assigned falls under the broader Government Facilities sector, despite the fact that a majority of American colleges and universities are private institutions and that our public institutions historically have closer ties to state and local governments. Perhaps most troubling, the current NIPP subdivides many elements of our campuses between multiple sectors (e.g. stadiums and arenas, transportation, chemicals, cybersecurity, public safety, educational facilities, etc.), thereby complicating emergency preparedness and response considerably by requiring an institution governed by a single president or chancellor to interface with multiple departments of government both during the emergency planning process and in the event of an emergency.

Although higher education is listed as a "security partner" with respect to the NIPP, key higher education associations have to date not been meaningfully consulted regarding the NIPP's development, resulting in the wide-ranging deficiencies described above. At the end of the day, I am afraid that any security plan for higher education developed without the substantive input and expertise of higher education itself will not optimally secure the human, physical and cyber assets we are all committed to protecting.

Thank you for your consideration of these views. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

ATTACHMENT

David Ward and the American Council on Education's

President to President

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SPECIAL EDITION

- **Questions Campus Leaders Should Ask About Security and Emergency Preparedness**

Recent events have focused significant attention on the need to plan for campus emergencies. While incidents of violence on campus remain isolated, recent events have shown that institutions are often subject to profound natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, flood; attacks on technology systems; releases of biological and chemical agents; and even terrorism. Because of this, campus leaders throughout the country are addressing preparedness for crisis with renewed urgency.

Although no single template will adequately meet the emergency planning needs of all institutions, among the key questions presidents should consider are these:

- Has our institution conducted a comprehensive assessment of the potentially catastrophic risks it faces? Has our institution made plans that address those risks?
- Does our institution have an appropriate emergency team in place? Is the team headed by a senior administrator? Do key team members regularly participate in emergency preparedness exercises?
- Does our institution have a plan for continuous operation in the event of an emergency (i.e., continuity plan)? Is that plan applicable to all types of emergencies?
- Does our institution have multiple means to communicate with students, faculty, staff and visitors in the event of an immediate, ongoing emergency situation?
- What role does our campus information technology leadership play in our emergency planning? How are technology experts brought into the day-to-day planning process for campus communications, emergency response, and the ability to maintain campus services during a short- or long-term disruption?

- What communication and coordination networks exist among our campus security leadership, local law enforcement, political officials, first responders and health officials, both on an ongoing basis and in case of emergency? For example, does our institution's campus safety department have mutual aid agreements or memoranda of understanding with local emergency response agencies?
- What kinds of processes or programs does our institution utilize to inventory campus security resources, including the ability to retain experienced, trained staff?
- Is the training of campus security personnel appropriately responsive to catastrophic risks?
- Are the policies and procedures used at our institution appropriate with respect to persons who are believed to pose significant danger to themselves or others?

Even the best-managed institutions cannot completely eliminate the risk of catastrophe. But by addressing such risks thoughtfully, institutions can increase their preparedness. Resources are available to assist in this work. For example, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) has developed what it believes to be best practices, as well as all-hazards campus preparedness planning and training materials and guidance that your institution may find useful. The IACLEA Campus Preparedness Resource Center, developed with support from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is accessible at <http://www.iaclea.org/visitors/WMDCPT/cprc/login.cfm>. The login is XXXXX and the password is XXXXX.

In the world in which we live, emergency planning has taken on heightened priority. Questions and resources such as those identified above can be valuable in this effort.

David Ward,
President of ACE

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