

Public Safety Community Engagement Sessions

Summary Report

Introduction

Public safety is an Oregon State University priority. As licensed law enforcement services on OSU's Corvallis campus change on July 1, 2020 the university sought community input regarding public safety services for the Corvallis campus. Students, faculty and staff, along with the public, were encouraged to participate. The espoused purpose of these community engagement sessions was foremost to provide an opportunity for community members to connect, explore a complicated and tense topic with structure and support, and to emerge from dialogue with greater clarity of one's values and expectations for public safety, appreciation for the nuance and complexity of the issues, increased empathy for diverse points of view, and greater sense of connection with those whom we disagree. The documentation of these dialogues was prepared to afford institutional decision makers insight into the values and expectations of the community and develop a profile which represents the resonance and dissonance of expectations among diverse stakeholders.

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) conducted four community listening sessions from March 9-11, 2020 – three on campus and one at the Corvallis library to engage the broader community. Two additional online community sessions were held April 22nd and 23rd via zoom. All sessions focused on gathering stakeholder input on the values, principles, and expectations for the conduct of public safety on campus. Throughout the six community listening sessions, more than 120 faculty, staff, and students attended and engaged in dialogue.

The community listening sessions included:

- A welcome and introduction from the chairs of the Public Safety Advisory Committee
- Shared learning about the historical and contemporary contexts of campus public safety and racial tensions in policing
- Orientation to the foundations of dialogue and the many deliberation dimensions of campus safety
- 75 minutes of dialogue in small groups (4-8 participants) among randomized participants including students, faculty and staff at OSU
- Trained volunteer facilitators guiding the dialogues
- Trained volunteer notetakers documenting the contributions of the participants

The campus community was also invited to submit their ideas and reflection via an online web form.

Methods

The documentation from the community engagement sessions and the submissions to the online web form were compiled, analyzed, and synthesized for this report.

At the close of each community engagement session, facilitators and notetakers initiated small group reflections and tasked participants with summarizing the totality of their dialogue. Together, they identified areas of common ground and active tensions that surfaced through their deliberation. The groups were asked to identify themes as well as unique contributions to succinctly summarize their dialogue. These dialogue summaries, as well as the submissions to the online web form, were the data source for this report. The data was sorted using an a priori coding scheme based on the dialogue framework (See Appendix A) presented at the introduction of each community engagement session. Axial coding was used to collapse sorted data into categories and sub-categories. In the report, categories and subcategories are presented in alphabetical order. An asterisk (*) is used to denote categories with high frequency in the axial coding phase.

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Mission and Vision Dimensions

Program Outcomes:

The premier goals and priorities of public safety programs, services, and officer interactions

- Care*
- Comprehensive response: crisis, care, education, physical health, mental health*
- De-escalation, diffusion*
- Education and development*
- Mitigating confrontation and unsafe behaviors through community education
- Public education is limited, laws must be enforced
- Reducing confrontation*
- Shared responsibility between officers and the public for reducing confrontation, de-escalation
- Social justice
- Directions for Officer Training*
 - Affirmation of the limits of training, need for accountability
 - Balancing enforcer and educator roles
 - Caring and humane dispositions*
 - Community engagement, community policing
 - Comprehensive, ongoing, constant improvement
 - Culture of Oregon State University
 - De-escalation, diffusion*
 - Developmental and educational approaches*
 - Historical and contemporary diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in higher education
 - Recognizing and mitigating implicit bias
 - Restorative justice
 - Social justice issues
 - Student and community histories with policing and public safety*
 - Students' rights and responsibilities
 - Trauma informed response and care*
 - Unique needs of international students
 - Training is an important investment, but training is only useful to the extent that it is matched with accountability

Community Integration:

The nature of the relationships between institutional and community agencies

- Engagement from multiple OSU departments with community agencies
- Integrate values with the larger Corvallis and Linn-Benton community
- Partnership regarding education and resources within university, the city, and county

Conceptualization of Safety:

The framework to understand safety and guide organizational goals, programs, and services

- Sense of belonging
- Extend definition beyond law enforcement

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Organization Dimensions

Organizational Authority:

The nature of the decision making partnership between public safety, institution, and community

- Accountability, built in oversight of programs and leadership, continuous improvement informed by national research and local engagement
- Demonstrated listening to diverse stakeholders
- Student voice, student review and evaluation of programs and leadership
- Transparency*
- Ongoing stakeholder input and deliberation
- Clear code of conduct, wide communication of standards to which public safety personnel should be held
- Desire for a third-party accountability board, with student leadership/representation
- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to guide the success of the public safety program
- Establishing an OSU Agency
 - Creating our own agency to guide officer development, program ethos
 - Diveristy in officer and personnel selection, emphasis on race, class, and gender diversity*

Scope of Jurisdiction:

The physical and organizational boundaries of institutional responsibilities and services

- Ambivalence, uncertainty about the boundaries of OSU campus and the extent of OSU's public safety reach*
- Attending to the needs of Corvallis community members as they interact with the campus
- Wide reach of our core values, in partnership with other agencies

Organization Visibility

The nature and frequency of public safety presence on patrol and at community events

- Ambivalence about officer visibility, recognition of the opposing needs of diverse community members*
- Ambivalence about the balance of armed/not armed, uniformed/plain-clothed officers*
- Ambivalence about the need for an armed presence*
- Desire or highly visbible, engaged, relationship oriented officers and personnel*

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Officer Dimensions

Officer Engagement:

The disposition of officers in interactions with students and community members

- Demonstrated listening to diverse stakeholders
- Honest, humble, and vulnerable agency, responsive and engaged when mistakes are made
- Increased interaction with the community*
- Mutual responsibility between agency and community in cultivating relationships, trust, and respect*
- Outreach education that is transparent and honest
- Strong relationship building, cultivating trust and respect*
- Visible and active engagement, in person and online
- Willingness to engage in long and complicated processes of restoration

Officer Discretion

The scope of officer authority in assessment and decision making

- Ambivalence about the appropriate ratio of armed and unarmed officers, sworn and not sworn officers*
- Ambivalence about the presence of armed officers*
- Desire for both armed and unarmed officers, sworn and not sworn officers*
- Officers and personnel should have and demonstrate authority
- Officers should be held accountable through institutional structures, ie institutional reporting, body cams, etc.

Officer Disposition

The demeanor and affect (mood) of officers during community interactions

- Acknowledge and mitigate dehumanization
- Approachable, warm, de-escalating*
- Caring, compassionate, humane, big picture view of community members*
- Demonstrable listening
- First aid response, health and wellness*
- Nuanced balance of enforcer and educator roles
- Only use of firm, armed response for hard or criminal activity
- Should expect respect, not compliance
- Should operate with assumed respect and authority

Community Regard

Officer's baseline assumptions and regard for students and community members

- *Not represented in analysis*

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Service Dimensions

Response Time

The relationship between expectations of officer proximity and availability

- Ambivalence about the trade offs for rapid response time*
- Desire for rapid response time*

Resourcing & Services

The responsibility and allocation of resources for public safety programs and services

- Ambivalence about the institutional and community financial tradeoffs of prioritizing public safety
- Concern about the tax-payer/stakeholder impact of pursuing institutionally unique public safety services
- Desire for concealed carry among students, faculty and staff
- Desire for efficiency through shared community resources
- Uncertainty about available resources
- Resources and services should not increase student fees