

BUCKNELL STUDENT GOVERNMENT
STUDENT ARMING ADVISORY GROUP

PRELIMINARY REPORT
NOVEMBER 2007 BOARD MEETING

First and foremost, we would like to extend sincere thanks to the University and the Board of Trustees for inviting the students to partake in such a momentous decision on Bucknell's campus. The choice to arm Public Safety quite obviously promises to incite many different opinions and emotions throughout the campus. We recognize critical importance of protecting our students to the greatest degree possible as well as the gravity and potential consequences of any decision to arm. In the following pages, you will find the Student Advisory Group's Preliminary Report to the Board regarding our observations and concerns as we have perceived them over the past few months.

Membership of the Student Advisory Group

At the request of President Mitchell, the Bucknell Student Government gathered student leaders from across the campus to help the University make a decision regarding the potential arming of Bucknell Public Safety officers. Our charge is "to provide the Campus Security Task Force with a broad, thorough, and balanced representation of the general student opinion regarding the potential arming of Public Safety Officers at Bucknell University." Our members are:

- **President of Bucknell Student Government:** Sarah Cummings '08
- **President of Interfraternity Council:** David Quinn '08
- **President of Panhellenic Council:** Stacey Swift '08
- **Co-Chair of Committee on Complementary Activities:** Thomas "Spike" Short '08
- **Multicultural Council of Presidents:** Alice Lakian '09
- **Residence Hall Association Vice President:** Emily Haley '09
- **Student Representative At Large:** Justin Alsop '10

The membership includes a diverse representation of not only leadership perspectives but also age, gender, membership status in a Greek organization, and field of study.

Methods of Gauging Student Opinion

The Student Advisory Group conducted a Student Open Forum on Thursday, October 18, 2007. The entire student body was invited to attend and receive a 20-minute presentation from Chief of Public Safety, Jason Friedberg. This report was a condensed summary of Chief Friedberg's Arming Proposal, including some of the points that the Student Advisory Group felt were most

germane to the student body's opinion. These issues on which we asked Chief Friedberg to focus were:

1. What are the violent crime statistics in the surrounding area (including gangs and drugs) and how has that changed over time?
2. What are some of the highlights of relevant case law?
3. What are the best and worst case scenario response times of local departments, such as Lewisburg Police and East Buffalo Township Police?
4. What type of training do Public Safety Officers receive currently and what type of training would they receive if we were to arm?
5. What is the status of our peer schools and other Patriot League schools?

We allowed for a Question & Answer session with Chief Friedberg, and then conducted a closed-door, students-only discussion. The results of this Open Forum are summarized in a later portion of this report.

In addition, the Campus Security Task Force conducted a Campus Open Forum, inviting students, faculty, and staff. The Student Advisory Group members attended this forum as well. David Quinn, President of the Interfraternity Council, has also conducted a discussion with members of the Interfraternity Council. Emily Haley, the Vice President of the Residence Hall Association, also held an informal conversation with various Resident Assistants. We have also gathered information through casual conversations with members of our various constituencies.

Summary of Student Opinion

The Student Advisory Group agreed at the outset to keep our personal opinions to ourselves until we had been able to review the various reports and data. However, at the beginning, it was not difficult to recognize that the student body opinion was generally opposed to arming Public Safety. It is within this framework that we have been operating, and interestingly, we have seen a dramatic shift towards an almost even split among our peers.

Most students who came to the Student Open Forum who felt opposed to arming were genuinely affected (if not entirely persuaded) by Chief Friedberg's presentation. The following statements represent emerging themes of concerns that were raised at the forum.

Alternatives to Guns: Many students felt that strongly that if we do choose to arm, we must consider all levels and degrees of arming. For example, there was a strong sentiment that providing each officer with a gun on their person was unnecessary, and many felt more comfortable with the concepts of storing the weapon in a locker, locked boxes in the vehicle, rubber bullets or bean-bag bullets, or limiting the number of officers who carry the weapon.

Ambiance of Bucknell: Bucknell is perceived as a safe environment, and students believe that the addition of weapons would destroy that sense of small-town community. There have only been a handful of incidents over the past 10 years that would have required an armed officer to respond. This level of force is excessive and unwarranted for Bucknell.

Evolving Relationship with Public Safety: Many students remember a time when Public Safety-Student relations were at an all-time low. Since Chief Friedberg joined Bucknell, we have seen a marked improvement in this category. However, arming the officers may have a negative impact and threaten to undo the significant amount of positive work we have done.

Training of Public Safety Officers: Students inquired about the level and adequacy of training that officers would receive if they were armed. In particular, there was strong objection to the small amount of money that would be spent on psychological testing for the officers.

Lack of Information about Previous Incidents: The students would benefit from detailed information about what violent incidents have occurred on Bucknell's campus in the past that may have warranted the arming of officers.

Adequacy of Local Departments: The realistic response times of various local agencies are too long and unreliable. External officers are less familiar with Bucknell's campus geography than Public Safety officers.

Emergency Response Teams: Bucknell's SERV (Student Emergency Response Volunteers) expressed strong support for arming of Public Safety in light of situations in which they currently find themselves as first-responders with unarmed Public Safety officers.

Misuse of Deadly Force: Although we fully support Chief Friedberg and the current officers, any decision to arm will ultimately outlast their employment. Thus, the concern that an officer may misuse a weapon or that it may lead to the overstepping of boundaries is a concern that must be considered.

Preference for Public Safety: Most students expressed a strong desire to have Public Safety respond to an incident on campus as opposed to Lewisburg Police or East Buffalo Police.

Biased Nature of Arming Proposal: Some students felt that the Arming Proposal presented a weighted argument in favor of arming. We may want to look into factual arguments against arming.

Student Advisory Group Preliminary Report

The Student Advisory Group has been working long and hard on this issue. We have struggled and wrestled with the nuances and complexities of all of the arguments. It is a difficult subject and the fact that our peers are so evenly divided only makes our job more difficult. We feel confident that we are on the right track and with more information and time, we will be able to come to a conclusion that unites the various perspectives and mitigates the conflict.

We are not comfortable making any recommendation at this time. We hope that our report informs the Board of our current status and allows you to see that the students have taken this issue very seriously. In the weeks and months ahead, we will charge ourselves with ensuring that Chief Friedberg's Arming Proposal and other germane documents and information are broadly disseminated to the student body and campus community. We will also request and

gather further information regarding previous violent incidents that have occurred on Bucknell's campus, the types of arms that may be utilized if armed, and the effects of arming on similar campuses that have recently made this decision.

Whatever decision the Board may make, whether it is today or in April, we strongly request that the following three objectives are met in the process:

1. Communication to the campus about the nature of and reasoning behind any decision is absolutely critical. For students in particular, the acceptance of arming depends almost entirely on the perception of the decision process.
2. The Campus Security Task Force, Student Advisory Group, and Board of Trustees must show that all sides of the argument were considered equally and objectively. We are presented with a specific challenge here, in that Chief Friedberg's Arming Proposal seems obviously one-sided, yet it serves as the primary document with which we are educating the campus. We must provide evidence of an impartial decision-making process.
3. If the decision is to arm Public Safety, any implementation should not be rushed.

Ultimately, the decision hinges upon the philosophy of Bucknell's Department of Public Safety. As an educational entity of campus life, Public Safety Officers are perceived as providing a holistic blanket of protection and services to its community. We must be sure that we treat our officers in a manner that is consistent with the job we expect them to perform, thus our first and foremost decision must be about the nature of that job. Importantly, we must also recognize that the decision to arm our officers is one whose effects will outlast anyone currently at the institution. We must be sure that we are comfortable not only with arming under today's specific circumstances but also that we would support an armed Public Safety many years from now.

We thank you for the opportunity to work with you on this important issue and we look forward to additional discussions in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah M. Cummings, President of Bucknell Student Government, on Thursday, November 8, 2007.