

AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTION RESPONSES TO  
SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AND SUGGESTED PRACTICES TO  
PREVENT FUTURE INCIDENTS

A Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

by

Scott Godley

May, 2010

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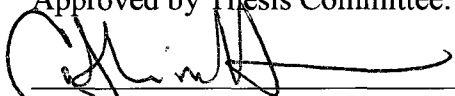
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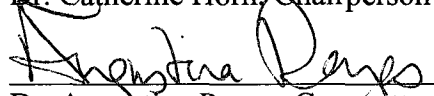
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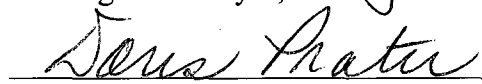
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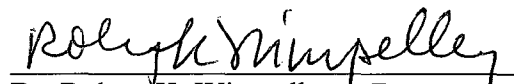
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## Abstract

The following study will examine the effectiveness of recent measures being taken at the campus, state and national level in improving safety on college campuses without compromising student privacy. This study will analyze seven shootings on college campuses and the overlapping symptoms within the assailants that likely triggered such destructive actions. This will be followed by a breakdown of what institutional, state and national officials are doing to be more aware of these warning signs to prevent future violence. The study will also acknowledge what universities are doing to improve their emergency response systems to minimize the number of casualties that result from unanticipated shootings. It will provide a collection of recommendations to improve upon what is already being done with regard to campus safety and the privacy of student records. The study includes an overview of relevant federal and state laws and an explanation of the policies related to the privacy of student records. The seven university-level shootings that will be the focus of this qualitative study are: University of Iowa Graduate School of Physics (1991), Bard's School at Simon Rock (1992), Appalachian School of Law (2002), the University of Arizona – College of Nursing (2002), Case Western Reserve University Business School (2003), Virginia Tech University (2007) and Northern Illinois University (2008).

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## Introduction

### *The Problem*

A wake-up call for university personnel came on April 16, 2007. That morning 32 Virginia Tech students and faculty walked into a classroom, but never walked out. Their violent deaths came at the hands of another Virginia Tech student, Seung-Hui Cho, whose rampage has earned the distinction of the worst school shooting in U.S. history. The incident forced colleges and universities across the country to take a long look in the mirror and reassess their campus security policies and mental health services. But the shootings have continued. One year later, two more school shootings took place less than a week apart from each other... first at Louisiana Tech, then Northern Illinois. These grim incidents have contributed to the upsurge in campus murders in recent years: 25 deaths in 2006, 66 deaths in 2007 and 55 deaths in 2008 (Campus Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool, 2010).

The general attitude among university personnel has been that it is hard to predict when a campus shooting will occur. And even when warning signs do exist, as Helen Hickey De Haven (2009) notes, universities have historically taken the blame off themselves when casualties are part of the equation. In some instances, the blame is deflected to the state and federal laws restricting access to student records. Two of the three shooters from the abovementioned cases had a documented history of mental illness. Making university officials aware of these conditions could have enabled them to remove the student from any situation where they could have harmed others. And yet, privacy laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 have made it difficult to determine what instances permit access to student records.

Even in the context of privacy laws, a lack of accountability on the part of university personnel is no longer being tolerated. Higher education officials as well as state and national legislators are taking measures to prevent future shootings (Blagojevich, Jones, Madigan, & Velasquez, 2008; Illinois General Assembly, 2010; Patrick, 2010; Simmons, 2003; Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). There have been no student-led shootings on college campuses in the past two years. But is this break in violence a matter of good fortune, or are college personnel and political officials taking significant steps to make campuses safer without hurting the integrity of the privacy laws? To answer this question, the focus of this qualitative study involves determining connecting themes of individuals who become shooters and a general assessment of the campus, state, and national interventions being implemented to provide better campus safety while maintaining student privacy.

### *Definition of Terms*

Successful execution of the recommended outreach initiatives involves a thorough understanding of and willingness to comply with the privacy laws in place at the local, state and national levels. Understanding the terms associated with these matters as well as the terms that define campus violence is recommended. The following terms are relevant to the campus safety/mental health literature discussed later in this report as well as the various statutes that helped to define privacy laws (such as the Texas Health and Safety Code):

**Disability:** a case where individuals are unable to perform all of the activities within the scope of human behavior (e.g., interacting with others, eating, etc.) due to a physical or mental impairment (Dunkle, 2010).



Disturbing Student: these individuals lack the tools to establish “close, age-appropriate relationships; they are considered very self-centered but want to establish relationships” (Dunkle, 2010, p. 13).

Disturbed Student: two types of disturbed students exist. The type A disturbed student “exhibits specific behaviors that are out of sync with other students; often marked patterns of moving away from or against others; may overly fixate on one goal or idea; may evince overall rigid, highly dualistic thinking; may make inappropriate or off-task remarks; or seems angry and destructive toward self or others. The type B disturbed student maintains an outward focus, angry at the world and particular persons. He or she may be engaged in academics, but only those courses that allow the basic angry stance to be expressed in some way. More typically, this student feels alienated from academics and mainstream activities, but may be involved in groups that are working toward change in the system” (Dunkle, 2010, p. 13). This student’s intensity keeps them from achieving an organized, systematic group goal. Therefore, he or she is looked at as a fringe member of the group (Dunkle, 2010).

This study now turns to the relevant literature and begins with an overview of the policies related to mentally unstable students on college campuses. This is important because mental illness is an attribute connected with most of the campus shooters. The study then describes the relevant elements of mental illness in a college setting as well as important measures to prevent campus violence. These reviews discuss the feasibility of preventing shooting attacks on campus, the repercussions of false alarms, while also suggesting ways to respond to attacks. The section continues with insights from mental health professionals and a series of recommendations related to the preventing and

responding to campus violence, in addition to first-hand accounts and advice from university officials who have lived through a violent incident. This qualitative study will then provide a description of seven shootings that have occurred on college campuses over the past two decades – University of Iowa Graduate School of Physics (1991), Bard’s School at Simon Rock (1992), Appalachian School of Law (2002), the University of Arizona – College of Nursing (2002), Case Western Reserve University Business School (2003), Virginia Tech University (2007) and Northern Illinois University (2008) – along with an identification of the themes related to the shooters in each case study. This will be followed by a breakdown of the institutional, state and national responses. The study concludes with a collection of recommendations to possibly improve upon what is already being done with regard to campus safety and the privacy of student records.

#### *National, State and University Policies*

Students with disabilities, such as mental illness, who met academic standards to attend college, were not afforded any guaranteed admissions protection in the United States until the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 came into existence. However, these two acts collectively helped to ensure that higher education institutions made reasonable accommodations to those with disabilities (Liebert, 2003).

#### *Rehabilitation Act of 1973.*

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a national law protecting qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. It further prevents organizations and employers from denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive benefits and services. The Rehabilitation Act requires all postsecondary institutions

receiving federal funding to make their programs accessible to those students with disabilities.

Under this law, individuals with disabilities are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. People who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that noticeably limits one or more major life activities are also covered. Alcoholism, drug addiction and mental illness are examples of impairments that may substantially limit major life activities (Department of Health and Human Services, 2005).

*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 further prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities. This applies to all services, programs, and activities made available by these operations. The law does not negate any of the standards set forth in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The law further states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, because a public entity’s facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by individuals with disabilities, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity” (Department of Justice, 2009, p. 16). The ADA of 1990 also states that public entities like colleges and universities must ensure that communication with disabled students is as effective as communications with others (Department of Justice, 2009).

*Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.*

The Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, including those with disabilities, is called the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

This law applies to all schools that receive funds under U.S. Department of Education programs. This essentially covers almost every institution of higher learning as well as public elementary and secondary schools (Family Educational Rights and Privacy, Final Rule, 2008).

For overview purposes, FERPA has established into law the fact that once a person reaches the age of 18 or attends an educational institution beyond the high school level, the rights to their education records transfer from the parent to the student. At that point, eligible students can review their education records maintained by the school and request corrections to any inaccurate or misleading information. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to school officials with legitimate educational interest. This could include third-party consultants, volunteers, and others to whom an educational organization has outsourced institutional services. Educational agencies or institutions must record their "legitimate interests" for obtaining information under FERPA through a written agreement with the organization that specifies the information to be disclosed as well as the purpose, scope, and duration of the study. FERPA also allows disclosure when it is necessary to comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. Disclosure also is provided to appropriate officials in situations that involve health and safety emergencies (Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Rule, 2008).

State laws about health records also apply to FERPA. Disclosure is not permitted when a state law is less protective of health records privacy than FERPA. However, the state law can be more protective than FERPA. If an outside law enforcement agency

shares a record with the school, the record that is maintained by the school becomes subject to FERPA. In other words, members of the school's law enforcement unit can only be given access to students' education records in cases in which they have legitimate educational interests as determined by the school. Outside police officers and non-employees to whom the university has outsourced its services do not count as school officials, so they must get consent to access student records. The records kept by these agencies are not subject to FERPA. This statute also does not apply to police departments or courts (Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Rule, 2008).

Schools may disclose, without permission, directory information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth. However, schools must make parents and eligible students aware of this directory information and allow them time to request that the school not disclose this information. Finally, schools must annually notify parents and eligible students of their rights under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Rule, 2008).

*Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.*

Complicating the situation of student privacy is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law mandating standards and requirements for protecting personally identifiable health information maintained by health care professionals. Often clarification is needed to discern FERPA from HIPAA, given the overlapping nature of the two statutes. The privacy of educational records is primarily governed by FERPA. The primary difference between the two is that HIPAA protects all medical information gained in the course of treatment, whether in oral or written form, whereas FERPA applies only to information in student records. Furthermore, personal

observations, including information gained from a conversation with a student, fall outside FERPA. Like FERPA, HIPAA and most state confidentiality laws have exceptions under which information may be shared without written consent of the “patient” (Department of Health and Human Service & Department of Education, 2008). The following text regarding the protections provided through HIPAA is found through Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 164. For the purpose of this study, the law has been condensed to include instances where use and disclosure of information does not require written authorization.

A covered entity may use or disclose protected health information if it is required by law and doing so complies with and is limited to the relevant requirements of such law. Disclosure may also take place when the person covered believes it is necessary to prevent harm to individuals, or the disclosure would be adversely affected by waiting until the individual is able to agree to provide it. With that in mind, the covered entity that makes a disclosure must immediately inform the individual that such a report has been or will be made, unless they believe informing the individual would place that person at risk of serious harm.

Disclosure of the student’s medical records/history is a delicate matter, and in some instances the parents may even be unaware of various medical treatments provided to their child. The parents of Virginia Tech shooter Seung-Hui Cho, for example, were unaware of the fact he spent the night at St. Alban’s, a local mental health facility, the December prior to his rampage (Hickey de Haven, 2009). The regulations set forth in FERPA indicate that the privacy rights of mental health records transfer to the student once they have moved beyond the age of 18, or to an educational institution beyond high

school. The parents are obviously not the only ones barred from student records (unless one of the aforementioned exceptions applies).

The policies within HIPAA indicate that the covered entity, health care professionals, can disclose mental health records in an effort to prevent serious harm to the individual or other potential victims. FERPA also allows for nonconsensual disclosure during health or safety emergencies, but school officials often times are far from certain about when these exemptions apply. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, most institutions used the distinction of a terrorist-level threat for situations in which disclosure was appropriate.

The relevance of these laws to this study is that several gunmen associated with school rampages suffered from mental illness. The Americans with Disabilities and Rehabilitation Acts gave students like those that pulled guns out on their classmates and teachers access to higher education, and policies like FERPA and HIPAA are in place to protect the privacy of the clinically ill. But it is equally important that everyone on a college campus understands the details of these privacy laws so as to know when disclosure of such information should be made to protect others as well as when the release of mental health records is unnecessary. How does a student, faculty or staff member go about determining that a particular individual could be as potentially dangerous as the men that have already terrorized educational institutions across the country? The purpose of this thesis is to supply colleges and universities with information and resources that will help them to be better prepared for students that may potentially jeopardize the safety on campus.

## Review of Literature

Over the past three decades, a good amount of literature has been produced on the subject matter of mental health and securing safe campuses. This review includes two primary areas for discussion: Psychological Services and Campus-wide Interventions. Each is presented in turn.

### *Psychological Services*

John H. Dunkle (2010) compiled a publication designed for use by various student services professionals. It also is an update to Dr. Ursula Delworth's (1989) two decade old work that involved a discussion of the use of the Assessment-Intervention of Student Problems (AISP) Model. This model helps to maintain a safe environment on campus by explaining student psychological and behavioral problems for staff members who are not formally trained in these areas (Delworth, 1989).

In her original text, Delworth discussed the importance of developing a systems approach for managing students of concern. As she suggests, many times residence hall or law enforcement personnel observe disturbing behavior whereas in other cases faculty members, university staff, or other students may be the first to observe this behavior. This justifies the importance of consulting with other individuals on campus about a student's well being (Dunkle, 2010).

Both authors agree that the university's intervention team should be composed of key campus personnel from mental health services, security, legal counselors, the student services administration, as well as the student services judicial or discipline office. Dunkle further discusses the responsibilities of this team, such as developing and implementing assessment and intervention programs for students who are either initially



assessed as disturbed/disturbing or do not profit from initial assignments. He also discusses what should be done in cases where the disturbed individual refuses professional help. He notes that the campus intervention team needs to work toward a more integrated plan of interventions, since mental health interventions only occur in isolation and generally do not become integrated with the student's day-to-day life. Dunkle points out that disturbing students referred to the judicial system have violated the community's norms, but at the same time they are on the cutting edge of their own personal development. A successful intervention on the part of the judicial system confronts students about the consequences of their actions, encourages them to learn from difficult circumstances, and challenges them to make contributions as members of the campus community.

One change since Delworth's original publication is the growing recognition that the practice of student affairs may vary depending on the institutional context in which it is undertaken (Dunkle, 2010). For instance, student affairs staff at smaller institutions may serve in positions combining the responsibilities typically associated with several positions at larger institutions. Furthermore, the study notes that an important part of the student affairs professional, particularly those at the community college level, involves continuous outreach into the community to establish working relations with the community agencies served by the college (Dunkle, 2010).

#### *Campus-wide Intervention*

Ben Williamson (2008) noted in his study that mental health professionals and other faculty and staff on campuses cannot realistically ensure the safety of students. His report first discusses the 1976 court case of *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of*

*California*, in which the Supreme Court of California held that mental health professionals have a duty to protect individuals who are being threatened with bodily harm by a patient (Williamson, 2008). Williamson argues that university rampage killings involve facts very different from those of the 1976 case, in which Prosenjit Proddar murdered Tatiana Tarasoff. What made the case unique is Proddar told a school psychologist about this plan, who then contacted police. They detained Proddar, but eventually let him go. Williamson notes that although some employees of a university, such as mental health counselors, may be uniquely capable of forecasting student violence, the vast majority are not able to do so. He also states in his report that determining a potential shooter for a school rampage is difficult on a college campus because the incidence of any form of violence is very low and a very large number of people have identifiable risk factors; there is no reliable way to pick out from that large group the very few who will actually commit the violent act.

Williamson concludes his report by stating that universities may not be able to take reasonable steps to prevent rampage killings. He notes that holding university mental health personnel responsible for preventing these types of killings would result in a paranoid farce and would be unfair to the universities as well as the students. Williamson feels students would be forced into an adversarial relationship with their educators and with each other, and this would result in increased stress and isolation not only for students at risk of becoming violent, but for any student who could be mistaken for one.

Paul A. Grayson and Philip W. Meilman (2006) produced a compilation of insights from various professionals in the field of mental health, addressing topics ranging from legal and ethical issues, depression and anxiety, diversity issues as well as sexual

concerns. The treatment guide opens with a discussion of the campus environment and student mentality, as well as an overview of the state of college mental health at the start of the 21st century. Grayson and Meilman touch on the issues faced by students of every generation, as well as those concerns unique to the current college student. Their book provides an emphasis on mental health practice verses theory.

Their text does delve into stress management strategies, with Robert McGrath – president of the American Psychological Association – stating that this issue involves physiologically disruptive responses and ineffective behavioral choices. A later chapter by Charles P. Ducey calls to attention the fact that student struggles in the classroom may be associated with a divergence from their traditional classroom culture, a subject matter that is especially relevant to multicultural campuses like the University of Houston (Grayson & Meilman, 2006).

More recently, Margaret Jablonski, George McClellan and Eugene Zdziarski (2008) put together a report that dealt with the issue of campus-wide intervention following a school shooting like that at Virginia Tech. The 31-page document focuses on four areas: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The preventative solutions include placing more focus on programs regarding men and violence, exploring conflict resolution strategies such as healing circles and bullying theory as well as mapping incidents of violence on campus, and using the information to inform decision-making. The report also suggests that, if possible, campus security or police should be accredited and graduate preparation programs should address issues of campus violence.

In terms of preparedness, the NASPA supplemental study notes that campuses need to do a better job clarifying the role of the president or other senior leader with regard to

the response team. Additionally, campus security personnel should participate in National Incident Management System training on a regular basis. In terms of response and recovery, the NASPA report suggests that soliciting involvement from alumni is important, and university administrators should use community resources and other colleges and universities to assist in providing for care for the responding team.

At the NASPA 2010 National Conference in Chicago, Brian O. Hemphill and Brandi Hephner LaBanc (2010) released their book which presents first-hand accounts and experienced counsel from professionals who have lived through a violent incident, and continue to deal with its aftermath. The report covers violence, suicide prevention, and mental health promotion, and offers a comprehensive plan to create a campus-wide system for collecting information about students at-risk for self-harm or violence toward others on campus.

In summation, the aforementioned literature identifies that, though it may be impossible to fully prevent campus violence, measures can be taken to make campuses safer communities. *The subject of mental illness and the sensitivity that must be taken when handling this allotment of disabled students was also addressed.* Nevertheless, more needs to be done to get this information and other relevant resources in the hands of individuals outside of the mental health field – namely students and faculty. Targeting these two populations makes more sense as this report goes on to describe the attributes connected with the shooters, most of which were observed by other peers, professors and other staff members within each institution.

## Data

The number of casualties (32) associated with the Virginia Tech University shooting make it the worst school shooting in U.S. history and caused the country to reevaluate the quality of security at higher education institutions. However, preventing future shooting rampages on college campuses requires more than an analysis of a singular incident. A deeper exploration into university shootings prior to and since Virginia Tech is needed to best resolve this problem. The report generated by the Virginia Tech Review Panel in the wake of Seung Hui Cho's rampage provided a list of 41 fatal school shootings that have taken place in the United States from 1966 – 2007. This list was analyzed in an effort to compile incidents that have taken place on college campuses. Since this study is focused on solutions that would be useful in today's environment, it is limited to shootings that have happened since 1990. Furthermore, since the Virginia Tech Review Panel report does not address incidents since Seung-Hui Cho's rampage, independent research was conducted to uncover more recent shootings. This led to the work of Helen Hickey de Haven (2009) and the discovery of the Northern Illinois University shooting involving Steven Kazmierczak. A second post-Virginia Tech campus shooting on the Louisiana Tech University campus was excluded from this study since little information was available regarding the female shooter and her motives. The final set of data, then, included seven case studies, each of which met certain criteria. The violent incidents were shootings that took place on a university campus on a public stage before an audience. They involved multiple victims (this includes injuries), some of which were shot simply for their symbolic significance, or at random. Finally, the shooters were a current or former student of the institution they attacked. In the end, the

samplings looked a lot like that which occurred at Columbine High School in 1999 as opposed to isolated attacks, like that involving Annie Le at Yale University in September 2009 (Alfonsi, Netter & Goldman, 2009).

### Analytical Approach

Finding a solution to this problem required a thorough analysis of the content within each case to derive themes. This started with an exploration into the gunman's background to determine what events may help to explain each gunman's eventual actions. An exploration of the shooter's relationship with the university also was important to better understand why the attack was made at the institution and not elsewhere. This research of various books, articles and other reports also led to the uncovering of four characteristics commonly found in the gunmen. This information helps colleges and universities to better understand the psychological makeup of the shooters. Once it was established that several campus gunmen dealt with mental illness, an exploration of the privacy laws of students related to this subject matter was conducted to understand the barriers that campuses face when it comes to identifying and reporting potentially dangerous students. The next important analysis involved understanding the security on the university campuses before and after the rampages to understand how, or if, they altered and improved these policies following the shootings. An exploration of the new policies and programs at the state and national levels in the wake of the shootings was equally important since these changes often trickle down to the local level (university campuses). The evaluation of institutional responses as well as the suggested recommendations was drawn from an analysis of the themes existent within the gunmen and the institutional responses.

Table 1

*Shooting Rampages on College Campuses (1991-2008)*

		Bard College	Appalachian		Case		
	University of	at Simon's	School of	University	Western		Northern
	Iowa	Rock	Law	of Arizona	Reserve	University	Illinois
					University	Virginia Tech	University
Date	11/1/91	12/14/92	1/16/02	10/29/02	5/9/03	4/16/07	2/14/08
Location	Iowa	Massachusetts	Virginia	Arizona	Ohio	Virginia	Illinois
Level	Graduate	Undergraduate	Law	Nursing	Graduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
Casualties	Five	Two	Three	Three	One	32	Five
Shooter	Gang Lu	Wayne Lo	Peter Odighizuwa	Robert Flores	Biswanath Halder	Seung Hui Cho	Steven Kazmierczak
Age	27	18	43	41	62	23	27
Nation of Origin	China	Taiwan	Nigeria	USA	India	South Korea	USA
Student Status	Current	Current	Current	Current	Former	Current	Former
Threats of violence	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

In order to understand the missteps by college officials in each example as well as the quality and validity of the interventions, a thorough exploration into the background of each individual shooter as well as the university-related events surrounding each rampage was conducted. This helped to uncover themes within the assailants that likely played a role in their eventual deadly actions. The following is a detailed description of each case study followed by a breakdown of the four themes associated with the shooters.

### *Case Study Descriptions*

#### *University of Iowa.*

Gang Lu's rampage happened almost 20 years ago at the Graduate School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Iowa. Born in 1963, Lu was known to have a rebellious streak that got him in trouble several times while growing up in China. Even so, as Lu got older he showed more and more promise academically, capturing several scholastic awards while in high school. He was admitted to Beijing University where he majored in space physics and astronomy (Chen, 1995). By the fall of 1984 (his senior year), Lu's success in the classroom made him eligible to take a battery of exams to go to the United States to earn a Ph.D. in physics. He enrolled at the University of Iowa and started working as a teaching assistant in the Department of Physics and Astronomy despite scoring poorly on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Lu continued to excel in his Ph.D. program, but in the fall of 1987 a more skillful classmate would emerge in Shan Linhua. Socially, the coeds on campus were more drawn to Linhua than Lu, something that was frustrating for the latter individual. Eventually Linhua started to outshine Lu and became physics professor Christoph Klaus Goertz's favorite student. After an abysmal performance defending his dissertation, Lu



focused on collecting the university's annual D.C. Spriesterbach Dissertation Prize that carried a cash prize of \$2,500. But when Linhua got the award, Lu felt he had been cheated and his only recourse was to take his case to higher authorities. His numerous attempts to have Linhua's nomination overturned were unsuccessful, a fact that clearly infuriated him. He eventually composed a press release about this matter and sent it to various big-name newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*. On Oct. 7, T. Anne Clearly, the associate vice president for academic affairs, told Lu they would look into his allegation that Dwight Nicholson, the chairman of the physics departments, violated the university's ethical guidelines. But by this point Lu knew what the outcome would be, so he took matters into his own hands (Chen, 1995).

Many of the department's plasma physics professors, researchers and graduate students met on Friday afternoons in room 309 of Van Allen Hall to informally discuss their work, exchange ideas and test each other's line of investigation. On November 1, 1991, Lu entered the conference room where the discussion was taking place, pulled out his .38-caliber Taurus and shot Goertz in the back of the head before taking two steps to his left and shooting Linhua. Some people began hiding under the table and rushing from the room. Robert Smith was not able to get away as Lu got between him and the door, eventually putting two bullets into his body. He then went downstairs to Nicholson's office while two graduate students tended to a seriously wounded Smith. Lu proceeded to shoot Nicholson execution style before returning back to the conference room and pumping two more shots into Smith's head. He then shot Goertz and Linhua again before leaving the building and heading towards the administration building – Jessup Hall. Once

there, Lu demanded to see Anne Clearly. When her secretary, Miya Rodolfo-Sioson, told him she did not want to speak with him, Lu grew frustrated. Clearly eventually came out of her office and the two had an argument before Lu shot and killed her. He turned to shoot Rodolfo-Sioson and hit her in the mouth, a move that left her paralyzed (Chen, 1995).

Lu then went towards the university president's office, but by this time law enforcement officials had the building surrounded. Eventually he found a vacated room, sat in a chair and shot himself in the head. Gang Lu had clearly lost touch with reality at the point of his shootings by choosing not to acknowledge the inadequacies in his own school work along with Linhua's superior talent. His struggles to maintain a consistent source of income put added pressures on the prospect of his dissertation being approved.

*Bard College at Simon's Rock.*

On December 14, 1992, Wayne Lo went on a shooting spree at Bard College at Simon's Rock that lasted 18 minutes and killed two while injuring four others. Lo started at Simon's Rock in 1991 at the age of 16. He was reclusive his first year of college, but eventually befriended a group of students that were identified by their peers as a group of angry, metal-listening students. Lo was known by his peers to hate Jews, blacks and homosexuals, and to have contended that the Holocaust never happened. Lo's anger only grew when one of his two close friends was dismissed from school for threatening behavior toward a female student (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

The events of the day of the shooting began around 10:00 a.m. when the college's receptionist received a package for Lo that had the return address of an arms store. She notified the college's residence directors of the package, and they brought it with them to

a regularly scheduled meeting with the dean of the college. They eventually allowed the package to be delivered (Appeals Court of Massachusetts, 2002). Katherine Robinson, one of the residence directors, learned that Lo had picked up the package and confronted Lo in his dorm room about its contents. He refused to show her what was inside. The college had a policy that permission must be sought from the associate dean of students to search the contents of a student's property. With that in mind, Robinson left and called Dean Bernard Rodgers, who told her to determine the package's contents. Robinson's husband, Floyd, who also was a residence director, accompanied her to Lo's room. Upon entering the room they noticed four black plastic magazines that appeared to be empty, a black plastic rifle stock, and an empty army surplus cartridge box. But they found no ammunition or gun (Appeals Court of Massachusetts, 2002).

Later that day, Lo purchased an assault rifle. Bard College student Jeremy Roberts had dinner with Lo that evening. During this time Lo indicated that he was going to kill the Robinsons and others. Roberts notified the Robinsons who contacted the college provost, Ba Win. The provost urged the couple to bring their children to his home, where they would call Dean Rodgers to convey a plan to locate Lo and his weapons. However, it was during this time that shots were fired nearby (Appeals Court of Massachusetts, 2002). Lo had walked to the school's main entrance and used his rifle to shoot security officer Teresa Beavers twice in her abdomen. He then shot and killed Nacunan L. Saez, a young professor who happened to be driving in. Lo then made his way to the library as students rushed out of the building to help Saez. Lo then shot and killed 18-year-old student Galen Gibson and wounded 19-year-old Thomas McElderry. He shot and injured Joshua Faber and Matthew Lee David in the lobby of one of the dormitories before

walking to the student union building to call police and surrendered. The 20-minute rampage could have been worse if Lo had better equipment (Hickey de Haven, 2009). Various lawsuits were brought against the college, alleging that it was negligent in not preventing Lo's rampage.

*Appalachian School of Law.*

Almost a decade later at Appalachian School of Law, Peter Odighizuwa killed the school's dean and a professor who had failed him in a course. He also shot four students, one of whom died. Odighizuwa's path to the United States started in his early 20s when he moved to Portland, Oregon, to work as a bus driver. However, he was fired after seven years of service for abusing drugs and alcohol on the job, deliberately destroying property as well as being a danger to public safety (Hickey de Haven, 2009). He eventually moved to Ohio in the mid-1990s and got married.

By the time Odighizuwa started law school he was 42, had four young children and very little money. He enrolled in five classes but completed only one of them with a grade in the C range. For this reason, Odighizuwa could not enroll for the spring semester, but Antony Sutin, the Dean of the law school, encouraged him to return to school the following fall (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

Shortly before doing so, Odighizuwa bought a semi-automatic pistol. After his arrest, Odighizuwa said he carried a gun to school all semester for protection (Hickey de Haven, 2009). His behavior became more disruptive as he continued with law school. Eventually, his classmates nicknamed him "Shooter" and the Student Services staff that interacted with him was typically intimidated by his behavior. He struggled to maintain positive relationships with women in every facet of his life, particularly with his wife,

who charged him with assault. He flunked out of law school twice, and when Odighizuwa went to appeal his grades he carried a pistol in his pocket and two loaded ammunition clips. He shot and killed Professor Tom Blackwell in his office before walking to the Dean's office to fatally shoot Tony Sutin. He then went to a lounge area where he opened fire on four female students, eventually killing Angela Dales. Out of ammunition, Odighizuwa went outside toward the parking lot, laid his gun down, and was tackled by two unarmed students (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

*University of Arizona.*

The first case involving a U.S.-born resident and former military officer took place on Oct. 28, 2002, in the College of Nursing at the University of Arizona. Before moving to Arizona to begin nursing school, Robert Stewart Flores did a couple tours of duty in the Middle East in the early 1990s. He found his wife after six years in military service, and the two had a pair of kids. Despite having a scholarship and the G.I. Bill to help support his family, Flores still had to take other jobs while going to school in West Texas. Eventually, he had accumulated 63 hours with honors and took the state board exam for Licensed Practiced Nurses. Then his wife gave him an ultimatum. She was taking their kids to Tucson to be closer to her grandmother and get away from her mother. He decided to go with her versus getting a divorce (Flores, 2002).

The University of Arizona's College of Nursing in Tucson accepted 77 of Flores' 110 semester credit hours, which he expected. However, Flores was upset when the school accepted no credit hours towards his core classes from the junior college he attended as well as San Angelo State University. Things worsened when Flores learned he had to pay out-of-state rates during his first year while his wife went unemployed for

eight months. The stress in Flores' life continued to mount when, over the course of two months, his wife left him and a car driving on the wrong side of road struck him head on. The accident left him with chronic back pain that made it hard for him to sleep. According to Flores, the pain caused bouts of depression. During this time he tried to get his child support payments decreased but that did not happen, forcing him to max out his student loans while working full time (Flores, 2002).

Life inside the classroom for Flores was not much better. He felt that his University of Arizona instructors treated him unfairly and considered his Associate Degree as a Registered Nurse to be "unprofessional." His motives for killing Robin Rogers, a 50-year-old assistant professor of nursing, were based on the fact she failed him in clinicals. He later failed the clinical portion of the ICU rotation that was led by one of his other victims, Barbara Monroe. Flores was furthermore insulted when Monroe said he was "unsafe." According to the military veteran's suicide letter, failing pretty much put him in position where he would not be able to repay loans and child support. In the final pages of his letter Flores states that he was going to end it now instead of spending the next month or two selling the few assets he owns (Flores, 2002).

The morning of the shooting, Flores came to school with five handguns and over 250 rounds of ammunition in his backpack. He shot and killed Rogers around 8:30 a.m. in her second-floor office, then ran upstairs to the fourth floor to a classroom where Monroe and Cheryl McGaffic were administering the ICU midterm. McGaffic, who had been sitting in a desk near the back of the room, stood up and began to panic. He shot her three times in the chest. Flores then walked to the front of the room and found Monroe crouched under a desk and shot her twice. He turned his attention to the students,

ordering two friends out of the room. The others assumed Flores was going to open fire on them, but he changed his mind and told them all to leave. After they did so, Flores killed himself by a bullet to the head (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

*Case Western Reserve University.*

Biswanath Halder was born in India and lived in Germany and Canada before moving to the United States in 1969. He received a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Calcutta and moved to Ohio to begin his work towards a Master's degree in business administration at Case Western Reserve University. Halder was known on campus for his quirky behavior. At the age of 59, while completing his Master's, he lived in a college dorm. He often wore a toupee and short shorts with tube socks, even during the cold winters in Ohio. Halder completed his Master's in 1999, but still hung around the Cleveland-area campus and took classes to maintain his computer privileges (Hiaasen & Mangels, 2003). The motive for the shooting was fueled by a personal grudge against Shawn Miller, a university employee who worked in the Weatherhead computer lab on campus. Halder believed Miller had hacked into his account and destroyed over 1,000 files and deleted information for more than 50,000 contacts he spent years building. Halder eventually filed a lawsuit against Miller, but Halder's difficult nature led his attorney to withdraw as his council because of continued arguments with Halder. A couple months later Halder bought a pair of guns (Hickey de Haven, 2009). He lost the case and filed an appeal, which was equally unsuccessful. On May 9, 2003, only a few days after he learned that his appeal had been dismissed, Halder came to the computer lab that Miller worked at dressed in military fatigues, a military helmet, and a flak jacket. He carried two semi-automatic pistols, 800 rounds of

ammunition, and a sledgehammer. Halder shot to death graduate student Norman Wallace and held the building hostage for seven hours before police finally subdued him (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

*Virginia Tech University.*

Intellectually, Seung Hui Cho performed well in the classroom. In his second year at Virginia Tech University he changed his major from computer technology to English, but his early pursuits to be published garnered little success (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). In the fall of 2005, he signed up for a creative writing course, but the violent and graphic nature of his writings bothered his classmates. His creative writing professor, Nikki Giovanni, asked to have Cho removed from the class when his behavior became even more of a disruption (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). From October 2005 through the end of the semester the English Department Chair, Dr. Lucinda Roy, took Cho out of Giovanni's class and began working with him in a one-on-one setting. Cho's mental instability eventually led to him having a phone conversation with a clinical psychologist, who made no diagnosis and requested no further appointment (Hickey de Haven, 2009; Shuchman, 2007).

Cho continued with his odd behavior, eventually threatening to commit suicide. This led to a call to police and a stay in a psychiatric ward. Cho was diagnosed by court officials as being a danger to himself and outpatient treatment was requested, but it never happened (Hickey de Haven, 2009). From that point on Cho fell off the counseling center radar. He did not draw the attention of most anyone until April 16, 2007, the day of his shooting rampage. No connection was found between Cho and his first shooting victim, Emily Hilscher. The noises that emanated from Hilscher's room in West Ambler



Johnston (WAJ) dormitory around 7:15 a.m. were loud enough to cause resident advisor Ryan Clark to leave his room to see what happened. Cho ended up shooting and killing Clark (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Cho exited the building without any issue. Once the Virginia Tech University and Blacksburg police became aware of the incident 30 minutes later they put the residence hall under lockdown. A friend of Hilscher reported that her now deceased friend had been visiting her boyfriend, and she knew that he owned a gun. This made him an immediate “person of interest,” a mistake the university would later acknowledge (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

According to university personnel, the unfortunate events of August 2006 influenced the Virginia Tech Policy Group’s course of action with regard to the double homicide at WAJ Hall. In 2006, a convict named William Morva escaped from a nearby prison and killed a law enforcement officer and a guard at a local hospital. An inaccurate police report indicated that the convict might be on the Virginia Tech campus, which led to students rushing out of the building with their hands up as police entered. As it turned out, Morva was captured off campus. With the shootings of Hilscher and Clark, the Policy Group did not want to cause a repeat of the Morva situation. Therefore, the university was not put on high alert. (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

After shooting the two students in West Ambler Johnston, Cho went back to his room and wiped out his university computer account shortly before 7:30 a.m. He deleted his computer’s hard drive and threw away his cell phone (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Before 9:00 a.m., Cho went to the Blacksburg post office and mailed a package to NBC News in New York that had a CD with videos and letters of him complaining about the world. The pictures showed him wielding weapons he would later use in his rampage.

He then went to Norris Hall with two handguns and almost 400 rounds of ammunition. Upon arriving, he chain shut the doors at the three main entrances and put a note on one of the doors that said a bomb would go off if anyone tried to remove the chains. He first walked into Professor G. V. Loganathan's engineering class and shot him to death. He then killed nine students and injured two (only two survived unharmed). No one in the room was able to call the police (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

The first call to 9-1-1 went through to Virginia Tech police less than two minutes after the shooting started. Cho eventually moved onto room 207, a German class taught by Christopher James Bishop. He shot and killed Bishop and four other students. Cho then moved onto Jocelyne Couture-Nowak's French class and shot the professor before walking down the aisle to shoot the students. Cho did not say anything as he fired his gun (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Cho was unsuccessful in getting into several other classrooms, so he returned to Couture-Nowak's class and went around the room shooting students again. This classroom received the most visits by Cho, who ended up killing 11 students and the instructor while wounding another six – the entire class.

Cho tried entering the classroom of solid mechanics professor Liviu Librescu (room 204), who blocked the door with his body and told his students to escape via the window. Ten of the 16 students escaped this way. Unfortunately, Librescu was fatally shot through the door trying to hold it closed. One student was shot fatally in this class. The massacre continued for nine minutes after the first call to police, during which time Cho murdered 25 students and five faculty of Virginia Tech at Norris Hall. Another 17 were shot and survived, and six were injured when they jumped from classroom windows to escape (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

*Northern Illinois University.*

The Virginia Tech shooting was the worst in American history. But the country would not have a lot of time to mourn, as a year later Steven Kazmierczak opened up fire on the campus of Northern Illinois University. As a teen, Kazmierczak dealt with serious mental illness that generally took the form of anxiety and depression. He was harassed for his physical looks and his failed suicide attempt his junior year (Vann, 2008). After numerous stints in the hospital, Kazmierczak's parents sent him to the Mary Hill Residence group home after graduation in June 1998.

In 2002 he enrolled at Northern Illinois University. By the fall of 2004 he was doing better from a social standpoint. He also had a girlfriend, and he was doing well academically – Kazmierczak won the distinguished Deans' Award during his senior year (Vann, 2008). He eventually began dating Jessica Baty, during which time he enrolled at the University of Illinois. It was around this timeframe that he applied for his firearms permit. Since Kazmierczak had been out of the mental-health system for five years, he was eligible (Vann, 2008). From February to March he bought various guns and went to the shooting range instead of school.

He and Baty broke up but still got an apartment together in the summer of 2007. By this point Kazmierczak's obsessive-compulsive behavior was out of control, as he washed his hands 20 times a day, checked five times to make sure the car was locked and three times for the apartment door. He made an appointment that August at McKinley Health Center on the Illinois campus and eventually was back on meds (Prozac) for the first time in more than six years (Vann, 2008).

A couple days before the shooting, Kazmierczak drove to DeKalb, Illinois and checked into the Best Western hotel. That evening he closed all his e-mail, phone and computer accounts. On February 14, 2008, – Valentine’s Day – Kazmierczak walked into an Introduction to Ocean Science class at Cole Hall Room 100 at 3:04 p.m. He stood on the stage and fired his shotgun into the front row of students. Kazmierczak eventually walked calmly up the aisle, shooting students with his pistol. He kept shooting, aiming primarily at women. Five students were killed – Gayle Dubowski, Ryanne Mace, Julianna Gehant, Catalina Garcia and Daniel Parmenter – while 18 others were injured. Kazmierczak eventually hopped back onto the stage and committed suicide (Vann, 2008).

#### *Student Characteristics*

Analyses of these seven cases revealed four themes related to the assailants’ character. Each shooter does not necessarily exhibit all four traits. Each theme is presented separately.

##### *Theme No. 1: Loner/Antisocial.*

Several individuals involved in the campus shootings had trouble over the years interacting with their peers, often times leaving them as social outcasts. Gang Lu struggled socially due to his limited English, at one point placing an ad in the local newspaper describing his desire to meet somebody. His attempts to build relationships with the opposite sex did not go well, driving him to pornography. At one time he became infatuated with a co-ed he met at a local sports bar in Iowa City, sending her friendship cards and eventually a set of roses with champagne. However, she was clearly not interested, and when he showed up unannounced at her door the girl’s boyfriend told him to leave her alone. Furthermore, Lu continued to lose favor with his fellow Chinese

classmates, especially after a canoeing trip in which he was unjustly angered by how the expenses were divided up. Later, a dispute over a dinner tab resulted in Lu stranding two classmates in Chicago, 200 miles away from school, a decision that further alienated him from the group. By early winter of 1991 Lu was such a social pariah that almost nobody came to his Chinese New Year party, leaving him crushed and angry. Whenever Lu found himself surrounded by others he projected an aloofness that separated him from his peers. Going to the gun range and staying at home to watch action-packed, violent movies characterized the final summer of his life. He was becoming even more socially reclusive since going off university payroll that May. He was still welcomed to the physics department, but was distant with everybody (Chen, 1995).

Wayne Lo, who went on a shooting rampage at Bards College at Simon's Rock, was described as being increasingly antisocial toward others both inside and outside the classroom in the months leading up to his rampage. Lo did have a small circle of friends that he established during his first year at Simon's Rock. It was only after one of his close friends was kicked out of school that Lo started to separate himself from the rest of society (Hickey de Haven, 2009). Biswanath Halder, the Case Western Reserve University shooter, also was reportedly a loner on campus (Hiaasen & Mangels, 2003).

The troubling case with Seung Hui Cho started long before he arrived to Virginia Tech. Cho's growth both socially and mentally was stunted as a result of his "selective mutism" as a child. His struggles interacting with others were also due to his extreme social anxiety disorder. The South Korean lived a life of solitude. For all of his 23 years, the most frequent observation made by anyone about him was that Cho had absolutely no social life. He shielded himself away from other people and seemed to prefer his own

company to the company of others. Even amongst family members Cho was quiet and uncommunicative. This led his parents to repeatedly discuss this abnormal characteristic with others. He did his school work alone and with as little oral communication as possible (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Steven Kazmierczak was described as an outsider in high school, even among his friends. The Northern Illinois shooter's wardrobe of choice during this time was a gothic look: long black trench coats, black leather boots, chains and spikes. In college, he was known as "Strange Steve" among his classmates thanks to reports fed from Kazmierczak's roommate, Ahron Mack, who would later tell police that Kazmierczak only left the room to eat. The only other signs of antisocial behavior came one month before the shootings, when Kazmierczak began to isolate himself from his friends (Vann, 2008). It is difficult to discern the extent to which the lack of social interaction in the aforementioned cases contributed to the shooters' eventual decisions to attack their prospective institutions. That aside, this behavior is worth noting because it should drive more colleges and universities to develop programs to help to students that are seen by their classmates as social outsiders.

*Theme No. 2: Professional Students Blame Faculty.*

A second theme to emerge from the study of assailants is the revelation that several shootings were calculated attacks on a collection of university faculty and staff members whom the shooters felt had a clear mission to see them fail. Gang Lu first felt slighted by the University of Iowa during a visit he had with Margaret B. Brooke. As the program assistant and foreign-student adviser at the university's Office of International Education and Services, Brooke was the employee foreign students interacted with when they

wished to change their visa status. Brooke came to understand in the fall of 1986 that Lu wanted to change his visa status because he was changing majors. Apparently the College of Business Administration had accepted him as an M.B.A. candidate, but to transfer he had to get a job that would earn him at least \$10,000. Lu was dumbstruck by this notion and felt boxed in. To complicate matters, his \$7,700 teaching assistantship was not renewed. It took a while for Lu to deal with this reality, but by the second year of graduate school he came to terms with the fact he could not get an M.B.A. (Chen, 1995).

Lu's first real frustrations with a specific faculty member were directed at the professor that helped to mentor him throughout his studies – Christoph Klaus Goertz. In December 1990, Lu's classmate Shan Linhua finished his Ph.D. with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. In doing so, he beat Lu across the finish line with a better GPA. Lu appeared to blame everybody but himself for this outcome. He felt Goertz favored Linhua. Furthermore, Lu was ridiculed during the defense of his dissertation for not doing a double precision calculation that would ensure accuracy. He again blamed Goertz and chairman of the physics department Dwight Nicholson, saying they were try to expose him and cause him emotional anguish. He also called out associate professor Robert A. Smith for being too critical in his questioning (Chen, 1995).

The incident with administration that appeared to trigger Lu's shooting rampage involved the awarding of university's annual D.C. Spriesterbach Dissertation Prize by the Graduate College. Lu improved his work after the initial negative feedback and got Nicholson and Smith (among others) to sign off on it. On Friday, April 26 he learned that Nicholson had nominated Shan Linhua for the Spriesterbach award. Lu felt it was incomprehensible for them to pass him by even after he made revisions. He took his

claim of injustice to central administration, who found no justification for nullifying Nicholson's nomination of Linhua. Eventually, Lu wrote a letter in response that said he would be willing to take further action to protect his rights. His complaints extended to T. Anne Clearly, the University of Iowa Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the school's president, Hunter R. Rawlings III. He claimed the Graduate College and physics department were part of a "cover up" of Nicholson's misconduct. Lu's efforts to obtain a job were not having much success, and he blamed this mostly on Goertz and Nicholson.

Shortly before his shooting rampage, Lu wrote a suicide letter to his second-oldest sister, Huimin, clearly illustrating his frustrations with the university system at Iowa. In the letter he criticized Nicholson, Goertz and Smith, explaining the ways in which they wronged him during his time at the University of Iowa. Often times the claims were very trivial (Chen, 1995).

Despite his eventual suicide, law enforcement and school officials were able to gather strong clues revealing Robert Flores' motives for killing three University of Arizona faculty members thanks in large part to a suicide letter entitled "Communication from the Dead" that he sent to the *Arizona Daily Star* (2002). In his 23-page letter, which was posted on the newspaper's online site, the names of some of the victims, and his frustrations with both their behaviors and the behavior of the institution, are apparent. Evidence shows that Flores hated the women he killed, but his anger was primarily anti-institutional.

His frustrations with the University of Arizona's School of Nursing started 10 years before the 2002 shooting even took place. Six years into his military deployment, he went



down to University of Arizona to get some questions answered about enrolling in their nursing program as well as have his unofficial transcript opened to see what else is needed. In his suicide letter, he describes his frustrations of being blown off by University of Arizona personnel. Once enrolled at the University of Arizona, Flores' frustrations with the institution continued when the College of Nursing accepted only 33 hours of his 110 semester credit hours, none of which counted towards his core classes. Once in school, Flores felt ostracized by his professors. He felt being male, a nontraditional student and assertive was not compatible with instructors at College of Nursing. Flores believed they were ignoring him, so he took this issue to Assistant Dean of Students, Pamela Reed, who only gave the issue her attention once it was in writing (Flores, 2002).

It was noted earlier in this report that Biswanath Halder, the Case Western Reserve University shooter, claimed a university employee deleted all of his files that were to be used towards a business that would provide important resources for natives of India living outside of the country. The two had many run-ins, including an argument on the day the Web site was hacked. Halder took his complaints to the administration and police, but little was being done to make him happy. Halder took matters into his own hands when it became apparent the legal system was not going to find Miller or the university at fault for the deleted files (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

*Theme No. 3: Warning Signs.*

Aside from a feeling of being disrespected by the faculty and staff at their respective institutions, several shooters provided warning signs of their future actions, be it through their actions or words. The evidence of potential danger with Robert Flores at

the University of Arizona's College of Nursing stretched back to Spring 2001, when instructor Melissa Goldsmith heard him say that he might "end it all" and might "put something [such as a bomb] under the college" (Hickey de Haven, 2009, p. 543).

Goldsmith filed a police report but no investigation of Flores was conducted. The police reported that an officer had called the student, left a message, and noted that he would eventually follow up with Flores. However, no other action was taken. Flores's suicide letter does not mention any interaction with police or any university representatives at a level higher than the Assistant Dean of the College of Nursing (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

The clear failing in the case with Wayne Lo and Bard College at Simon's Rock was the fact that university officials allowed firearms to be delivered. Once university officials noted that a package from an arms dealer had arrived at the university, they scheduled a meeting to discuss what to do with it. Their obvious fear was that the package might contain a weapon in violation of the college policy prohibiting firearms, weapons, and explosives on college property. Rodgers and the residence directors decided to question Lo about the packages contents only after it was delivered.

Even after residence hall directors inspected the package and found the contents to be various parts to weapons, Lo mentioned that the cartridge box was a gift for his father, and the other items were used for target practice whenever he went home to Montana. He gave this same excuse to Dean Bernard Rodgers. When Lo arrived at Rodger's office with the items, he was calm in expressing his understanding of the university's policy that firearms are not allowed on campus (Appeals Court of Massachusetts, 2002). The failure to take more drastic actions led to the eventual phone call from Jeremy Roberts, who said Lo had a weapon with ammunition and he intended to kill others. During this

time in which university officials tried to notify each other of these facts and find Lo, he had already started his killing spree.

In the Appalachian School of Law case, one law student noted that shooter Peter Odighizuwa talked about how he was going to shoot somebody. Some went to the Dean about their concerns, but no action to remove Odighizuwa from campus or get him medical help was taken (Hickey de Haven, 2009). Biswanath Halder also provided a strong signal of his eventual actions one year before his attack on Case Western Reserve University. The India-native told one of his few confidants, CWRU law student Paul Helon, he would “fuck those fuckers up” if he lost the court battle. Helon reported Halder’s threat to Shawn Miller, the computer lab employee who Halder blamed for his files being deleted. Miller reported it to his supervisor who eventually told him that Halder “probably would not do anything” (Hickey de Haven, 2009, p. 551).

The warning signs with Seung Hui Cho started when he signed up for a creative writing class in the fall of 2005. His classmates were threatened by his violent-themed stories. These rejections devastated Cho, and he fantasized about getting revenge on those around him. Professor Nikki Giovanni was so distressed by Cho that she threatened to resign unless he was removed from her creative writing class. Cho had bothered her by writing verses that accused his classmates of cannibalism and genocide. Several other students stopped going to the class because of Cho (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). English Department Chair Dr. Lucinda Roy noticed that all of his writings were about shooting and harming people because their authority or behavior angered him (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

After the Northern Illinois University shooting spree, Jessica Baty, the killer's on-and-off again girlfriend, described various warning signs that she noticed in him. The last day she saw Steven Kazmierczak was three days before the shooting. He suggested that she write a book about him someday, in which he could be her case study. Also, on the way to the Marilyn Manson concert the week before the shooting, Kazmierczak asked her, "What do you think happens when you die?" A couple months earlier he told her, "One day I might just disappear and you will never find me. Nobody will ever find me" (Vann, 2008, para. 312).

*Theme No. 4: Mental Illness.*

Another reoccurring theme is the prevalence of mental illness within the shooters. The initial signs that Wayne Lo, the Bard College at Simon's Rock shooter, was emotionally disturbed were evident through his obsession with being tough. His friends felt that Lo went through with the shootings in a way to impress them. Further supporting this point, Lo told residence directors Floyd and Trinka Robinson, who lived in the dorms with their children, that he had the power to bring the college to its knees (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

The element of mental illness was a unique aspect to Peter Odighizuwa and the Appalachian School of Law case. Odighizuwa was diagnosed after the shooting as a paranoid schizophrenic. There were several instances where his illness was on display to those around him. Forty-year-old Zeke Jackson said he stopped trying to recruit Odighizuwa to the university's Black Law Students' Association after he sent the dean a letter stating that Jackson was harassing him. The Nigerian native felt persecuted by other students and feared someone might shoot him, especially after he claimed to find a spent

shell casing in his yard. Odighizuwa told police about the bullet. He also told law enforcement officials that somebody broke into his home. In both instances, police found nothing (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

One year later the subject of mental illness reappeared in the wake of another campus shooting in Ohio. It later became clear after his shooting spree at Case Western Reserve University that Biswanath Halder suffered from paranoia, which was documented in a clear paper trail. This was the fuel behind his feud with Shawn Miller. Furthermore, on the second day of the sentencing process forensic psychologist Jeffrey Smalldon told the jurors that the then 65-year-old Halder was convinced that his seven-hour long shooting rampage of the business school was justified (ReDiff, 2006).

Virginia Tech shooter Seung Hui Cho started receiving psychotherapy in the seventh grade because he was extremely isolated socially. In the eighth grade, he was prescribed antidepressants for a year after an incident of depression following his writing of a paper for his English class in spring 1999. Shortly after the Columbine High School rampage, he indicated a desire to repeat what happened at Columbine and discussed general thoughts of suicide and murder (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007).

Dr. Lucinda Roy (2009), the former English Department Chair at Virginia Tech University, indicated that she tried to get Seung Hui Cho psychiatric help, but she felt the university's rules and the mental health system were geared more toward protecting his privacy rather than the safety of those around Cho. On Nov. 30, Cho did in fact call the counseling center and asked for an appointment with a licensed clinical psychologist. The appointment was scheduled for Dec. 12. However, Cho ended up only speaking briefly with the psychologist over the phone, and no diagnosis or referral for services was made.

Furthermore, the psychologist requested no further appointment for Cho (Hickey de Haven, 2009; Shuchman, 2007).

Cho later sent a text message to his suitemate that he was thinking of killing himself. He voluntarily spoke to an “emergency evaluator” from the state Department of Mental Health who recommended that he spend the night at St. Alban’s, a local mental health facility. The next day at his commitment hearing, the special justice of the circuit court ruled that Cho presented an imminent danger to himself as a result of mental illness and ordered that he follow all recommended outpatient treatments. Before Cho was released, he made an appointment at the Virginia Tech counseling center for 3:00 p.m. His psychiatric discharge summary was faxed to the counseling center, though the university later claimed not to have received it. When Cho showed up for his appointment, he was screened for the third time and left without talking with a counselor or scheduling another appointment. There was no follow-up by the counseling center or the court (Hickey de Haven, 2009).

As the case was with Cho, Steven Kazmierczak had a long history of mental illness that dates back to his adolescent years. As a junior in high school, Kazmierczak’s anxiety and antisocial behavior got so bad that on December 14, 1996 he decided to commit suicide. He survived the overdose on Tylenol, but his parents threw him into Rush University Medical Center in Illinois for a week. It did not help as his anxiety and depression continued. Furthermore, over the course of a couple months Kazmierczak blew up on all the medications, going from a skinny kid to one pushing 300 pounds with a serious case of acne (Vann, 2008).

Matters worsened over the course of the next year. On April 13, 1997 he overdosed on 40 Ambien and slit his wrists. After another failed suicide attempt Kazmierczak was taken to Alexian Brothers Hospital in northwest Chicago. He stayed for only three days, but eventually returned to the hospital two months later for suicidal thoughts. As noted earlier in this text, his parents sent him to the Mary Hill Residence group home after graduation (Vann, 2008).

In October, almost 16 months after entering the program, Kazmierczak's psychiatrist reported that he had concerns unrelated to medications – including feelings that people harassed him at work (Vann, 2008). Kazmierczak eventually went against doctors' orders by weaning off his medications and enrolling in school while trying to work (essentially, putting too much on his plate). He then quit school and enlisted in the Army. It would be several years before Kazmierczak revisited a mental health institution. On August 3, 2007 he made an appointment at McKinley Health Center on the University of Illinois campus. The social worker noted that Kazmierczak was worried about confidentiality, and he did not mention his previous mood swings or suicide attempts. She made him an appointment with a psychiatrist for three days later (Vann, 2008). During that visit the doctor noted that Kazmierczak exhibited elements of both social anxiety and obsessive/compulsive disorder, and started him on Prozac. One month later he was back at McKinley, explaining that his mother's death still bothered him. Furthermore, Kazmierczak was anxious all the time in this new place and was worried what people think of him. The doctor asked him whether he was planning to kill himself or anyone else. He said no. The staff at McKinley Health Center upped his Prozac intake and added Xanax. That would be the last time they would see him (Vann, 2008). After a

review of these four themes it is clear that the shooters felt disregarded by their peers in an educational setting, be it just in college or throughout their childhood. Their inability to connect with and generate respect from others was at times a delusion perpetuated by their mental illness.

### *Institutional Responses*

The characteristics of the various shooters in the aforementioned case studies have generated a lot of discussion amongst campus constituents as to how to better understand and provide help for these students as well as protect the campus community as a whole in rare instances where these individuals may lash out at others. Various measures have been taken at the campus, state and national level to avoid future shootings. In some instances – Case Western Reserve University and Appalachian School of Law – very little action, at least that which has been documented, has taken in terms of university or state policy changes and/or new programs following their respective campus shootings. Other schools and states, such as the University of Arizona and the states of Illinois and Virginia, headed the charge as far as new initiatives to better secure their campus as well as others. In some instances, national policies have been altered or added to provide better safety to the campus community. The following themes group the campus responses into clearly definable categories.

#### *Action No. 1: Happier, Safer Campuses.*

The actions from most universities following the shootings focused on stabilizing their campus climate. In some instances, strong measures were taken at the local level. Robert Flores' shootings in 2002 caught the attention of everyone across the University of Arizona campus. According to figures released by the Dean of Students, during the



2002-03 school year there were 69 reports of threats or harm compared with 22 threats the previous year (Simmons, 2003). The office also reported an 84 percent increase in overall conduct complaints, from 292 in 2001-02 to 536 the next school year. The Dean of Students office developed a software program designed to store reports of threatening activity more efficiently, automatically indicating when an individual has more than one report on their record (Simmons, 2003).

In response to Flores' shootings, the University of Arizona also developed a policy on threatening behavior to give faculty and staff clearly outlined steps for dealing with difficult situations. Playing off pop culture, the university also developed a 12-minute video for freshmen orientation that was formatted after the TV-show "American Idol." The Dean of Students office polled the faculty and students before it made the "Arizona Idols" video to determine what the campus community considered to be disruptive behavior (Simmons, 2003). In the fall of 2003 the University of Arizona and Tucson Police Departments staged a mock disaster. The drill was designed to test the emergency response systems at the University of Arizona. Changes enacted by the university since Flores' shootings included modifications to policies on threatening behavior by students and violence in the workplace (Simmons, 2003).

Some of the recent legislation related to campus security was initiated long before the Virginia Tech rampage. At the 2004 National Summit on Campus Public Safety, held from November 29 to December 1 in Baltimore, Maryland, a series of recommendations were made related to promoting collaboration, operating a safe campus. Attendees suggested that a center for campus safety should be created to improve the quality of services provided by public safety personnel to students, faculty, staff, parents, and other

individuals affiliated with colleges and universities. It would also increase collaboration in prevention and problem-solving methods among entities serving higher education institutions (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2005).

That aside, no real action was taken with regard to this measure until January 28, 2009, when the CAMPUS Safety Act of 2009 was introduced in the House of Representatives. It would create a National Center for Campus Public Safety that would study and coordinate efforts related to security on school campuses. The House passed the bill by a voice vote and it was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee on February 4, 2009. It still needs to be passed by the Senate and signed by the President (OpenCongress, 2009).

In response to the shooting incident at Virginia Tech, former Illinois Governor Rod R. Blagojevich helped to establish in April 2007 the State of Illinois Campus Security Task Force (CSTF). The group created and implemented policies and training programs designed to help all public and private higher education institutions in Illinois prevent and respond to campus violence. This CSTF Report represented the consensus of over 75 organizations from the response, mental health, legal, and higher education communities (Blagojevich, et. al., 2008).

The Response Committee helped to enhance Illinois campus security through the distribution of interoperable radios to over 70 colleges statewide and campus security awareness training courses to over 95 Illinois campuses. One of the most positive changes made by the CSTF on the state level was the implementation of the 2008 Campus Security Enhancement Act. This act required state institutions to develop a National Incident Management System-compliant emergency response plan in

partnership with the institution's major emergency management official. They must then report the plan to this official and have annual training and exercises for the plan (Illinois General Assembly, 2010). It also required, as of January 2010, the development of a campus violence prevention plan that would include communication among all available campus and local mental health and first response resources as well as with government agencies and school districts near the college or university (Blagojevich, et. al., 2008).

Many colleges, including Virginia Tech, are also implementing systems to send emergency text messages to students' cell phones. The CaseWARN system was a new addition to Case Western University in 2008, and this system has been used in the event of an emergency. It is a text and voice messaging system that notifies the community if there is a major campus emergency (Yergin, 2008).

Omnilert, which sells mass notification systems, noted that since the Virginia Tech shootings the number of colleges using its campus emergency-alert system had jumped from about 25 to 200. The system uses phone calls, e-mail, RSS computer feeds, loudspeakers and digital billboards, but mostly text messages to get the word out. The text messages have been sent out for weather alerts, bomb scares and power outages (Vu, 2007).

#### *Action No. 2: Challenge Gun Laws.*

Some institutions have reacted to the violence that has interrupted their campus learning community by challenging the existing gun laws within their states. The University of Iowa killings in 1991 led to the creation of the November First Coalition, a grassroots organization formed by Iowa City gun-control advocates. In November 1993, Congress passed the Brady Bill, which imposes a five-day waiting period before person

may purchase a handgun. This gave authorities time to conduct a background check (Chen, 1995).

At the Simon's Rock College graduation ceremonies in May of 2003 (six months after the shootings), former Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts urged the 125 students to turn their fury and frustration into working for gun control. In the months following the shooting, various faculty members and students lobbied the state legislature to hold nonresidents to the same 30-day waiting period that residents must meet when buying firearms in the state. Under state law, nonresidents who wish to buy firearms are subject to the laws of their home state, not Massachusetts law (New York Times, 1993). The state has not made any clear changes in this regard, but they have laid out specific conditions for mentally ill individuals to possess guns. According to Massachusetts law, these individuals can only possess a gun if they submit with their application an affidavit of a registered physician attesting that this professional believes the applicant is not disabled by mental illness in a manner that should prevent such applicant from possessing a firearm (Executive Office of Public Safety, 2010). Current Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has been a strong proponent of gun control. Last year he presented an Anti-Crime Package Bill that amends state law to comply with the federal National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Improvement Amendments Act of 2007. The bill also limits gun purchases to one gun a month in order to reduce gun trafficking by "straw purchasers" who purchase firearms for convicted felons or other prohibited buyers (Patrick, 2010). College students were probably not the primary targets for Governor Patrick's bill. But they do help to improve accountability in regards to the process of purchasing a gun.

The gun laws of North Carolina were scrutinized following the Appalachian State University shootings. College administrators argued that guns and students are a volatile mix that could lead to more violence, whereas gun-rights proponents feel having access to guns enables victims to defend themselves.

*Action No. 3: FERPA Changes.*

One of the major points made in the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report following the rampage by Seung-Hui Cho was that many parties at the university saw FERPA as a barrier to sharing important information with others on campus or to contact the students' parents about the behaviors of students of concern. However, the U.S. Department of Education announced proposed changes in the Federal Register on March 24, 2008, to help educational agencies and institutions better understand and administer FERPA, and to make important changes to improve school safety through access to education data for research and accountability. The final regulations were announced on December 8, 2008.

These regulations note that educational agencies and institutions may disclose information from education records to appropriate parties, including parents, whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of a student or another individual if there is a significant threat to the health or safety of a student or other individual, considering the totality of the circumstances (Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Rule, 2008). The final regulations further require educational entities to explain the health or safety emergency that required the release of the student's education records. These written agreements must specify the purpose, scope, and duration of the study and the information to be disclosed. Colleges and universities have generally been under the mistaken impression that FERPA prevents them from providing

parents with information about their children who are at least 18 years of age or attending a postsecondary institution. The updated regulations clarify that even after the rights under FERPA have transferred from parents to a student who is considered an adult, a college or university may generally disclose education records to the student's parents without consent under FERPA existing provisions (Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Rule, 2008). The updates to the FERPA laws have helped to minimize that gray area when dealing with disturbed students. For instance, the updated regulations would have given Virginia Tech officials more leeway to make Seung Hui Cho's parents aware of his threatening behavior in the classroom as well as the medical treatment he was receiving outside of it. As mentioned, the new FERPA regulations also allow university's the opportunity to disclose personal information if they can justify their actions. The current state of FERPA laws has caused universities and colleges to invest more in a team concept to intervention of disturbed students.

*Action No. 4: Team Concept to Assessment*

One of the most troubling findings to come from the Seung Hui Cho shootings at Virginia Tech is that residence life administrators knew through their staff (two residence advisers and their supervisor) that multiple reports and concerns were expressed over Cho's behavior in the dorms, but nobody took these concerns to the CARE team, a group that was established to identify and work with troubled students (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). The National Center for Higher Education Risk Management established the CUBIT (College & University Behavioral Intervention Team) Model in response to shootings at Virginia Tech and the obvious need to improve communication systems across different departments. More than 300 campuses have implemented some version

of CUBIT since its introduction in December 2007. The goal of CUBIT is to accurately predict potential for violent, homicidal and/or suicidal behaviors through individualized assessment. The key is to intervene early and provide support and behavioral response to disturbed or disturbing students. The CUBIT team also needs to make sure that services, support and resources are deployed effectively (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008).

A psychologist from the campus counseling center and a student affairs administrator should be permanent members of the CUBIT. It is up to each campus to determine the remaining members of CUBIT. This might include having a permanent representative from campus law enforcement, health services office, residence life, or someone who handles university crisis situations. The idea is to keep the staff lean so that it is easy to assemble when needed (Sokolow & Hughes, 2008).

Another key function of CUBIT is to balance FERPA, HIPAA and general counselor privilege with university need-to-know and emergency communication needs. The group also would be responsible for engaging faculty and staff in an effective assessment and response with respect to disturbed or disturbing students.

As suggested, getting students to assist in the assessment and intervention of other disturbed individuals has been a helpful practice in the post-Virginia Tech era. Recently the University of Arizona launched the UA SafeCats Program. This student fee-funded service, which began in the fall of 2009, is designed to disperse information related to safety on and off campus for students, faculty, staff, parents, and other university community members through various avenues. The SafeCats Program was created in response to a UA Student Safety Survey completed in the spring of 2008. This program

provides access to a “one-stop-shop” network that brings safety to the forefront of campus life (University of Arizona, 2009).

That same semester the University launched Student Advocacy and Assistance, whose purpose is to work with students experiencing personal trauma, mental/behavioral health issues, needing wellness checks or have other safety concerns or student defined crises. Between September 14, 2009 and December 11, 2009, the coordinator of Student Advocacy and Assistance served over 140 students, with more than 500 contacts (Student Service Fee Progress Report). The program has helped to arrange emergency housing for residents, counsel students dealing with suicidal thoughts, communicating with parents and concerned parties, provide referrals to self-help resources within the campus and Tucson communities, as well as coordinate services and referrals for students who have experienced a traumatic event (University of Arizona, 2009).

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have given more people the opportunity to attend college, an accomplishment that should not be overlooked. But what is often unnoticed is the pressure that is put on college students to succeed both academically and socially once they get to that stage. This can be even more enormous for students dealing with different forms of mental illness. How students, not necessarily just those dealing with mental illness, react to that pressure is not always positive. The violence brought on by Kazmierczak, Cho, Flores and others was premeditated, and it ruined the lives of many. Some of these individuals wanted to gain fame from their rampages, and to some extent, they got their wish. But what they also did was bring the issue of campus security to an unprecedented level. The



abovementioned responses from colleges and government officials, both locally and nationally, indicate that improvements have been made in terms of preventative and responsive measures.

Data indicates that mental health centers are making efforts to make their services more appealing. On a national level, statistics have shown that college counseling services across the country have trended towards improving their services. The results from the 2009 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors were drawn from 302 centers representing 2.6 million students who are eligible for counseling services at their institutions. According to survey results, only 6.1 percent of centers charge for personal counseling, down from a peak of 17.2 percent in 1996. Additionally, 107 new staff positions were funded during the past year whereas only 37 positions were lost. The ratio of counselors to students is 1 to 1,527. This compares to a ratio of 1 to 1,906 for 2008, when 284 centers were surveyed representing 3.4 million students. Furthermore, 10.4 percent of enrolled students sought counseling in 2009 compared with 9.0 percent the previous year (Gallagher, 2008; 2009). An important change at the Cook Counseling Center at Virginia Tech following Cho's rampage was the addition of six counselors to the staff. In 2007, only 10 counselors were employed at the center, meaning each counselor was responsible for almost 3,000 total university students. As of March 2010, there are 16 counselors, with a counselor-to-student ratio of roughly 1:1,800 students (Sanderson, 2010).

But the problem is far from fixed. There are several ways in which campus safety can be improved. As the abovementioned 2008 NASPA supplement noted, college counseling/psychological services should have more programs and outreach efforts

geared towards men, especially when considering these individuals pulled the trigger in 39 of the 41 fatal school shootings in the United States from 1966 – 2007 (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Barriers related to male identity exist with regard to them seeking professional assistance from a counselor or psychiatrist. Often times men have shaped their perceptions over time to think that these services are ineffective, or simply not in their best interests. Societal and family influences, be it direct or indirect, lead men to believe addressing their own inadequacies with a stranger is a sign of weakness. The goal is to simply change that perception. These changes need to start at the secondary level, where counseling services are often times ignored by students, particularly males. This is due in part to the fact that the counselors are spending less time counseling and more time taking care of administrative responsibilities unrelated to mental health, such as altering student schedules. More secondary schools need to change the responsibilities of their counseling staff so they spend more time reaching out to students and making their services more inviting to males. This change in perception at both the secondary and higher education levels is especially important given the number of men needing psychological counseling will likely increase as more military servicemen return from combat. In some instances, these individuals return to college campuses with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or other psychological issues that could result in violence against others.

Outreach programs developed through the counseling/psychological service offices need to be more accessible to the entire campus and easily explainable to faculty and students so these two parties can better detect warning signs. As the case studies have shown, every gunman on campus interacts with at least one faculty member and/or

another student during their college career. For this reason, it is extremely important for both groups to be able to detect abnormalities in behavior of disturbed individuals.

Alarming statistics related to this matter came from the *Safe School Initiative*, a recent study provided by the U.S. Secret Service. Personnel from the Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) studied 37 secondary school shootings, involving 41 attackers who were current or recent students at the school. Shootings clearly related to gang or drug activity or to an interpersonal or relationship dispute that happened to occur on school grounds were not included. In over three-quarters of the cases, the attacker(s) told someone before the incident about his interest in mounting an attack on the school. In over half of the cases, the attacker told more than one person. In one instance, the attacker told at least 24 friends and classmates about his interest in killing other kids (Vossekuil, et al., 2000). Steps should be taken to make students aware of warning signs as soon as they step on campus, be it through orientation or another avenue. Sometimes the warning signs are not as obvious, which is why community-based programs designed to raise awareness, as well as advocacy groups with representation from different departments, are important. Furthermore, it is important for these programs to have clearly defined tasks and procedures so the representatives from different entities across campus understand how to make a proper diagnosis and/or referral.

And even though the aforementioned data shows improvements in counseling and psychological services, campus violence can be curtailed even more if these units are provided ample resources to be effective. This includes staffing, marketing resources to effectively engage the university community, etc. For instance, the goal of every institution should be to adhere to the International Association of Counseling Services

(IACS) recommendation of one staff member for every 1,500 students. Having more staff available to engage students will only improve the classroom performance of young adults suffering from mental illness. Research suggests that 37 percent of individuals between the ages of 15-to-24 have a diagnosable mental illness or psychological problem, both of which are barriers to retention and ultimately graduation (Kessler, Olsfon & Berglund, 1998). Turner and Berry (2000) reported a retention rate of 85 percent for students involved in counseling versus 74 percent for those who did not.

The benefits of a university-wide support system are apparent. Theory must be put into practice. Students, faculty and mental health officials must improve their understanding of the severity of these issues and the lessons learned. Changing their daily routines and procedures to support these concerns will be a positive step for the school, individuals and the community.

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