

Update on Off-Campus Incident:

Emergency Response & Communications: For this incident, City Police were first responders on the scene, and were there quickly (they already had officers in the area). Once the situation was contained, those officers were able to notify dispatch and their Chief of Police. The City's Chief called SU's Chief of Police to provide all of the developing information they had on the situation. Once SUPD was aware an incident took place near campus, an alert was issued to the campus community. At this time, we were not yet informed that the incident involved SU students. The Mayor also called to ensure that the University was looped in due to the proximity to campus. Once the victims were identified as students, Student Affairs immediately began with their support protocols. Some of the feedback we received was that the initial alert was too vague. The first message sent out was not very specific, and this is often the case because SUPD and Police Dispatch only have limited information but need to issue a warning. These alerts are often an extra layer of caution to keep people away from a potentially dangerous area – they are not meant to share substantial details of the situation. This is different than what the campus community would see if there was an active threat to campus, which would provide more specific instructions like where to seek shelter, shelter in place, exiting a building, etc.

Crisis Communications Plan & Debrief: We recognize the importance of ensuring that campus is prepared to deal with emergencies. Our Crisis Communications Plan was recently updated and outlines our responsibilities to communicate internally, with the University System of Maryland, and with State/local agencies during an emergency situation. SUPD maintains continuity of operations plans for various areas of campus, and is in the process of ensuring those plans are also up to date. They will be in touch with various responsible parties to make sure everyone is familiar with their roles and responsibilities. SUPD also maintains the University's emergency operations plan and coordinates training for our emergency operations team. A tabletop exercise is scheduled for October and more information and outcomes will be shared after the exercise is complete.

Next Steps: The safety and security of our students and employees continues to be the administration's top priority. Even before the incident last week, SU has been meeting with allied agencies about some of the concerning trends we're seeing in the City and surrounding areas. Those meetings will continue with greater frequency. Data supports that our campus is among the safest places to be in Salisbury, but we recognize our students and employees live beyond the borders of campus, and we have to do more. We are adding five additional police officers to SUPD. This process was underway well before the shooting and four of these hires are backfilling existing positions that were left vacant during the pandemic. We recently expanded our memorandum of understanding with the City of Salisbury, Fruitland, and the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office so that our police department can assist with responding to calls and patrolling critical areas. We are now taking another look at that MOU. SUPD recently purchased new equipment so officers can regularly train in active shooter and other high-risk situations. This equipment allows SUPD to practice on campus as frequently as necessary. The University is also increasing the frequency of our meetings with local law enforcement agencies to improve collaboration and information sharing.

Student Tips: Student Affairs sent information out to the entire campus community that included safety tips and available resources. Safety will always be a top priority, and students are encouraged to call the police immediately if they feel there is danger. We also want to highlight the dangers of large gatherings, particularly at night/early in the morning. Unfortunately, there are people who are looking for and targeting these types of events.