

Statement on Proposal to Arm MATC Public Safety Officers

Sue Ruggles, Local 212 Health & Safety Representative

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What concerns me most about the proposal to arm MATC Public Safety officers is the lack of faculty and staff inclusion in the discussion. When Local 212 agreed last year to conditionally support the Public Safety staffing plan, we urged the administration to work collaboratively with faculty and staff to develop a comprehensive plan. While that has happened to some extent, we have had no input on a proposal that would open the door to the use of deadly force.

We have made progress. We've worked on the Emergency Response Guide, participated in fire drills and CERT training, had a demonstration of the wireless alert system, tested the public address system and emergency phones, and heard periodic updates from Brad Hines in the Sustainability Committee. We've heard reports on increased staffing, training, and mobile patrols, but nothing on the proposal to arm Public Safety officers.

In February, we participated in a Security Navigation Workshop facilitated by Johnson Controls. The top security needs we identified were:

- Employee training on emergency policies and procedures
- Effective emergency notification
- Rapid evacuation of facility in emergency situations
- Updated policies and procedures based on best practices
- Increased reliability of security systems and technology
- Improved training for security staff

We talked about the need for a more visible Public Safety presence, more patrols, and better training. We talked about the lack of a clear MATC policy on how to handle disruptive students in the classroom. But no one ever characterized our students as dangerous or confrontational. Faculty are asking for more effective intervention, conflict resolution, and training in dealing with emergencies or threats. No one expressed the opinion that our Public Safety officers should be armed.

The Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety of 2007 offers a set of best practices:

- Clear procedures for identifying and reporting threatening behavior
- Increased student access to counseling and mental health resources
- Shared responsibility and community outreach

For reports of troubling behavior, the Task Force recommends:

- A review team comprised of academic, mental health, and law enforcement
- Thorough assessment of every report of troubling behavior
- Standardized assessment and screening

None of this has happened or even been discussed. Instead we read in the newspaper that our students are becoming more angry and combative, and posing a threat to the community. If that's true, why haven't these incidents been reported and discussed?

Why hasn't there been a report to the Sustainability Committee, or to the new joint Safety Committee? Why haven't I heard about this first-hand from faculty and staff in my capacity as Local 212 Health and Safety rep? I hear about plenty of other problems, but nothing about this. Let's have that discussion before we act on this proposal.

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