STOP THE MADNESS – HOW UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE RESPONDING TO SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

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Each successive campus attack provokes knee-jerk responses from the higher education community. After Virginia Tech, we made the text-messaging industry rich. After Northern Illinois University, we're seeing a widespread movement toward locking classroom doors. What as-yet-unimagined remedies will we rush to deploy after the next shooting? Depends on the nature of that shooting. We thought after some time had passed, and we had distance from Virginia Tech, cooler heads would prevail. By and large, they have not. We are caught in a reactive mode, pinned by fear and deluged by services, contractors, consultants, devices, gadgets and gizmos assuring they can protect us. After the Virginia Tech shootings, we hoped colleges would not lose sight of the mental health crisis provoking this violence. Our salvation lies not in text messages but in looking at the roots of the problem. Each successive shooting should reassure us of that, but it is easier to install door locks. How should universities really be responding?

- CLASSROOM DOOR LOCKS. This idea is gaining traction as a result of the easy access to a classroom gained by a former student at Northern Illinois University. This approach, like many, has few merits and many disadvantages. Proponents want to use locks to harden targets. Any time spent by a shooter trying to find unlocked rooms or shooting at locks is less time he will be able to spend shooting people. True enough. But, if a shooter is a student or former student, he will know we now lock classrooms, and will instead target the cafeteria, the quad or use the belltower. Locks will chase the shooting to a new venue. But, will they stop the shooting? Classroom locks also have practical limitations. Some campuses are fitting crash-bar doors, which at least solve the problem of locking us in with a shooter, but most have key-button locks.   These lock the door once class has started, but what about in-between class times when doors have to be open to allow student access? And, what about shooting the hallway full of students as they head to class or leave? Should we lock the exterior building doors? Tailgating is rampant. Students will let the shooter in right behind them. They'll even hold the door for him. Students are notoriously late for classes. They'll knock, disrupting class, and someone will go let them in. This will happen so often that eventually the instructor will be aggravated. Will someone then prop the door? That's what happens with so many of our residence hall doors. So, will we install prop alarms? That won't be at all disruptive to the academic process, will it? And, we're one step closer to turning the college campus into a police state. Colleges that feel like prisons won't feel like colleges anymore. And, while horrific, shootings on college campuses are still statistically rare, however devastating they are for the families and communities that experience them. Will locked rooms become havens for sexual assault or other criminal activity, trading protection from shooters for increases in other personal and property crimes? Any money spent on door locks that creates an inability to spend on campus behavioral intervention capacity is short-sighted, wrong-headed and ultimately substitutes a veneer of safety for truly proactive prevention. Stop the madness.

- SECURITY CAMERAS. One client recently boasted to me of the $60,000 camera system now trained on every inch of their community college campus, with an archive that will maintain six months of tape from every camera. Wow. So, they will have a great recorded image of exactly what the shooter looked like as he pulled the trigger. We'll have major network coverage of his flat, affectless expression as he rampaged. Most security camera systems are not live-monitored. Even if they were, our response times are longer than most shootings. A taped system may be useful at catching perpetrators of other campus crimes after the fact, but are likely to be of little use in preventing shootings and other violence. Some assert a deterrent effect, if the perpetrator is aware of the cameras, but as with locked classroom doors, their effect may be to move the violence, not necessarily to prevent it. The money invested in cameras will make us FEEL safe, but it will do little to MAKE us safe. A case being litigated in New York right now involves students who allegedly gang-raped a female student, and mid-rape, held up a sign in her handwriting in front of the hallway security camera stating "I want sex" despite her nearly passed-out state of intoxication. Did those cameras help her? Rather than deter her attackers, the camera unwittingly served as their accomplice. No one came running. She committed suicide subsequently. Did the college take disciplinary action against any of the alleged perpetrators? Not according to the complaint. So, how did the cameras help her? How did they make that campus any safer? Stop the madness.

- BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION.   In the process of identifying and developing best practices for our clients, we find ourselves in the unique position to offer our models to other campuses as well. The best means of protecting our campuses from seemingly random violence is to accept that it is not as random as it seems. The potential for violence exists in each of our communities. The question is how we will identify it and act upon it. At NCHERM, we are convinced that a Behavioral Intervention team approach is the BEST and MOST effective model for accomplishing this goal. The NCHERM model is but one version of many that are in place, though we believe we have synthesized the strengths of each, minimized the weaknesses and added capacity that no other models have. We are pleased to report that as a result of our first Institute at which we shared the NCHERM CUBIT model, the entire Mississippi State University System decided to implement our approach. Dozens of other individual campuses are adopting our model or are using our models to inform their approach. The model concept is free. A Whitepaper discussing it in detail is posted at www.ncherm.org/whitepapers.html. Yet, NCHERM's clients are spending at a ratio of about 25 to 1, with security improvements wholly trampling investment in campus mental health-based and behavioral intervention approaches. We will soon come to regret this. We cannot tell you how many of our clients have installed sirens, security cameras, locks and text systems ad infinitum, but then claim not to have the resources to establish, train and equip a decent behavioral intervention team model. Where is the Presidential-level leadership on pressing behavioral intervention as an institutional priority? These same budget-strapped campuses probably have great new security cameras and tons of door locks. This is the wrong kind of investment. It invests us in threat-parallel or post-threat remedies, rather than getting us out ahead of the threat. Stop the madness.

- WE ARE NOT BIG BROTHER. Campus community members are becoming rightfully alarmed at a seeming trend toward Big Brotherism on campuses. Even mention suicide, and

you'll find yourself facing a mandated assessment or hospitalization on many campuses. If we take this approach, we will drive people who need support and resources underground. We need to help bring mental health crises to light, and help members of our communities to transcend these crises and succeed academically with better access to disability services, counseling, needed pharmacology and understanding peers. Big Brother will not get us there. Yet, we need to have an important debate in higher education about what the rise in school shootings means for campus civil rights and privacy. It is right now in a state of flux. A new balance will be struck, but for now, we are not sure whether to err on the side of safety, or on the side of protecting the rights of members of our communities, even if they may do us harm as a result. Rather than pose these as dichotomous or opposing goals, we at NCHERM chose to see them as compatible. We can collect information on "red flag" behavior, support students, deploy resources and effectively intervene while steadfastly adhering to rights established by FERPA, HIPAA, the Clery Act, ADA, the direct threat test required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Supreme Court "true threat" standard established by the *Watts* case, the privilege of counselors and health service providers, constitutional due process and other state standards that may apply. We have based CUBIT on the need to address each of these standards. CUBIT is designed to ensure that college and university administrators have clearer understanding of what rights each of these convey, and what areas of flexibility and response they allow. For example, we are all learning now how better to use FERPA as a communication tool, but first we must overcome years of imbedded campus consciousness that FERPA is a shield and an impediment to effective internal communication. It is no such thing.

- TIMELY WARNINGS. We need to warn our communities, but the madness of Congress is a good match for our current misplaced campus spending priorities. The House of Representatives has passed legislation that will require us to make timely warnings under the Clery Act within 30 minutes of becoming aware of a threat. The Senate version may be different, and we are hopeful that the conference committee will wind up imposing on us a more reasonable, longer time parameter. In the meantime, let's please keep in mind that our duty is to protect our community first, and warn our community second. A 30-minute warning requirement may distract us from the immediate need to focus on the crisis. It is true that a warning can save lives, but this hyper-focus that the Clery Act complaint against Virginia Tech has caused on so many campuses is not serving us well. It often can take a half-hour before we have any reasonable handle on what we are facing when a campus crisis occurs. But, the Security-on-Campus, Inc. folks want us to take the time to draft detailed warnings despite the fact that the Clery Act does not define "timely" and the Department of Education has been telling us for years that warnings within 24 to 48 hours are sufficient. If it comes down to protecting your community or worrying about compliance with an unreasonable provision of the Clery Act, I think our choice is clear. Three criteria have and always should guide our warning process. Can we identify the nature of the threat? Can we identify the source of the threat? Can we tell members of our community concrete actions they can take to protect themselves from the threat? If so, we should give a detailed warning. If not, we may just panic people and do more harm than good. NIU's timely warning on their shooting was out within 20 minutes but all it told people was that there was a shooter on campus and they should take action to protect themselves. That is a useless, but legally sufficient warning. S. Daniel Carter, the Vice president of Security-On-Campus praised this

warning at the Stetson Law and Higher Education Conference two weeks ago. What nonsense. This is a perfect example of a non-helpful warning done to satisfy the SOC perpetual-legislation machine. Who is shooting? Where? With what? Should you stay in? Should you leave? No details. Just protect yourself. If that's what they want, at least it won't distract us from responding to the crisis.

- "RED FLAG" DATABASES. The CUBIT model proposes the use of a "red flag" reporting database. To create a culture of reporting on college campuses, incidents involving concerning behavior would be reported in real time to the behavioral intervention team via a web-based reporting system. NCHERM has identified the RiskAware platform for its clients (www.riskaware.com). Data-driven and developed based on the best research in the field, this database will help colleges to break down the silos of information that may be critical to help a student or staff member in crisis. Yet, this information is not traditionally shared on many campuses because of FERPA or departmental inter-communication dysfunction. RiskAware can help us to bring about that critical change in consciousness and practice. Many could see such a database as emblematic of the Big Brother ethos we are trying to avoid. To them we say that the use of the database within the CUBIT model is specifically designed to keep no more records than we currently keep on most of our campuses about student misconduct and concerning behavior already. We aim to keep them in a different form, perhaps, allowing for centralization of information that has heretofore been scattered. But, records in the database are kept according to the rules of privilege and the mandates of FERPA. Students have a right to request access. Open records laws may grant certain access. And subpoenas must be honored. The idea is to make the recordkeeping process transparent so that it is not reasonable for anyone to conclude that a hidden, deceptive Big Brother is operating in the background without their knowledge or access. We're already keeping these records, now we can use them to effect meaningful behavioral intervention for the health and safety of our communities.

- SHARE THE WEALTH. Campus law enforcement agencies are experiencing a post-shooting budget windfall, and in some ways this is good. Many departments have been dangerously under-funded for years. They will have sufficient staffing now. Many will become armed--perhaps not lethally--a necessary trend. Training will improve, as will the quality of officers we can recruit and afford. But, we call on campus law enforcement to take only what they need, and to partner with NCHERM in insisting that their campuses invest in behavioral intervention capacity to the point where CUBIT or similar models are as functional and well-trained as the admirable law enforcement professionals who so quickly responded to the shootings at Northern Illinois University. From my travels to more than 130 campuses a year, it is clear to me that most law enforcement and security professionals understand this need. But, being flush after many years of lean budgets can be enticing. Behavioral Intervention is not a police-based function, and the budget for CUBIT models will come from elsewhere, but a strong voice of advocacy from campus law enforcement for behavioral intervention will go a long way toward making campuses safer, which is really what we are all working toward together.

- AVOID PROFILING. There is a cadre of consultants who claim they can teach you who your next school shooter will be. They play to packed houses of college officials when they

offer local seminars. They keynote conferences of our associations and organizations. Stop the madness. Profiling is a largely discredited pseudo-science. Our students and staff do not want to be profiled. Profiling is causing backlashes within our communities, especially in an environment where we are striving to enhance civility and tolerance. Profiling is anathema to that goal, especially when violent actors come from racial and ethnic minority populations. It is not a good thing these days on a college campus to be a poetry-writing Korean who wears too much black and doesn't talk much. This is profiling. It doesn't work and we shouldn't be wasting our good money on it. The Association of Threat Assessment Professionals, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, Gary Pavela, John Byrnes, NCHERM and many other nationally-respected folks are calling on higher education to eschew profiling and embrace threat assessment. John Byrnes goes even further, insisting that threat assessment already assumes the existence of a threat. It is by definition threat-parallel. His work focusing on aggression management purposefully aims to help us get out ahead of the threat, if we can. We have appended a brief synopsis of the aggression management approach under the next bullet point.

- AGGRESSION MANAGEMENT. Can a college or university identify someone who intends to do harm on their campus? The horrific shootings at Virginia Tech (VT) and subsequently, Northern Illinois University (NIU) demonstrate the need to understand the critical difference between two dramatically different kinds of aggression. Typically, security and law enforcement officers are trained to look for the "Primal Aggressor" (red-faced and ready to explode) when in fact, these shooters were classic "Cognitive Aggressors" (cold, completely detached and determined). If weapons were not visible, the VT and NIU shooters probably would have walked right by most security or law enforcement officers without being noticed. Nothing about them would be likely to raise "reasonable suspicion" or "probable cause." The Primal Aggressor is the person who loses control, possibly from an escalation of anger. The Cognitive Aggressor is a far more dangerous and elusive predator. He is a perpetrator of murder/suicide (or terrorist-like) who presents as a calm, deliberate and focused aggressor with no remorse or compunction about multiple killings. While the Primal Aggressor is fueled by adrenaline, the Cognitive Aggressor is driven by intent.

Who are the predators we keep hearing about and what do they have in common? Very revealing are the first five indicators identified by the *Safe School Initiative Final Report* by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education:

1. Incidents of targeted violence at school *rarely* were sudden, impulsive acts.
2. Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack.
3. Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack.
4. **There is no accurate or useful "profile" of students who engaged in targeted school violence.**
5. Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.

Whether you are a student affairs administrator, risk manager, director of security, human resources director, counselor, or university president, all those responsible for college and

university governance are being driven to become more aggression-vigilant. One of the greatest fears we have is uncertainty. Can we identify someone who intends to do harm to our students or faculty? In the vast majority of cases, the answer is yes. A person who goes through the cognitive process of preparing to give up his life for a cause (murder/suicide) takes on specific body language, behavior, and communication indicators that can be identified.

The Aggression Management System provides practical tools for measurement of emerging human aggression. Whether on campus, in medical school or a public venue like a stadium, wherever an incident may occur, the goal is to identify the aggressor and provide the means to understand, evaluate, defuse and/or mitigate the emergence of his aggression. The system also measures university security personnel's adrenaline, allowing them to manage any potential for aggression, and respond more effectively and professionally. The system is designed to provide a clear clinical method of documentation, which can ultimately achieve legal defensibility for actions taken to protect the community.
www.aggressionmanagement.com

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