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From: **Meghan Harte Weyant** <mhweyant@unca.edu>

Date: Fri, Oct 7, 2022 at 10:01 AM

Subject: Highsmith Student Employee Training Brief

To: Meghan Harte Weyant <mhweyant@unca.edu>



Dear Campus Community,

As promised in my September 23 email to campus, I am writing to provide a brief of the September 20, 2022 active shooter training review. This brief update includes proposed next steps and action items.

Highsmith Student Employee Training Brief

Historically, Highsmith Student Union student employees participated in annual onboarding that included active shooter training. This program had been in hiatus since the COVID pandemic, but the training was reinstated for Fall 2022. Due to scheduling conflicts, the active shooter component of the student employee training did not occur in August 2022. Instead, it was scheduled to take place during the first monthly student employee meeting on September 20, 2022.

The training was a combination of lecture, video, and experiential exercises intended to replicate what a participant should do in the event of an active shooter incident.

During and after the training, there was general and understandably negative reaction from the student participants, as well as from patrons of Highsmith who were not involved in the program. Student complaints included allegations of staff misconduct during the program, in addition to a lack of care, clarity, and communication regarding the content of the training.

I requested a review of the training in order to best determine next steps. The assessment consisted of interviewing involved staff, hearing feedback directly from students during three campus listening sessions and a community conversation, reviewing student and faculty emails about the incident to UNC Asheville administrators, and reviewing social media postings.

Review Determinations

Following the review, I have made the following determinations:

- Active Shooter Training requires a high level of care, sensitivity, preparation, and disclosure to those participating. The staff involved in the scheduling and coordination of this training did not reasonably or responsibly prepare for the training, nor did they adequately disclose the content of the training to students involved.

- Because the active shooter training was presented as part of a mandatory staff meeting, many student employees reasonably believed the training was mandatory. Highsmith staff were not appropriately clear that the training was optional and that student employees were able to leave prior to or at any time during the training.
- Student employees were asked to notify staff if they were leaving the training. The intention was to ensure students received any support they may need. Students understandably interpreted that they needed to provide a justification for leaving.
- Given the lack of clear communication prior to and during the student employee meeting, the warning at the beginning of the presentation about its sensitive and potentially upsetting content was not effective.
- Mental health professionals were not on site for students to access as recommended for such trainings.
- As a result of the training not being properly planned and implemented with the appropriate level of care and concern, student employees in attendance and the staff presenting and hosting the training had multiple miscommunication about the purpose and learning outcomes associated with the training.
- The active shooter training occurred in an open, public building without advance warning to building staff or patrons.
- While this training's content was largely consistent with active shooter training presented by UNC Asheville since 2012, the program needs to be fully reviewed to determine what is best practice and how trainers and staff can best assess and determine the learning outcomes and impact.
- Student employees were given t-shirts that included the phrase "Highsmith Hero" at the close of the training. These shirts were intended for August distribution for a "superhero" themed August orientation, but were delayed in delivery by the vendor. Student employees reasonably concluded that the t-shirts were associated with the training.

The end result of all of these issues together was that a critical training topic was implemented for student employees without the necessary care or consideration that is required for such content. The staff involved did not reasonably or responsibly prepare and implement the training in a student centered or trauma-informed manner, thereby causing ongoing distress and concerns for the students impacted.

Action Items

Based upon these determinations, I am proposing for continued conversation the following recommendations and action items regarding active shooter training. Moving forward, I plan to work directly with a group of identified students who have asked to be part of the advisory board and with the Student Government Association to review, revise and implement these recommendations as necessary.

Active Shooter Training Action Items	Recommendations
Establish a Public Safety Advisory Board. The first task of the advisory board will serve to review the purpose and learning outcomes of Active Shooter Training.	The taskforce should utilize the expertise and advice available on campus and through the NC system. The taskforce should review the need for simulations during training. In addition to reviewing the purpose and learning outcomes, the taskforce will make recommendations on the training content based on best practice. The Public Safety Advisory board will advise the department of public safety moving forward.
Establish a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for Active Shooter Training.	<p>A clear set of policies and procedures including a checklist will be established for the planning and implementation of Active Shooter Training. Clear staff expectations will be outlined for the responsible parties involved. The protocol should include, but are not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Implementing Active Shooter Training • Clear communication plan for participants prior to and during the training • Communicate that active shooter training is never mandatory, and participants may leave at any time. • Determining an appropriate location for training (never using open buildings without warning) • Providing mental health counseling support during the training. • Providing follow up resources and support after the training • Never holding the training as a part of a reoccurring or mandatory meeting or session. • Reviewing all content prior to and after training to determine what might cause confusion or concern.
Determine recommended spaces for hosting Active Shooter Training	Review appropriate spaces to host training that will not cause confusion or distress.

Beyond Active Shooter Training

During the listening sessions and community conversations, a number of public safety related concerns were brought to my attention. Some of them were new concerns and others were themes that I have

heard since my arrival on campus in June. I hope to work closely with the proposed Public Safety Advisory Board and other appropriate groups to address these concerns. Broadly, these concerns included:

- Addressing the purpose and expectations of campus policing and the relationship between University Police and students
- Reviewing the current escort policy
- Reviewing campus lighting concerns
- Reviewing the training that is provided to student employee managers
- Addressing student employee safety concerns in Highsmith Union and as they may be relatable to other spaces on campus

In Closing

I want to thank the students and staff who were willing to share their experience so that we could institute a review and set of action steps. A number of students have already shared with me that they would like to be a part of the advisory board. All students, faculty, and staff are invited. Please, email me directly at vcsa@unca.edu if you would like to be involved, and I will be sure to include you in our first meeting.

Please, do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

In care,

-mhw

Meghan Harte Weyant, Ph.D.

Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs

University of North Carolina Asheville

