



TO: ALL STAFF
From: Fred Williams, Interim Chancellor
Date: October 30, 2015

In light of the recent spate of school shootings, I'm sure that campus safety is something we're all thinking about. It's unnerving to realize how vulnerable we are when faced with this type of situation, and how quickly life can change. We have been so lucky at NOCCCD not to have to deal with violence of this magnitude, but we need to be as ready as we can—just in case.

For some time I've felt that our emergency preparedness is not what it could be. It's one of those things that we focus on during drills or when something like the Umpqua shooting occurs, but it is hard to devote a lot of time and resources to it when everyone is already working so hard. Of course, over the years we have implemented a number of safety measures and protocols—memorandums of understanding with local police, a *District-wide Incident Communications Plan*, a pilot public address system at Cypress College, and employee trainings, among other things—but we are hardly where we need to be to adequately deal with a major incident.

We discussed this topic in Chancellor's Staff a couple of weeks ago and decided that the first step should be to conduct an honest assessment of what we're doing right and what we still have to do. I was surprised to learn from the *Margolis Healy 2015 Campus Safety Survey* that only a little over half of the campuses that responded (54.7%) said “that their institution had conducted a comprehensive hazard and vulnerability assessment critical to the development of appropriate all-hazards emergency planning.” An assessment is an incredibly important foundation on which we should base our campus safety conversations, decisions, and policies. To that end, we're researching consultants who can visit each of our campuses as soon as possible and help us to create an effective emergency operations plan (EOP). I'll keep you updated as we proceed through this process.

When we talk about something as horrific as an active shooter situation, though, we can't afford to ignore the human aspect. Following the Umpqua story, I was struck by how much the shooter's alleged mental illness was discussed. So many times with incidents of this nature, mental illness is identified as the possible root of the issue. I was reminded of this connection when I attended a recent Suicide Prevention event at Fullerton College. Hearing the data on the number of students who have dealt with the suicide of a loved one or had themselves struggled with suicidal thoughts, it really hit home how much our students have to deal with these days. We ask so much of them and it seems like there's no lessening of the stressors. And, as I learned in a recent meeting with our student leadership, even basic needs like food and transportation are challenges for many of them. As all of us interact with students in the course of our business, I urge you to take the time to find out what's important to them. Sometimes the answer is a simple thing that would positively affect their educational experience—like a recent request to include a “preferred name” field on our application. In other cases, the need is greater—like the desire of Fullerton College students to create a steady revenue stream to expand their Food and Care Bank services. My feeling is: if this is what's deemed significant by the students, let's figure out a way to help.

We have to do more to take care of our students—keep them safe from outside threats, yes, but also be a resource and source of support for when the internal pressure gets to be too much. I am not suggesting that we become providers of psychiatric or social services, but I do want us to explore every reasonable and responsible thing we can do to put our students' greatest needs first. It's obvious to me that even one person reaching out to a student in pain can be the difference that saves lives. Imagine what a whole district can do.

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School of Continuing Education Change. Cultivated.
Fullerton College Excellence. Elevated.
NOCCCD Greatness. Achieved.