Proposal to Establish a Safety, Security and Emergency Management Council

Executive Summary:

The BAC Safety and Security Committee weighed the potential impacts of implementing this proposal and also the impacts of continuing the status quo with regard to campus safety, security and emergency management. The committee believes it is in the best interest of the individual colleges, and the collective community and technical college system, to create a Safety, Security and Emergency Management Council. Furthermore, the committee asks that the Business Affairs Commission carry this proposal forward to the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges for further consideration and implementation.

Guiding Principles:

- Campus safety is of paramount importance to students, staff, faculty, and administrators.
- Campus safety, security and emergency management personnel need a formal structure for information and best practices exchange, as well as a forum for training on campus safety-related legislation and industry standards.

Benefits of Implementation:

- College administrators benefit from having an organized group of professionals to call upon – both in times of planning and in times of crisis - for input to inform administrative decisions on policies, practices and potential legislation.
- Colleges benefit from having better informed staff and, potentially, realize cost-savings through regional or system-wide purchases, as well as regional trainings provided through in-system expertise.
- Colleges benefit from reduced legal and financial risks, in addition to increased recovery of costs through system-wide training and collaboration on application for federal recovery funds.
- Campus communities, as a whole, become better prepared to respond to, and recover from, incidents ranging from the urgent (e.g. operations-limiting), to the critical (e.g. life-threatening).
- Smaller institutions have additional resources of peer colleges in the Council who may assist them in meeting accreditation standard 2.D.2, which states: *The institution makes adequate provision for the safety and security of its students and their property at all locations where it offers programs and services.*
- System-wide collaboration and training will improve the ability of colleges to work together in times of regional disasters or major incidents.
- Well-planned, well-coordinated, and well-executed responses to, and recovery from, campus incidents increase community good will toward our colleges.

Potential Negative Impacts of Implementation:

- Time and effort of adding another council to the system structure, adding liaisons to/from other groups, approval of an additional council work plan, communicating with a new Council, and other logistics
- Travel expenses will be incurred for participation in council and committee meeting
- Campus security coverage would be reduced when staff attend meetings; this could be mitigated by scheduling meetings during term breaks.

Background:

The issues related to campus safety are many, and are complex. Some of these issues involve facilities (e.g. crime prevention through environmental design), some involve student services (e.g. behavior intervention teams), and some involve the entire campus community (e.g. all-hazards approach to community preparedness). Additionally, the necessity to work closely with local first responders, and other public agencies, requires that SSEMP personnel have specific knowledge and skills that are unique to this area of higher education. On large campuses, SSEMP personnel have a natural cohort with which to train, prepare and work. Other campuses employ lone SSEMP personnel who are isolated from the interaction with others in their field of work – essentially, they become islands of knowledge on a campus.

As early as 2007, the Operations and Facilities Council discussed the issues revolving around the need for a formal structure for the SSEMP group, and, in November of 2007, crafted a letter supporting the creation of a Safety and Security Council. At that time, WACTC was not inclined to create additional groups within the formal CTC commission and council structure, and the proposed council was not created. Without a formal structure for the group, interaction between SSEMP colleagues was ad-hoc, and less than optimally effective.

As legislatively-mandated practices and reporting requirements were implemented, some SSEMP personnel interacted to determine how their campuses would be impacted and what they needed to do – others remained unaware of these mandates. Informal interaction between campus safety professionals continued to occur via trainings offered by the Pierce College Center of Excellence for Homeland Security, and via a CIS listserv.

Legislation passed in 2008 (SSHB 2507), required specialized mapping of all facilities of the community and technical colleges. This mapping project, led by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs brought the SSEMP personnel together as they discussed how the mapping information could be used to help colleges prepare for urgent and emergency situations. Furthering the shared work of the group, additional legislation (RCW 28B.10.569) also required the Washington State Board to submit a biennial report to the legislature. This report was to be a compilation of information on a long list of items from each of the colleges – almost all of which the colleges were already reporting to local or national authorities under other legislation.

What the compiled report to the legislature did was bring to light the fact that many colleges were unaware of some legally-mandated practices and reporting requirements. The SSEMP personnel were again reminded of the need to find ways to work together to not only increase compliance with existing laws, but to be more effective in their work to create and maintain safe campus communities.

Efforts to further strengthen the cohort were renewed in April of 2009, when the group convened for a two-day planning retreat. During this retreat the cohort established a name for their group – Safety, Security and Emergency Management Professionals – as well as worked together to craft a vision, mission and action plan for their group. Unfortunately, without a clear line of communication and direction, and without a formal place within the Washington Community and Technical College system structure, the group was simply unable to make much progress toward their stated goals.

Inconsistency in reporting structures for SSEMP personnel may have added to the difficulty in effectively collaborating as a system-wide group. In a February 2011 survey, 32 colleges identified the reporting structure

for security on their campuses: 12 report to Administrative Services; 11 to Facilities/Operations; 6 to Other Areas; 3 to Student Services.

In 2011, the Business Affairs Commission created a Safety and Security Committee to address, among other issues, legislation and reporting requirements for SSEMP personnel. The committee developed a work plan including -- as item number one -- identifying and establishing a group structure which facilitates communication and collaboration amongst Washington State Community and Technical College safety, security and emergency management personnel.

In 2012, the Washington State Legislature passed SHB 2259, which repealed RCW 28B.10.569, eliminating the Campus Safety and Security report to the legislature. The report had included a summary, as well as individual reports from each of the 34 colleges in the Washington State community and technical college system. To provide access to the primary information that would have been included in the report, the SBCTC created a one-stop web page with links to each of the college's Safety and Security pages and crime statistics, as well as links to relevant legislation and resources. While the SSEMP listserv and SBCTC webpage both serve as conduits of information to the SSEMP group, and the Center of Excellence continues to serve as a training resource to the colleges, none of these comes close to substituting for the regular, ongoing interaction and collaboration that occurs in a Council.

Times have changed. Community expectations have changed. And, as we acknowledge that it is not likely that the world we live in will become less threatening in the foreseeable future, the need to be well-prepared to plan for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate impact of critical incidents on our college campuses is more important than ever.