Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) – Meeting Minutes
Feb 5, 2021
12:30-1:30pm
Held via zoom

Attendees:

Members: Byrne (faculty), Chukwukere (student), Davis-Frost (institutional), Haenlin-Mott (institutional), Hodges (student), Lewis (faculty), Mackowski, (faculty), Ononye (institutional), Rogers (student)

Guest: Love

Chair: DeStefano

Staff: Burgess Honan, Matta, Radloff

START: 12:30pm

I. Introductions:
Chair DeStefano provided an update to the survey going public on February 8, 2021 and encouraged members of the committee to spread awareness of the survey. DeStefano also provided a summary of her meeting with faculty members who received a “Belonging at Cornell – Telling our Stories” grant. The team was invited by the Chair to attend a future meeting to discuss their project.

Marla Love, interim Dean of Students, was introduced to the group as today’s meeting guest.

II. Community Response Team Program

Interim Dean of Students, Marla Love, joined the group to discuss the community response team project envisioned by Student Campus Life as a response to calls from the Cornell community to lessen the need for armed police officers to respond to non-threatening emergency calls. Last July, President Pollack charged Vice Presidents Burgess and Lombardi to create this program with the goal of providing a broad range of support for the community and promote safety and well-being.

Dr. Love stated that this effort will be led by Reba McCutcheon and that there are plans to hire four response officers and coordinators. Dr. Love clarified that the hiring pool will be made up of social workers, crisis managers, and mental health workers. These crisis response coordinators will network and interface with various offices, including CUPD, to be able to provide support and balance this support with
appropriate needs. Part of their role is to exercise discretion and promote safety and well-being of students within Cornell residential communities, de-escalate non-serious conflict, co-create coping plans, partner with CUPD and EMS when situations warrant further support, and offer support to impacted third parties. These services will be confidential resources for those in need of support. While the program does not fully eliminate police from residential halls, it will provide further support for other needs. Coordinators from the dispatch center will measure various levels of support needed and relay to the appropriate response team. This will allow the police department to handle issues of crime and violence and take pressure off them.

Several questions were raised regarding promotion of this resource and integration of said resources to make sure all students have access to them. The committee also questioned the role of the police department stepping in when situations escalate. Dr. Love reiterated that the challenge we must face is that we are still in a transition period where people still want to rely on police while others choose alternative solutions. We are in an environment where we have created something new as a response to these issues but have not lived it yet. As a result, there will be an evolution of the programs we understand it better. The primary goal is to deescalate non-serious situations and provide support to those who need it. The committee applauded the efforts to reduce police presence in residential halls and promote the well-being for those that need mental health support.

III. Subcommittee on Training Update

Subcommittee Co-Chairs, Joanie Mackowski and Dave Honan, provided a brief update of the progress of the subcommittee’s work. The group’s main question is how do we interface academic expertise of Cornell to better police training? The subcommittee has divided into smaller groups to begin analyzing this question.

IV. Conclusion/Next steps

The chair thanked Ms. Love for her participation at the meeting and hopes to have her present again in the future. Chair DeStefano encouraged the committee to start thinking about narrowing down possible themes and how the committee should begin focusing on our report to the president. The next meeting will include members from the “Telling our Stories” project.

Meeting adjourned at 1:32 PM
Notes by: Samantha Radloff