

JCCC Strengthens Campus Security Plans

Department
of Public
Safety

Yellow crime scene tape barricaded the first and second floors of the Carlsen Center on Dec. 20, while JCCC Department of

Public Safety officers and the Overland Park Police Department SWAT team swept the area for suspicious objects. Their search was productive, yielding a grenade and dynamite.

This exercise was the first in a series of events to establish a plan of action in the event of an “active shooter” on campus. Sgt. Ryan Miller, OPPD, focused on the time-sensitive mission of an active shooter incident.

“It’s run and gun. In 5 to 10 minutes, the shooting is over,” Miller said. “But there is always the possibility of an additional slap in the face like at Columbine High School – IEDs (improvised explosive devices).”

During the half-day exercise, officers did a walk-through of the Carlsen Center to locate points of entry and exit for a shooter and determine points of cover and rescue for the campus community. The officers also practiced tactical team formation for the group designated to engage the active shooter.

“It’s good for the JCCC DPS and Overland Park police to work together,” said Dr. Wayne Brown, JCCC executive vice president, Administration. “That way DPS knows what OPPD wants and vice versa.”

Another plan for strengthened security is to

have an armed OPPD officer on campus for eight hours a day beginning the 2008 spring semester, serving for three to six months until the board of trustees makes a decision whether or not to have Kansas-certified officers carry weapons.

Carrying weapons is not new to a majority of DPS officers nor is it new to the college, where armed officers were present during administrations up until 1981, according to Dr. Gerry Baird, executive vice president, Administrative Services.

With the addition of two officers in September 2007, DPS has a total of 25 officers who represent 679 years of public safety experience. As of March 2008, 17 of the 25 will be Kansas-certified police officers, most former officers with Overland Park or Kansas City, Mo. police departments. That includes Gus Ramirez, DPS director, who retired as a major from OPPD and has 47 years of experience, and his supervisor, Brown, who served 20 years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, working in law enforcement, among other duties.

“Certified officers must have 40 hours of continuing education and qualify with a handgun annually,” said Larry Dixon, manager, public safety. “The majority of our staff are certified officers whether we carry guns on campus or not. It’s not like we don’t know how to use a gun.”

If the decision is made to have DPS officers carry weapons, there will be a change in DPS job descriptions for future hires and a rewrite of processes and procedures regarding the continuum of force from pepper spray to batons to drawing weapons, according to Brown.

Brown estimates it will cost \$3,000 per armed officer for items that include a uniform, belt, baton, mace, weapon, ammunition and bullet-proof vest. Vests are already on order. DPS vehicles will have to be equipped more professionally with the addition of a light bar, siren, built-in radios and cage.

Exercises between DPS and OPPD will continue every six months.

“I would rather be prepared for the worst than just hope for the best,” Brown said. 🌿



Scott Wargin, DPS officer, participated in the exercise to prepare for an active shooter.