

Inaugural Report & Safety Evaluation

Downtown Safety Commission

March 11th, 2008

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Introduction

The origins of the Downtown Safety Commission are rooted in an acknowledged student need for a mechanism of direct feedback between the student and the administrator regarding issues of student safety. At present, no such mechanism exists; rather, a student's best hope for effecting positive change in his/her safety is a discussion with their advisor and/or dean of student affairs.

While direct discussion with one's dean is appropriate on an individual level, it is ultimately inefficient at addressing large numbers of individual concerns in a timely manner. Consequently, administrative response to student safety concerns is largely *reactive*. The goal of the Downtown Safety Commission (DSC) is to allow the administration an opportunity to take a more focused, *proactive* approach toward improving student safety and addressing the concerns of the student body. The DSC accomplishes this goal by providing the administration with written report twice a semester comprised of (but not limited to) an evaluation of downtown safety, recommendations for improvements in the provision of security, and any unresolved concerns of the downtown student body of Tulane University.

The DSC is subject to the governance of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) of Tulane University and its constitutional guidelines/regulations on graduate committees. It is a diverse assembly of students attending graduate, professional, and undergraduate programs (downtown and uptown alike) at Tulane

University and has been formally charged with representing the safety-related concerns of the downtown student body to the GAPSA and to the administration of Tulane University.

Evaluation/Critical Action Items

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS

As this is the inaugural report of this commission, there is no evaluation to be made at the present time. The first evaluation will be made in the next commission report, and will review administrative progress and response to the following *CRITICAL ACTION ITEMS* and *SUGGESTED ACTION ITEMS*.

CRITICAL ACTION ITEMS

The following four items identified by the DSC are highlighted as key safety issues of the highest student priority:

1) *Downtown Shuttle Reorganization*

This first critical action item will be addressed in the **Specific Student Concerns** section of this report.

2) *SafeRides*

The second critical action item is an important after-hours safety concern for students of the downtown campus. Currently, there is no availability of safe rides for Tulane Students in the downtown campus area. The DSC proposes that the Safe Rides coverage area be extended from the uptown campus to the downtown campus. At the

very least, Safe Rides should make available to students an after hours dispatch-based van/shuttle that will serve specific pick-up points for students in need.

3) *SafeWalks*

Thirdly, the DSC proposes that a dispatch-based security escort service be created for students called “SafeWalks.” If appropriate, the DSC suggests that this service be created by extending the range of the Tulane University Health Science Center dispatch-based escort service to include School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, HEAL Garage and the new Medical School Building (formerly the Murphy Oil Building, located at 131 S. Robertson St.).

4) *Student Awareness of Safety Resources*

Lastly, it is the recommendation of the DSC for all Tulane University educational programs housed in downtown facilities to take part in an “awareness campaign” that more effectively publicizes the safety resources that are available to downtown students. Awareness by students of items such as SafeRides/SafeWalks telephone numbers, points of sanctuary, etc. is not effectively available/publicized at the downtown campus. This information should be available to students through a variety of media including (but not limited to) posters, magnets, emails, pamphlets or websites.

Of particular importance regarding the DSC-proposed “awareness campaign” is the timing of the event. The DSC has determined that although distributing informative safety-related materials to students during orientation is important, it is also not sufficient. This campaign should be scheduled for the second or third week of classes in both the fall and the spring semesters to let downtown students know about their safety resources.

Suggested Action Items

Enumerated below are action items that are submitted for administrative consideration as suggestions created by the Downtown Safety Commission:

1) *Event Action Response Team*

This first point describes the creation of a specific security patrol that will be put work during major public events that draw unusually large crowds to the downtown New Orleans area. For example, the downtown campus finds itself located in the center of many New Orleans events – Jazz Fest, Mardi Gras, French Quarter Fest, Special Sporting Events (NBA All Star Weekend, College BCS National Championship), etc. There is a need for a more active and visible security patrol during these events, which the DSC has named the *Event Action Response Team*.

2) *Loitering Reduction/Elimination*

Another major issue concerning downtown campus students residing in Tulane University offered housing is loitering and vagrant occupation of building entries and exits. This is particularly problematic at the Deming housing facility where students have been harassed in many ways (requesting money, sexually, etc) at street corners and along sidewalks on the Deming block. It is the understanding of the students that the installation of Subway (in conjunction with pre-existing Walgreen's) will further amplify these problems.

It is the suggestion of the DSC that more efforts be made to minimize loitering on the premises of Deming and any other Tulane University Facility. Further, particular

interest has been expressed regarding the placement of a police squad car in front of Deming as a visual deterrent of crime and harassment.

3) *Other Issues*

Other issues of concern raised by students include:

- Possibility of 24-hour security at Tidewater
- Blue Light Station (emergency stations) around downtown campus.
- Security bike police – not wearing helmets

Specific Student Concerns

Downtown Shuttle Reorganization

(Adapted from the 2/21/2008 GAPSAs Shuttle Review Committee Meeting Minutes)

Current Shuttle Concerns:

- Quality of buses
 - problems with temperature control
 - leaking roof
 - not handicap-accessible
- Buses arrive early at stops and leave before the scheduled time
- Overflow at rush hour
- Safety concerns about the Tidewater stop, which is a block away from the Tidewater building in front of an abandoned hotel

- Papillion stop
 - inconveniences the majority of riders who travel between Uptown and Downtown
 - is inconvenient for Papillion residents – one of the two trips between their destination (Uptown or Downtown) and Papillion they will have to travel the entire loop
- Traffic on St. Charles leads to late arrivals (see proposal below for solutions)

Current Shuttle Recommendations:

- The shuttle should make all scheduled stops
 - Shuttle Operators should NOT be allowed to exercise discretion regarding scheduled stop locations
- **Due to unforeseeable traffic conditions, buses should be able to arrive to a destination late, but UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES leave a destination before the scheduled time**
- The necessity of the Poydras stop should be reconsidered
 - Pending evaluation/investigation to determine whether insufficient numbers of riders utilize this stop

Proposal for Reorganization of the Uptown-Downtown Shuttle:

The downtown shuttle route should be reconsidered for better efficiency. Please find below the proposal of the GAPSA Shuttle Review Committee:

- 1) Place more stops directly on LaSalle Street.
 - a. The Tidewater stop is moved to LaSalle on the side of the Tidewater building – here students would be able to stand in front of the Tidewater building and be able to see the shuttle arrive and would not have to stand in front of the abandoned hotel building
 - b. The Medical School stop should also be moved to LaSalle. Students would also be able to see the shuttle arriving while standing in front of the medical school, but having all of the stops on LaSalle would make the route more efficient
- 2) Implement an Express Shuttle
 - a. Due to the highest usage of the shuttle resulting from travel between Uptown and Downtown Campuses, an Uptown/Downtown Express bus should be considered which would travel between the main campuses via Claiborne and exclude the Papillion stop
- 3) Further Reorganization of the Papillon stop.
 - a. We suggest a new shuttle to go between Uptown and Papillion and another to go between Downtown and Papillion - Since there are less riders at Papillion than other current stops, we suggest using Tulane vans if staff and resources permit.
 - i. If Tulane does not have the resources for two vans, one van that travels from Downtown to Uptown and back passing by Papillion each way should be considered

b. Due to excessive traffic on St. Charles, we suggest the following route for providing shuttle service to students in Papillon:

i. Papillon → Uptown:

1. *Depart Papillon, Right on St. Charles, Right on Jackson, Left on LaSalle, Continue on Freret, Arrive at Uptown Stop*
OR
2. *Depart Papillon, Right on St. Charles, Right on Napoleon, Left on Freret, Arrive at Uptown Stop*

ii. Uptown → Papillon:

1. *Depart Reilly Center Stop, Left on Ben Weiner, Right on Claiborne, Right on Napoleon, Left on St. Charles, Arrive at Papillon*

iii. Papillon → Downtown:

1. *Depart Papillon, Right on St. Charles, Right on Jackson, Right on Claiborne, Right on Canal, Arrive at Tidewater Building Stop (on LaSalle)*

iv. Downtown → Papillon:

1. *Depart Tidewater, Continue up LaSalle to Medical School Stop (at Tulane Ave), Continue up LaSalle to 2nd Medical School Stop (at Poydras), Left on Poydras, Right on Loyola, Continue on Simon Bolivar, Left on MLK, Right on St. Charles, Arrive at Papillon*

Downtown Safety Commission Constitution

As adopted by GAPSAs and written into the GAPSAs constitution, the constitution of this Commission is as follows:

Purpose:

To assemble a diverse group of students attending downtown programs (graduate, professional, and undergraduate) at Tulane University to represent the safety-related concerns of the downtown student body to the GAPSAs and to the administration of Tulane University.

This commission will be subject to the governance of the GAPSAs of Tulane University and its constitutional guidelines/regulations on graduate committees.

This commission will produce a written report twice a semester containing (but not limited to) evaluation of downtown safety, recommendations for improvements in the provision of security, and any unresolved concerns of the downtown student body of Tulane University.

Meetings:

All meetings held by the commission are open to the public, and will accordingly include a period for new business during which all non-voting individuals will be given time to voice their concerns to the commission.

Meetings dates will be set by the chair of the committee and will be no less frequent than once a month.

Membership:

This commission will be composed of the commission chair, 11 voting board members (6 coming from downtown schools and 5 coming from each of the other GAPSA graduate schools) and any other interested individuals and/or parties (“*other members*”):

*When the proceeding representation is not available, the chair appointments are to be made such that the interests of the downtown student body pertaining to safety are represented satisfactorily at the discretion of the commission chair.

+*Chairperson*

The de facto chair of the commission will be the GAPSA Downtown Vice President. The chair will appoint members to the commission, set meeting dates, and call emergency meetings as needed. This is a non-voting position and serves to preside over commission meetings and represent the commission to the

GAPSA.

- The chair may only vote in the event of a tied vote amongst board members when a quorum is present representing an even number of votes

+*Voting Board*

Individual members with voting privileges will be appointed by the commission Chair. When possible, a diverse group of individuals must be appointed such that of the available votes:

6 come from Downtown Schools:

- 2 votes come from students at the Graduate School of Public Health
- 2 votes come from students at the School of Medicine
- 1 vote comes from a student at the School of Biomedical Sciences
- 1 vote comes from an undergraduate student in a downtown program (preferably a Junior or Senior participating in the BS Public Health degree program or the Undergraduate Premedical Society)

5 come from other GAPSA graduate Schools:

- 1 vote comes from students at the Freeman School of Business
- 1 vote comes from a student from the Graduate Student Studies Assoc (GSSA)
- 1 vote comes from a student at the Law School
- 1 vote comes from a student at the School of Social Work
- 1 vote comes from a student at the School of Continuing Studies

No more than 11 members may be appointed with voting privileges to the Commission

*When the aforementioned representation is not possible, an odd number of voting positions (not to exceed 11 total votes) must be appointed by the commission chair such that a majority of the appointed positions are held by students enrolled at in a Downtown program

+*Other Members (non-voting)*

Any student attending a downtown program through Tulane University is allowed to attend the commission meetings, however they will not be allowed to contribute a vote to any commission decisions.