

Implementing a Total Security Plan on a Slimming Budget

As budgets shrink in the current economic downturn, institutions must find ways to keep safety and security a priority.

As a former university finance officer and consultant to the industry for three decades, I have experienced four major cycles of economic prosperity and downturns. The upcoming years look like the toughest in a generation, as schools will face a combination of declining appropriations, diminished endowments, and narrowing credit resources for parents and students for tuition. Difficult resource decisions lie ahead in the next budget cycles that will have a profound effect on every campus.

More than ever, security remains a top priority for campuses, despite budget restrictions. When planning the resources for security, you must think about the four core elements to any security program: personnel, technology, facility design, and crime prevention education. Universities must consider the mix of all four and their expenditures to each when assessing total safety and security.

Personnel

Personnel expenditures typically make up more than 80 percent of a college's security budget. The rising costs of salaries, benefits, and training for personnel demand a careful look at staffing options. No other cost element will return savings to the bottom line as will a reallocation of

personnel expenditures.

As you consider the optimum mix between personnel, technology, facility improvements, and crime prevention education, the demands for personnel staffing levels will become evident. The key question is, "What skills are required to perform the variety of security tasks, including planning, investigation, patrol, and community outreach?" Defining the specific roles and responsibilities and the expectation for each skill level is a critical first step in determining the best deployment of staff.

Through the past few years, many public institutions located in urban, suburban, and rural locations have moved to a "hybrid" approach. With demands for coverage increasing, contracting for security officers is seen as a cost-effective force multiplier. The campus police or public-safety team remains focused on policy, planning, investigation, and enforcement, while contract security is responsible for access control, patrol, escorts, and related duties. This strategy has been especially effective for institutions with residential programs, where security officers provide extra eyes and ears to deter, detect, observe, and report potential dangers and complaints to campus police. The benefits of well trained, accountable, responsive, and respectful

professional security officers have attracted many institutions to this alternative.

A security company's ability to deliver locally is a given. Security forces are always drawn from nearby resources, but a firm's presence or willingness to invest in your community is also essential. Additionally, a security company that supports higher education associations and has a proven commitment to the industry can anticipate needs and adjust security programs based on security trends and your campus' specific security challenges. Universities should select a provider with a low turnover rate, maintained through extensive recruitment resources, and in-depth training and management programs. This allows for consistent and quality campus security. The officers must be trained professionals, supported by a responsive local management and logistical team and a national network of experienced resources.

Whether your security staff is in-house, outsourced, taps into resources of local law enforcement, or utilizes a combination of all, this team needs to be trained and prepared for any situation. Parents, students, faculty, and staff want assurance that a campus has up-to-date plans that have been carefully formulated and practiced. Plans should include protocols for intrusions, kidnapping, hostage situations,

health emergencies, and natural disasters. They should also provide strategies for communicating with students and staff, for responding promptly to implied or direct threats, and for the safe evacuation of students and staff.

Technology

Budgeters often look to technology as a substitute for personnel costs. Technology is often considered to be an excellent tool for making a campus more secure, and is typically viewed as less expensive than personnel. But all technology needs to be monitored, responded to, and maintained. And that takes personnel. Administrators should make an assessment of how technology can fit into their physical security program. However, with the reality of cost cutting and shrinking budgets, it is all the more important to use the right combination of resources.

The more technology a university has, the higher the need for response. Technology is just one part of a larger picture, and to be completely successful, this must be combined with active security surveillance and patrols. Your police and security officers need the most appropriate technology tools for your risk profile, and technology needs personnel throughout its life cycle.

Technology can be highly effective, but as with every component of the security program, it requires thorough research.

Facility Design

Many university facilities are decades old, and these original building structures were not designed with security in mind. This element of the whole security picture is most likely to be at the end of your budgeting list. Unfortunately, this also means you may have to invest more time and money into security at these sites, as they require more resources and additional personnel and technology.

Campuses that continue to build and expand should think about security-



Photo courtesy of AlliedBarton

Well trained and responsive security officers are the most important component of a comprehensive campus security plan. Personnel expenditures typically make up more than 80 percent of a college's security budget.

oriented building and landscape design. Security should be a main focus for new buildings early in their planning and development stages. Not only must these buildings be designed and developed for protection from intruders and terrorists, but designers and universities must also factor in natural hazards such as storms, earthquakes, and fires.

The safety aspects of a building's design ensure that occupants can escape, intruders are discouraged, and security personnel have optimum visibility and can properly monitor exits. The proper placement of a building and careful consideration of the occupants and functions minimize exposure to threats, reducing the overall operating expenses of that building. For example, multiple entrances call for increased security personnel. If you can minimize the number of entrance routes, you can also minimize the cost of security.

All threats, both human and natural, require a response plan. Have your university perform a risk analysis of new and old buildings as well as those in the develop-

ment process. The most effective way to consider the total cost of security is to think about it from the beginning, and in the end it will save your university money and man hours.

Crime Prevention Education

As an administrator, you need to stress the importance of safety education for your faculty, staff, and students. No matter the size of your campus, crime prevention and personal safety begin with safety education. Becoming aware of surroundings, using assertive body language, keeping doors locked, and using the buddy system will help students feel safer and may deter an attacker. Knowing emergency routes and participating in evacuation procedures will also prepare students and staff for a real emergency.

Students and faculty must be aware of campus security issues so that they can better protect themselves. Colleges and universities can offer students security tips through classroom programs, presentations, and e-mail blasts. Implementing safety and security procedures for everyone on campus and making education a part of your comprehensive safety program will enhance your physical and technological security resources. The return on the investment of additional crime prevention education is always high.

Regardless of the tough times, every higher education institution needs to consider these four key elements as part of a total security program. Taking a well-rounded approach to security and establishing a strong security presence in your institution will provide you with the most cost-effective total solution. [CPM](#)

Glenn R. Rosenberg is AlliedBarton's vice president of Higher Education. Rosenberg has worked in higher education for more than 30 years as a senior university administrator, management consultant, and business developer. He can be reached at glenn.rosenberg@alliedbarton.com.