April 22, 2016

Dear Parents:

The Washington University community experienced a very troubling incident earlier this week when one of our contract dining services employees was involved in a shooting on the main boulevard that runs along our Danforth Campus. She was in her car at the time. It appears, from the ongoing police investigation, that this was an isolated incident. We are relieved that her injury was not life threatening. However, I am deeply upset that the specter of gun violence has hit so close to home and directly affected a member of our community.

I wanted to write to you to give you my direct assurance that we are taking this situation seriously. Nothing is more important to us than maintaining the safety and well-being of our students.

There is much that makes Washington University a very special place. If you have had the opportunity to visit, I am sure you felt the openness and sense of community that is a very important part of our everyday lives. We want our students, faculty and staff to feel safe and comfortable not only on our own campuses, but also throughout the St. Louis region. And we want that sense of freedom to extend into the educational experience where our students are challenged to think big and bold, and open their minds to new ideas.

While we work very hard to maintain our open community, we also have an imperative to maintain safety. I thought it might be helpful to share with you some of the ways we approach this and some of the specific additional steps we have taken in response to recent incidents.

**Washington University Police Department**

First, we have one of the very best staffed and trained university police departments anywhere in the country. The Washington University Police Department (WUPD) is a team of 52 personnel, including 33 deputized police officers who have been trained in accordance with the local and state police academy and who meet the requirements for police certification. They are armed and authorized to make arrests, to investigate criminal and non-criminal incidents that occur on our Danforth Campus, and to cooperate in the criminal justice process. On our campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods, WUPD officers possess the same authority as do St. Louis County police officers. Off campus, they regularly patrol and maintain a visible presence.

Nearly always, in response to events such as those we have experienced recently, we amplify WUPD with added personnel, typically off-duty police from municipal departments. This can range from a few to many depending on need. Over the past few
weeks, we have added such coverage and will continue to increase the level of patrols as necessary.

Finally, we have worked very hard to develop close partnerships with the three police departments that are adjacent to Washington University. These partnerships are important not only when it comes to solving crimes, but also to preventing crimes. Our ability to share information on a regular basis makes our campus safer.

**Neighborhood Security Patrol**

Under the leadership of WUPD, we have established a Neighborhood Security Patrol to provide high-visibility nighttime security patrols to neighborhoods in which we own off-campus housing. Eight police officers and five licensed security officers patrol designated neighborhoods and high-traffic walkways, in distinctively marked vehicles, on bicycles and on foot.

**Infrastructure**

Washington University has a system of emergency blue lights to quickly summon police, as well as walkway lighting throughout our campuses and the surrounding neighborhoods. All are checked on a weekly basis to ensure they remain in good working condition.

Over the past couple of years, we have undertaken a major initiative to substantially enhance lighting along major pedestrian walkways used by our community. These walkways include Ackert Walkway and the sidewalk of Skinker Boulevard, both of which connect the Danforth Campus to the Delmar Loop.

We also have Alertus beacons throughout all of our buildings, which sound and light up in the event of an emergency. The beacons ensure that alerts are received even if cell or internet service is diminished. Our alert system includes text messages, phone calls, emails, pop-up computer messages, beacons, sirens and updates to our websites.

**Residential Life**

All Residential Life-managed properties – both on and off campus – have student Resident Advisors (RAs) living there. Their job is to help build strong communities and ensure our students feel safe and supported. They are supervised by Residential College/Community Directors (RCDs) who live in apartments in those buildings. Together, the RAs and RCDs work hard to keep our students safe, informed and empowered.

**Escorts and Transportation**

We offer many security supports through WUPD and other university programs. You can learn more about many of them by visiting the [WUPD website](https://www.wupd.wustl.edu). They include:
Our on-campus escort service provides 24-hour, on-call service for any student who would like an escort back to their on-campus residence.

Our Campus-2-Home shuttle provides a safe ride between the hours of 6 p.m. and 4 a.m. daily from the Danforth Campus to off-campus residences. The shuttle takes students to their home and waits until safe entry.

CCTV

The university has invested in a multi-million-dollar network of hundreds of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras on campus and around our off-campus residence halls. These CCTV channels have been extraordinarily effective in identifying potential issues and in responding to incidents. Video footage from our CCTV network has helped not only WUPD, but also surrounding jurisdictions, to investigate crimes, identify suspects, and empower arrests.

Going Forward

With this strong and effective system of security measures and personnel, we have experienced relatively little person-to-person crime on our campuses. It is a trend I intend to maintain. Even with this, however, we know that we are not immune from the reality of criminal activity. This week’s incident is a stark reminder of that fact. Therefore, we remain vigilant about adequately resourcing and regularly re-assessing our ability to prevent crime and respond to any situation that threatens the security and well-being of our students, faculty and staff.

We also take every opportunity to remind members of our community that there are steps each of us must take to ensure that we are well-prepared in the event of an emergency. Attached is a message I sent to our community earlier today. We will be following up with our students, faculty and staff to ensure that everyone understands our emergency processes and procedures. This is extremely important and we are going to be assertive about enhancing awareness.

You also will see in my message to the community that we are taking the opportunity, following recent incidents around our campuses, to debrief thoroughly and learn from the experiences. It is never possible to be too prepared and we have discovered through feedback from our community that there are ways we can enhance our emergency management approach. We plan to undertake an assessment of our current crime prevention measures on all of our campuses.

Some of you have asked how you can be better informed of emergency situations on campus. Downloading the WUSTL Mobile app is the fastest and easiest way for anyone — with or without a Washington University email address — to receive our emergency alerts. The app is available for iOS or Android.
Please remember: we only will issue alerts for emergencies that pose an immediate threat to the campus community, when the safety of the members of our community could be in serious danger. If an alert is received, it is critical to take action. Again, this is something we will be reinforcing with our community, along with information about the most appropriate ways to respond.

You have placed your trust in us, for which we are grateful. We are available to you, anytime, should you have any questions or concerns. Feel free to contact me at (314) 935-5100, our Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Lori White at (314) 935-4526, or our Dean of Students Justin Carroll at (314) 935-8499. We always are a resource to you and can help refer you to others in our community as necessary.

The promise we have made to you is that we will do everything possible to provide an exceptional experience for your student. That is a commitment we intend to keep.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Wrighton
Chancellor