Dear Friends,

Campus safety is one of our primary concerns, and our low annual crime statistics are a testament to our success in creating a secure environment for the UCR community. Recent events have, however, tested our usual strategies. In the past three weeks, several of our students have been confronted by armed robbers. Thankfully, none of our students has been hurt. These robberies did not happen on campus and the perpetrators were not UCR students or Riverside residents. Thanks to the quick work of our UC and Riverside Police Departments, six suspects have been captured in relation to at least five of the incidents.

In addition, all of Southern California has been traumatized by the recent attacks on police by a suspect who was a former LAPD officer. Our hearts are broken for the families of the slain officers and other innocent victims, and we are deeply concerned for the recovery of the other two officers who were wounded in the line of duty. At least two of the officers had strong ties to the UCR police department and to our students.

Although this unprovoked attack unfolded far off campus, our own police force was immediately on alert with additional person power to protect students, faculty and staff. Our UCR force will remain hyper vigilant until this situation is resolved.

These recent events are in sharp contrast to our typical experience on campus. Violent crimes are extremely rare. In fact, my review of campus crime statistics reveals a very low absolute number of violent crimes and a steady decrease in almost all crime categories over the past three years. Indeed, the single largest statistic has to do with bicycle thefts. While highly regrettable, and both expensive and frustrating for the victims, such incidents do not place our students in harm’s way.

We tend to publicize bad stuff that happens on or near campus as a way to educate ourselves about staying alert and taking reasonable precautions. Whenever an incident occurs on or near the campus, the UC Police Department sends a notification with reminders about safety. Each event is used as a teachable moment to remind ourselves to lock bikes, windows and doors, call escorts if we are worried about walking alone, and err on the side of safety by utilizing such services even if we think we "should" be braver.

The great UCR news is that we have a police force headed by a UCR alum, Chief Mike Lane. He is on top of every situation and has a heart for his fellow Highlanders. We are in good hands with the chief and his force of terrific men and women.

In addition, I am pleased to announce the formation of a special task force to address safety issues related to recent criminal activity in the area. It will be chaired by Interim Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business Operations Chuck Rowley, and will include representatives from ASUCR, GSA, the Academic Senate, Staff Assembly, UCPD, the Riverside Police Department, Parking and Transportation Services, and other interested groups.

The task force will examine current activities and make recommendations about additional measures to ensure the
safety of our campus and nearby community. If you have suggestions concerning campus safety, please submit your ideas via e-mail to ehs@ucr.edu.

Already UC Riverside is proactively focused on prevention of crime and keeping our campus and surrounding area safe. In fact, we have already initiated action on a number of suggestions that have been made in a petition that is currently circulating among the campus community, led by the Associated Students of UCR (ASUCR): ensuring that the campus has adequate lighting, trimming vegetation, providing escort services, increasing regular police patrols, utilizing parking oversight to extend the eyes of the police, installing additional emergency call boxes and video surveillance, creating student affairs area "watch" groups, and so on. In addition, the University Neighborhood Enhancement Team (a collaboration between campus police and the Riverside Police Department) is developing projects to detect and deter robberies in the nearby area. I applaud those who have signed the petition for taking safety issues so seriously, and urge others in our campus community to do so as well.

By their very nature university campuses are accessible places. We strive to keep an open and welcoming attitude while employing state of the art technology to protect our community. Your help and suggestions for greater security are always welcome. The bottom line is that UCR is a small town of about 30,000 staff, students and faculty that is a very safe place to work, live and play. We don't take that safety for granted, however, and are deeply and actively involved in actions to protect our community.

Jane

Jane Close Conoley, Ph.D.
Interim Chancellor

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