

Letter to the Editor

Campus Shootings: The Crisis Never Ends

It's Friday morning, February 19, 2010 and I find myself just as shocked and dumbfounded as I was when I wrote my last article in the 2008 winter edition of *StudentAffairs Online* titled "Technology in the Time of Crisis: A Dean's Perspective." My last article was based on the use of technology as part of campus preparation for crises. I was moved to write the article based on the tragic events that occurred at Virginia Tech in April 2007 and Northern Illinois University in February 2008.

Just as I thought campus violence (more specifically, campus shootings) were lessening and becoming a thing of the past, my optimistic attitude was quickly given a reality check.

On Friday, February 12, 2010, Amy Bishop opened fire during a faculty meeting at the University of Alabama's Huntsville (UAH) campus. Bishop killed three biology professors and injured three other campus employees. In my findings, many campus shootings have been the cause of student-shooters; however, this particular incident was different. Amy Bishop was a faculty member who was denied tenure, and she was the shooter.

Besides posting information on UAH's website, I am unsure of what other means of technology were used to disseminate information to the UAH campus community. However, I am relieved that no other casualties occurred and that university officials and first responders were able to act quickly.

Exactly one week later, another incident on a college campus occurred during the early morning hours on Friday, February 19, 2010, on the campus of Northern Illinois University (NIU). It is with great misfortune that yet again, another shooting occurred. NIU public officials stated that the event appeared to be an isolated incident between two students. One of the students was injured while the other was taken into custody.

As a current graduate student of NIU, I was exceptionally pleased to see how quickly information on this incident was communicated to the entire campus community. Through various means of technology, critical information was delivered in a moment's notice. NIU implemented a variety of emergency campus alert systems that included emergency text message notification, campus-alert postings on the university's website, campus-wide email alerts, and other measures geared towards quick mass communication.

Colleagues, I am very concerned about the safety of our students and campus communities. Hence, I pose these very important questions for you to consider once more: What lessons have we learned from our fellow institutions that have had members of their communities face human catastrophe? Most importantly, what are you doing to ensure the safety of your students and your campus community? Lastly, are you prepared to use technology in the time of crisis?

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