

Statement Before the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor

“Best Practices for Making College Campuses Safe”

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Introduction

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon, and members of the Committee, on behalf of the California State University (CSU) thank you for inviting me to discuss campus emergency preparedness and response. My testimony will focus on my experience as the Provost and Chief Academic Officer of California State University Northridge (CSUN) during the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the school's recovery from that event, and the changes made to campus emergency response planning as a result of the experience. But first, a few words about the CSU.

The California State University

Few, if any, university systems match the scope of the CSU. The CSU is the largest and most diverse four-year university system in the country, with 23 campuses, approximately 417,000 students and 46,000 faculty and staff. The CSU, stretching from Humboldt in the north to San Diego in the south, is renowned for the quality of its teaching and for its job-ready graduates. Since the system's creation in 1961, it has awarded about two million degrees. We currently award approximately 84,000 degrees each year. One key feature of the CSU is its affordability. For 2006-07, the CSU's systemwide fee for full-time undergraduate students is \$2,520. With individual campus fees added, the CSU's total fees average \$3,199, which is the lowest among any of the comparison public institutions nationwide. And while each of the 23 CSU campuses has its own identity, with distinct student populations and programs, all share the same mission—to provide high-quality, affordable higher education to meet the changing workforce needs of the people of California.

The 23 CSU campuses vary greatly in size and structure – from Cal Maritime's 1,000 student cadet environment, to large urban campuses, to more traditional mid-sized residential campus settings. Cal State Northridge (1958) is the intellectual, economic and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley. One of California's largest universities, CSUN each year educates more than 30,000 students and produces 6,000 highly skilled graduates. The university's superb

academic offerings spread between 62 bachelor's and 50 master's degrees include teacher preparation and undergraduate engineering programs ranked among the nation's best. The university also hosts a new, on-campus "learning laboratory" high school; a unique aquatic therapy center; and exceptional programs in the performing arts, sciences and ethnic studies. Northridge is a culturally and ethnically diverse university focused on student-centered learning and success. Its 356-acre campus in suburban northern Los Angeles offers a park-like setting with on-campus housing for 2,200 students. Students enjoy a wide range of support services and extracurricular activities, including more than 200 student clubs and organizations and an intercollegiate athletic program with 20 teams.

The Northridge Earthquake

On January 17, 1994 at 4:31 a.m. the northwest area of Los Angeles, including the campus of CSU Northridge, was struck by a 6.7 magnitude earthquake. Damage to the area is estimated at more than \$40 billion. Thousands of aftershocks continued to devastate structures for weeks after the major thrust.

California State University, Northridge located about a mile from the epicenter incurred more than \$400 million in damages. Overall casualties from the quake were relatively minimal because of the time of day. The campus was closed for break and January 17 was the Martin Luther King holiday. At the time of the disaster, CSUN had 25,000 students and three thousand faculty and staff working in 117 buildings on 356 acres. The earthquake resulted in damage to 107 of these structures, seven of which required demolition. For almost a decade, the campus was engaged in teaching and learning activities while simultaneously managing the process of reconstruction.

The Chancellor's office Emergency Response Unit reached us by walkie-talkie within a few hours of the event to offer assistance. On the morning of January 17, there were very few public safety officers, one Facilities staff, and a few campus and community members on campus. We asked for additional public safety and facilities' staffs to check each of the buildings to make certain no persons were trapped in any structures. The chancellor's office was very helpful in providing additional staff from other campuses to assist us and this support continued through the years of recovery until the final funding sign-off by FEMA in spring 2007.

We built a temporary campus, coordinated the relocation of classes and offices and worked closely with construction companies and federal and state agencies. My presentation today describes the steps taken to reopen the campus four weeks after the earthquake on February 14, scheduling 5000 classes in trailers, MYLAR domes, playing fields, and borrowed space from local schools and universities. We had no library, no science and engineering labs, no instruments for music or materials for art classes - or the operating systems to access

student records and business processes critical to managing a university. Solutions for each of these missing aspects of university life were found.

I will provide just a brief overview of the first day. We had imperfect information yet decisions needed to be made. One of the science buildings was in flames and several buildings were clearly dangerous since sections had separated from their main structures. Firefighters extinguished the fires in the science building but were deployed away from this fire when called to fires where lives were at risk. The fires reignited. Hazardous materials were exposed in two other damaged science buildings. We had no phones, no food, no water, no sanitary facilities and no safe structures. A severe limitation for many key staff was their inability to access roads and highways to get to campus. Faculty, staff and community members who were able to reach campus gathered on the open fields. We used those faculty and staff, regardless of their titles or previous roles, to begin the recovery and to communicate our status. While continuing to assess the structures, we began work to establish a communications center.

Communications: We needed to assure our students and staff that the campus would reopen and classes would begin for the spring semester. Yet all campus buildings were closed except to the professional staff evaluating which buildings might be repaired and returned to use. Exceptions were also made for individuals required to photograph and record the damages. Some faculty were anxious to get into the buildings to personally examine the damage to their offices and labs, an anxiety that did not abate for some weeks. We operated in more of a "command and control" structure than is usual in campus relations. The administration was characterized as authoritarian by some who felt that democratic decision making was a critical component of campus life and must be maintained. We were unable to honor those views and maintain safety and security.

With the help of the Chancellor's Office, CalState Dominguez Hills Public Safety officers, and the CalState Fullerton telecommunications staff, We had improved safety and operating phone connections on the field outside the public safety office by mid-day on January 18. This area became the new campus operations center. Two army tents arrived with the phone connections and we developed scripts for staff operating the phones. The aim was to make certain that anyone who called the campus was connected to an individual who could answer questions and convey as accurately as possible the status of our buildings. We assured all callers that the campus would reopen. We would indicate the status of buildings we believed could be used. These decisions were based on reports of structural damage. We did not yet understand the extent of damages that would result from the thousands of aftershocks.

Documenting the damages is a critical activity to ensure reimbursement. Part of that filming included making a video "Academic Aftershocks" demonstrating the

week to week and month to month progress over the first two years.

Building a Team for Recovery: A Crisis Management Team was formed, made up of the president and senior campus officers and members of the faculty who were experts in planning and who knew the campus geography. The team held 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. briefings from each area: academic, student, and administrative affairs. We were able to communicate now by phone, established phone trees, and added these in person meetings for some faculty and staff directly engaged in recovery efforts. Others were asked not to come to campus. Taped messages were prepared following the last update at 4 p.m. Individuals who called through the night could access the latest summary information.

By the end of day five, we determined that a temporary campus was the only way we could guarantee re-opening. Trying to build a schedule on shifting soil was impossible. We imagined covering the current flat parking areas with trailers, creating new parking, and acquiring 400 trailers and four 10,000 sq. ft. MYLAR domes. These decisions eliminated the uncertainty created when buildings were listed as on-line for use in the 10:00 a.m. meeting and, following aftershocks sometimes as high as 5.5 on the Richter scale, were then taken off the reopening plans at the 4:00 p.m. meetings. Classes were to begin February 14. Local radio stations and newspapers added to our communication network to get the word out to students that CSUN was "Not Just Back...Better!" Information booths were manned at all entry points for the first day. Group and individual counseling was made available for all faculty, students and staff and loans were made to students who could not access their existing accounts.

Developing a schedule and arranging on-line registration involved difficult and sometimes dangerous actions. With the aid of a cherry picker, the Dean of Libraries and Information Services entered the second floor window of the admissions and records area to retrieve student files. When she and a colleague entered the second floor, a 5.5 aftershock hit the campus and that building in particular. The retrieved files were flown to CSU Fresno and installed on their computers. Admissions and Records staff working from their homes, in campus domes, and at CSU, Fresno maintained the records, produced the schedule and enabled students to register as though they were connecting to CSU Northridge. CSU system effectiveness is apparent in these successes.

Radio stations were regularly announcing our status and reopening plans. President Clinton delivered a radio message to the campus. Vice President Gore arrived earlier to assess the situation. On February 14, twenty four-thousand students arrived for the first day of classes.

Opening Day It was a joyful and chaotic opening. The faculty were highly creative in serving students in the areas where trailers were nonexistent or not yet operational. The nonexistent trailer category was the fate of the Business

and Economics College. Selected for placement on the fields used as the Command Center, the College's trailers were delayed in placement. Faculty drove their cars adjacent to the field and placed large placards in the window announcing the car as the new Department Office. Other faculty used bullhorns to gather students for class. For example, a scene on the film has a faculty member shouting "Accounting 401, Behind the Dumpster." Many classes were held outdoors, though that was forced to end when the rains came.

All administrators agreed that we would be the last to occupy permanent space and would not move out of our domes and trailers until every faculty member had offices and student classrooms were rebuilt. We kept that promise. For the next eight years, academic affairs' staff worked in a 10,000 sq. ft. dome with neither walls nor windows. Student and Administrative Affairs shared an adjacent dome. The President and her staff worked from a trailer next to the domes. In fall 2002, the senior administration moved into permanent space.

Current Practices for Improving College Campus Safety

The CSU system campuses all have detailed **Emergency Operations Plans (EOP)**. A summary of the CSUN plan is just one example. Cal State Northridge has developed a detailed Emergency Operations Plan and structure that anticipates different threats, both natural (earthquakes, fire flooding, hazardous material's incidents, landslides, windstorms and utility outages) and those that are caused by accidental or intentional acts (national defense emergency, personal medical emergency, terrorist attack, aircraft crash, bomb threat, avian flu, acts of violence, shooting attack, or disturbance by criminal or insane persons). The Northridge plan is reviewed and updated annually, and the university regularly conducts training and exercises.

CSUN Public Safety Department officers, who have full police powers, have been specially trained and armed to deal with active shooting incidents. CSUN also has mutual aid agreements with other law enforcement agencies such as the California Highway Patrol.

The CSUN Public Safety Department regularly teams with its counterparts in university Student Affairs and Counseling to discuss and assess potentially serious student behavior problems. If warranted, university police conduct threat assessments designed to head off problems.

The University has a functioning emergency broadcast system on the main campus. The system uses speakers mounted on the roofs of major buildings, allow voice broadcasting throughout the main campus.

In an initiative begun after Hurricane Katrina, the University is currently testing another mass notification system called Connect-Ed that can rapidly deliver

recorded voice messages (and text messages) to the phones and e-mail in boxes of all students, faculty and staff, including TTY capability for those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

This year, the campus opened a new, state-of-the-art \$10 million Public Safety/Parking Department headquarters located in the heart of the campus. The two-story 26,000-square-foot facility included an expanded Emergency Operations Center. Public Safety also maintains a 40-foot command post trailer that can serve as a mobile EOC. Two other sites are also under development. Redundancy for emergency response is built into the development of units at different sites.

Should a disaster occur a **Campus Closure Integrated Communication Protocol** is activated. This protocol supplements the CSUN Emergency Operations Plan by providing detailed guidelines for communication with members of the campus community when classes are cancelled and the campus is closed due to an emergency or other unforeseen circumstance. The Emergency Operations Plan provides specific guidelines on notifications, mobilization of the Crisis Action Team, and possible activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Currently all 23 campuses of the CSU and the Office of the Chancellor have developed all hazard (natural and man-made) preparedness plans. Each plan has addenda for a specific hazard and many have been in development since the mid 1990s. Initially the campus plans were developed using the State's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and then revised to comply with the federal mandated National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Communications is the fundamental capability to prevent, react, respond and recover from an event. There is no one size or one technology that fits all situations. Each campus establishes its individual communication plan to operate for a variety of incidents/hazards using their available technologies for the specific event (broadcast e-mail, websites, phones, bullhorns, sirens, etc.).

Training occurs for all levels of CSU employees including Presidents, their designated back-ups and members of the emergency Operations Team. Routine sessions emphasize overall plans and specific facets of the campus plan. Crisis Communications is an area of focus in the CSU leadership training.

Crisis Communications such as occurred in the Northridge Earthquake, Katrina and shooting and terror acts require tough decisions by humans with limited information available as a crisis unfolds. Questions that must be asked are:

- How or can this event escalate in severity?
- What needs to be done immediately to prevent further injury, death or

damage to property?

The CSU strives to respond appropriately through its actions and communications to its campus population, community, and for large scale or catastrophic events, local regional, national and international media and populations.

CSU has experienced the misfortune of active shooters over the years and have developed specific campus plans for this type of event. All the events whether in the CSU or in other locations, cause us to re-evaluate and update the campus' overall plans.

In spring 2001, the CSU engaged former FEMA Director James Lee Witt to conduct various hazard/vulnerability assessments, including an active shooter scenario at SFSU. We maintain active "mutual aid" agreements with local and state public safety agencies to assist when an event exceeds our capabilities.

Future CSU Emergency Planning

- Continue to re-assess our active shooter and all hazard plans
- Re-emphasis placed on Prevention, Response, Communications and Recovery from the lessons learned from the Virginia Tech University (VTU) event
- Continue to exercise our plans and test both our capabilities and test for events beyond our abilities and work on shortfalls observed in our practices
- Continue to seek funding and grants to improve our equipment and plan documents
- Training sessions planned for our Presidents at the end of June with James Lee Witt, including crisis communications and lessons learned from VTU
- Continue to work with State Office of Emergency Services including participating in the GAP analysis initiative to identify and quantify what is available and what will be needed in a catastrophic event

The CSU remains vigilant in our efforts to preserve and protect life and property, and prepare to the best of our ability for such an event, to expect the unexpected, communicate our plans to the broadest possible audience, involve our entire campus community in improving our plans and continually seek to improve through routine testing and exercising of our plans for an event we hope will never happen.

Unpredictability is inherent in disasters and makes planning for such an event a challenge.