Campus Safety and Security

Expiry: April 30, 2027

1. Preamble

Ensuring that campus is a safe(r) place for all students and Edmonton community members is one of the Students' Union's top priorities. In addition to addressing sexual violence on campus (a top safety concern), we must also protect students from violence, harassment, theft and other situations that make students, staff, faculty and community members feel unsafe. To achieve these goals, the Students' Union recognizes that security may continue to play an important role in campus security and safety. However, the Black Lives Matter movement[1] and documented systemic discrimination and violence against marginalized community members both on and off-campus by police and security personnel[2,3] has made it clear to the University of Alberta Students Union (UASU) students council that we must reimagine security on our campuses.

We engage in this work with the understanding that policing in Canada was built on racist and classist ideas. For example, in Canada, "the RCMP was created in 1873 to "free up land" of Indigenous people to make way for white settlement"[4]. We also recognize that this is a complex issue, as our community members demonstrated throughout consultation. While security and policing personnel make some feel safe, security and policing present both a real and a perceived threat for many marginalized groups. For these reasons, as we strive for better safety and security mechanisms on campus, we must strive to meet the complex needs of our community members and continue to understand that this issue requires tentative nuanced thinking.

2. Definitions

Abolition: "the action or an act of abolishing a system, practice, or institution."[5]

Bystander Intervention: "Bystander intervention occurs when a person sees a situation and voices an opinion about someone else's language and/or behaviour that is inappropriate, hurtful, abusive or dangerous. Bystanders can prevent sexual violence [and other kinds of violence] when they recognize a situation could escalate and intervene."[6]

Harm Reduction: "Harm reduction, or harm minimization, refers to a range of public policies designed to lessen the negative social and/or physical consequences associated with various human behaviours, both legal and illegal"[7]

Welfare checks: are conducted when there is a reported concern over someone's medical condition[8]

Excited Delirium: a non-medically recognized diagnosis often used as a justification to escalate the use of firearms by police officers that is included in UAPS training documents.

3. Policy Facts

1. In 2021 the University of Alberta signed the Scarborough Charter[9] which committed signatories "to redressing anti-Black racism and fostering Black inclusion in universities and colleges across Canada''. While work has yet to begin to fulfill these commitments, signing this charter demonstrates the University's commitment to reforming security on campus. The charter states that the University will:
   a. "reassess... the existing campus security and safety infrastructure and protocols with a view to protecting the human dignity, equality and safety of Black people on campus";
   b. "undertak[e] periodic climate surveys that consider local community relations, to assess and guide initiatives to build inclusive campuses in a manner that is responsive to the specific needs of Black faculty, staff and students".
   c. Additionally, the University of Alberta has recognized in numerous reports that restorative justice is the preferred response to crime and conflict[10].

2. According to recent studies, police in Canada have an ongoing history of disproportionately killing, abusing, and/or mistreating minority groups:
    a. “CBC conducted an extensive investigation into fatal encounters with police in Canada over a 17 year period from 2000-2017 and found that while Black people are less than three percent of the population, they were nine percent of those killed by police. Indigenous peoples were less than four percent of the population but more than 15 percent of those killed by police”[11,12;]
    b. “The same CBC investigation, Deadly Force, found that of the 461 cases analyzed, only 18 officers were ever charged, and only two were convicted”[13,14];
    c. Updates from 2020 demonstrate that this continues to be an issue compounded by not only race but mental health[15].
3. Policies and services that help meet individuals’ basic needs (such as food, water, and shelter) and complex needs (such as mental health supports) can reduce crime rates[16]. These policies and services often include harm reduction policies and aim to create safe and secure communities.
4. Many who argue for abolition on our campus note that policing is a security method but that there are ways to create safe communities beyond policing. Advocates argue that harm reduction policies, restorative justice and bystander intervention training can all play a role in creating safety on and off campus.
5. There are varying opinions about policing and security on campus, largely based on cultural expectations and past experiences.
6. In 2021, the Students’ Union conducted the Campus Safety and Security Survey. The survey concluded that “most student respondents feel safe around UAPS and trust them to treat people fairly and equitably. However, women and gender minorities, disabled students, LGBTQ2S+ students, and various racial/ethnic groups are significantly less likely to feel safe around UAPS or trust them”[17].
7. The survey also found that many students, especially those from equity-seeking groups, are less likely to trust and feel safe around Edmonton Police Services[18].
8. The 2021 Students’ Union Campus Safety and Security Survey allowed us to see what minorities' interactions with UAPS have been like[19]:
    a. 13% of Black respondents and 10% of Indigenous or East/Southeast Asian respondents reported personally experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination by UAPS or law enforcement on or near campus,
    b. 9% of women, 8% of LGBTQ2S+, and 14% of gender minority respondents reported personally experiencing sex- or gender-based discrimination by UAPS or law enforcement on or near campus,
    c. 2% of men, 3% of women, 6% of LGBTQ2S+, and 10% of disabled respondents reported personally experiencing mental-health-based discrimination by UAPS or law enforcement on or near campus,
    d. 19% of disabled respondents reported personally experiencing disability-related discrimination by UAPS or law enforcement on or near campus,
    e. Students also reported widely varying positive and negative experiences with UAPS wellness checks.
9. Residence report having mixed experiences with UAPS officers[20]:
    a. Students have raised concerns about removing UAPS because they make them feel safe in residence and respond more quickly to concerns than EPS;
    b. Students have also raised concerns about the presence of UAPS in residence, particularly when responding to wellness checks.
10. The UASU’s 2020 Annual General Survey asked questions about security on campus. However, the survey did not ask questions about race[21]:
    a. “Broadly speaking, students trust UAPS but distrust other law enforcement, including EPS and ETS transit enforcement”;
        i. Distrust rise significantly among many marginalized populations including gender minorities, those with disabilities, and women,
        ii. “One exception is international students, who are by far the most likely group to trust law enforcement”,
    b. “5% of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit respondents had experienced racial/ethnic discrimination/unfair treatment from UAPS or law enforcement on or near campus. 25% had seen it happen to other people”;

c. 49% of respondents felt somewhat or much safer around UAPS, compared to 5% who felt somewhat or much less safe;
d. 43% of respondents felt somewhat or much safer around the Edmonton Police;
e. 44% of respondents felt somewhat or much safer around Edmonton transit enforcement/peace officers, compared to 11% who felt somewhat or much less safe;
f. 42% of respondents felt somewhat or much safer around RCMP officers, compared to 20% who felt somewhat or much less safe.

11. The 2021 Students' Union Campus Safety and Security Survey gave insight into what students would like to see changed about security on campus[22]:
    a. "Many students, including a significant portion of those who trust and feel safe around UAPS, feel less safe or explicitly unsafe due to UAPS plainclothes deployments. Gender minorities and Indigenous respondents had especially negative opinions on this issue."
    b. "Virtually all respondent groups support proposals that would route calls related to homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse to social workers, counsellors, and EMTs. Police would still respond to situations involving violence and serious crime. Women, sexual and gender minorities, and Black respondents strongly support these proposals."
    c. "Virtually all respondent groups feel dubious about UAPS sharing personal information with EPS, or feel it would be inappropriate. Sexual and gender minorities and Black respondents feel especially dubious."
12. According to the University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) 2020 Annual General Survey Report[23]:
    a. "13% of respondents with neurological, cognitive, or psychiatric conditions had experienced mental-health-related discrimination/unfair treatment from University of Alberta Protective Services (UAPS) or law enforcement on or near campus. 12% had seen it happen to other people'';
    b. According to qualitative data, many students did not feel as though UAPS was the best group to meet their needs during mental health crises;
    c. According to qualitative data, COVID caused serious stress and generally had a deterrent effect on students' mental health;
    d. According to qualitative data, wellness checks in residence could be improved to meet residents' needs. Training could also be changed to meet the needs of Residence Assistants (RAs)
13. CSJ is a French-speaking campus where many students are more comfortable communicating in French. Many of these French-speaking students are from African nations. This combination of a language barrier and race has raised concerns about UAPS's ability to meet students' needs.
14. On the Augustana campus, UAPS has a liaison officer and security provided by a private firm securitycompany[24].
15. The UAPS Incident Log can be found here:
    a. Oftentimes UAPS is responsible for removing homeless individuals, those in mental health crisis and individuals who have been locked out of their building from campus grounds. They also deal with alarm activations, and Traffic Stops[25]
    b. They have been dealing with an increased number of overdoses on campus throughout the 2020-2021 school year;
    c. The Students Union has been made aware that while some students do report acts of sexual violence to UAPS many do not due to the perception that students will be ignored.
16. UAPS began formally tracking welfare checks in September of 2020. In 2020 they performed 30 welfare checks and in 2021 they performed 159 welfare checks:
    a. According to our surveys, students have had mixed experiences with welfare checks. While some report positive experiences others, particularly those from marginalized communities, have had negative experiences.
17. UAPS's budget and the allocation of student funds to particular projects are not public. However, the No Cops On Campus Collectives report claims that the University allocates $1.4 million on securitizing the campus[26].
18. While UAPS and EPS's budgets continue to increase, public and student services are being cut[27,28]. As stated by UAPS representatives at the University of Alberta Safety & Security Committee (UASSC) meeting on Monday, January 17th, 2021, a lack of community support mixed with cold weather often means there are more individuals in distress who take refuge on campus, particularly in HUB[29].

19. UAPS and EPS are linked in multiple ways and work together. At The University of Alberta Safety & Security Committee (UASSC), the relationship is often discussed as they work together to develop new programs and run the Liaison Officer Program. While they have “no structured training schedule with EPS and very rarely train or “ride-along” with them”[30]. They do share information, have an established relationship, and learn from each other.
20. UAPS runs the Liaison Officer program in collaboration with EPS. This is a pilot program in its 3rd year of operation. When the UASU asked for “any contracts, memoranda of understanding, or similar documents that specify the roles, responsibilities, or authority of the EPS liaison officer(s) assigned to UAPS.” UAPS denied our request and directed us to read about the Human Engagement Liaison Program (HELP):
    a. This program has generated community concern because this agreement allows UAPS to share student information with EPS and means EPS is consistently present on campus;
    b. The cost of the program is not public and success has not been measured.
21. UAPS works with the Community Assistance Team (CAT). “This group is focused on connecting those in need with the local social programs that are best equipped to help them into safer circumstances. This team is guided by the philosophy that it’s better to seek support for individuals rather than criminalizing them. Our patrol officers are trained and expected to recognize when to activate our CAT program.”
22. Concerns have been raised in regards to UAPS’s transparency:
    a. Their incident Log was inaccessible until Winter of 2022;
    b. Basic information about the Liaison Officer, including what their responsibilities are, is challenging to find and/or is kept private;
    c. UAPS was unable to provide the UASU with any details about the specific content within the training their officers receive;
    d. UAPS’s budget is not accessible and could not be provided upon request as of Winter of 2022;
    e. Information about the success of their programs is not tracked and could not be provided as of Winter of 2022;
    f. The amount of times they asked for someone's identification on campus (also known as carding) is not tracked and they could not provide this information when requested in Winter 2022;
    g. Average response time to calls is not tracked and so information could not be provided;
    h. Information about future strategic plans or plans to improve UAPS’s service could not be provided.
23. UAPSs internal policies, such as standards, directives, and processes for dealing with complaints, the homeless, street ID checks, wellness checks, and writing tickets, are kept private. This can make it challenging to confirm student reports:
    a. For example, while students have reported being carded, when asked UAPS stated that they do not engage in street checks rather they “only conduct ID checks that are within our rights as an agent of the property or as a Peace Officer”
24. UAPS issues tickets to students. USPS does not track the numbers of tickets issued and, while they do not have any quotas or expectations for their officers to write tickets, the issuing of tickets is left to the discretion of their officers.
25. Information about the training UAPS officers receive is kept private. However, the UASU was informed that they receive 30 weeks of training both in class and on the job. The training is provided both externally and by a training officer. Some examples of their training include:
    a. Community Peace Officer Induction Program Training Academy
    b. Verbal Judo (Tactical Communications and De-Escalation)
    c. Professionalism and Unbiased Interactions
    d. ProTraining (mental health de-escalation for law enforcement developed by the U of A’s own Dr. Yasmeen Krameddine)
    e. Recognition of Emotionally Disturbed Persons
    f. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
    g. Excited Delirium Syndrome
    h. Ethics and Accountability
    i. And EDI Specific Training

4. Resolutions

1. The UASU will advocate for and work with the University to fulfill the commitments outlined in the Scarbrough Charter. This includes but is not limited to commitments made to “reassess... the existing campus security and safety infrastructure and protocols with a view to protecting the human dignity, equality and safety of Black people on campus”. More specifically the UASU will advocate for restorative justice and harm reduction practices to be accounted for in this work.
2. The UASU will advocate for the University to invest in more harm reduction services and strategies. This could include but is not limited to safe sex and sexual violence education, services for students struggling with addiction, and social workers.
3. The UASU will advocate for the municipal government to invest in harm reduction services and strategies to be used off-campus. This includes but is not limited to providing housing to those who are houseless, creating safe consumption sites, and working with EPS to improve their practices.
    a. The UASU will advocate for police officers to acquire mental health qualifications, as one of form of improving EPS practices.
4. The UASU will advocate for the provincial government to invest in harm reduction services and strategies. This could include but is not limited to bolstered funding for mental health services for students and community members.
5. The UASU will continue to work with campus stakeholders to learn about their perspectives on campus safety and security to remain responsive to their concerns and perspectives.
6. The UASU Campus Safety and Security Survey found that minority groups are less likely to feel safe around UAPS or trust them. In response, the UASU will advocate for reforms to UAPS’s practices and procedures to account for these concerns. Additionally, the UASU will work to redefine UAPS’s responsibilities to better meet community needs through advocacy and collaboration.
7. In response to the UASU Campus Safety and Security Surveys' findings that equity-seeking groups are less likely to trust EPS, the UASU will advocate to address the presence of EPS on campus and for a reevaluation of their relationship with UAPS.
8. The UASU will advocate for the University to undergo a review of safety and security practices on campus including UAPS with elders, FNMI community members, and FNMI students to determine what should be changed, abolished, or improved on campus to make UofA a safe(er) and secure place for all FNMI students, faculty, staff and community members.
9. The UASU will advocate for the University to undergo a review of safety and security practices on campus including UAPS with 2SLGBTQ+ campus and community leaders and advocates to determine what should be changed, abolished, or improved on campus to make UofA a safe(er) and secure place for all 2SLGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff and community members.
10. The UASU will advocate for the University to undergo a review of safety and security practices on campus including UAPS with disabled campus and community leaders and advocates to determine what should be changed, abolished, or improved on campus to make UofA a safe(er) and secure place for all disabled students, faculty, staff and community members.
11. The UASU will advocate for the University to undergo a review of safety and security practices on campus including UAPS with black campus and community leaders and advocates to determine what should be changed, abolished, or improved on campus to make UofA a safe(er) and secure place for all black students, faculty, staff and community members;
    a. This includes implementing the Scarbrough Charter in its entirety,
    b. And working with community members and advocates at UofA including but not limited to the Black Students’ Association (BSA), and in Edmonton.
12. The UASU will advocate for wellness checks in residence to be completely revamped and improved. Specifically, the UASU will advocate for social services to be placed at the forefront when welfare/wellness checks are conducted. These changes should be made to develop a new system that transitions the completion of wellness checks in residence from UAPS’s to social workers and mental health experts who can lead these checks and conduct follow up.
13. The UASU will advocate to the municipal government for improved safety on transit. This advocacy should focus on harm reduction and community-based strategies to improve safety in transit such as a the integration of Peace Officers and Social Workers like the Community Outreach Transit Team.
14. The UASU will advocate against a plainclothes unit on campus

15. The UASU will advocate for UAPS to develop a new system that routes calls related to homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse to social workers, counsellors, and EMTs. And that would have UAPS / Police respond to situations involving violence and serious crime.
16. The UASU will advocate against the Liaison Officer program and against the sharing of personal or identifying information with EPS.
17. The UASU will advocate for UAPS officers that work at Campus Saint-Jean to be required to speak a professional or working level of French.
18. The UASU will advocate for more robust and culturally sensitive disclosure and reporting services that do not depend on UAPS or EPS at the UofA.
19. The UASU will advocate for transparent training practices, standards and directives for UAPS officers and for their training process to be improved through community consultation. Specifically, the UASU will work towards addressing excited delirium in UAPS training.
20. While working to address the long term advocacy goals in this policy the UASU will advocate for short term solutions by:
    a. advocating for UAPS's full budget to be made public with a cost breakdown of how they get their money
    b. advocating for UAPS to continue tracking wellness checks including satisfaction with these checks
    c. advocating for increased transparency about the Liaison Officer program including what their role is, what information
    d. advocating for UAPS to track and report their ticketing
    e. advocating for UAPS to track average response time to calls
    f. and advocating for the UAPS to be transparent about long term planning

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30. Email exchange between UASU Executive, Marcel Roth and Catherine Swindlehurst

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