



*A Message to the Columbia Community
from Associate Vice President for Public Safety
James F. McShane*

Saturday, April 5, 2008

Last night, the University community suffered the tragic loss of a Columbia graduate student. I am writing to let you know that the safety and well-being of our students, faculty and staff, as well as others in our community, is our top priority. I would also like to share with you some of the things that the Department of Public Safety is doing to safeguard our campus, in order to help allay any concerns that you may have on the issue of safety here.

Uniformed Public Safety personnel are stationed at fixed locations throughout the Morningside area and on the uptown Medical Center campus. These include guard booths at the main gates on 116th Street at both Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, which are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These posts are supplemented by foot and motorized patrols that provide a highly visible presence in the areas around both campuses. In recent months, we have increased our foot patrols throughout the area. We also work very closely with neighboring institutions including Barnard College, Bank Street College, Jewish Theological Seminary, Manhattan School of Music, Teachers College, and Union Theological Seminary. Beginning this evening, we will be adding an additional patrol vehicle within the Morningside area.

All of our undergraduate residences are staffed by Public Safety personnel or trained student aides who control access to these buildings on a 24-hour basis. All students and visitors are screened. We also operate two 24-hour emergency operations centers, one on each campus. On the Morningside campus, we can be reached in an emergency by dialing 212-854-5555 on any phone. For routine business, you can reach us by calling 212-854-2797. At the Medical Center, the emergency response number is 212-305-7979.

There is also an extensive system of video cameras that we use to investigate crimes. In addition, emergency call boxes that connect directly to our 24 hour operations centers are installed in strategic locations across both campuses and surrounding areas. Our staff of highly trained investigators works hand in hand with the N.Y.P.D. to investigate matters that relate to the Columbia campuses. We are presently working closely with the N.Y.P.D. in support of the current investigation.

Last semester we introduced a text messaging system which can be used to transmit emergency messages to portable devices such as cell phones. Initially, this service was made available to the student body. Recently, it was made available to faculty and staff, as well.

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We also employ a number of Crime Prevention Initiatives to help ensure personal safety. For example, we operate a Morningside Heights shuttle service that provides scheduled service through the Morningside campus area during the evening hours, between 7:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. Thereafter, this shuttle service offers on-call service between 11:00 P.M. and 2:00 A.M. daily. This service ranges as far south as 103rd Street and as far north as 135th Street. Resources permitting, we supplement this service with patrol vehicles. Recently, we added an additional point to point vehicle which operates between the hours of 10:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M.

We also offer an escort service where trained students will accompany you to your door any time from 7:00 P.M. until 3:00 A.M. This service is available between 108th Street and 122nd Street. At the Medical Center, escorts are available between W. 165th Street and W. 181st Street. For this service, call 212-854-SAFE on the Morningside Campus and 212-305-8100 at the Medical Center.

Operation "Safe Haven" provides 65 storefront locations across both campuses where people who may feel threatened can take refuge. The merchants will call Public Safety and/or the N.Y.P.D. who will respond immediately. Look for the "Red Lion" sticker in the window of the store.

My team and I are here to keep you safe and sound. We look forward to working together with all of you, not only to keep our environment as safe as it is, but also to make our students, faculty and staff - and their families - feel safe.

I encourage anyone with a concern to contact Public Safety at 212-854-2797, day or night. For more information about safety concerns, please also see FACETS online at: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/facets/0708_safety.pdf