

# POST-INCIDENT UPDATE

## Hagey Hall attack

### Background

In the period after any activation of an emergency response, it is customary for organizations to engage in a process of learning and development to assess the actions taken during a crisis. This update seeks to summarize input gathered from a variety of sources to highlight some of the actions required (or that are already underway) to continuously improve the University's response to emergency situations, and to reflect on wider issues identified in the period after the attack in June 2023.

The University aims to create a safe, equitable, and inclusive campus for all. Teams continue to work to identify and break down barriers for many marginalized or historically oppressed groups, with the goal of creating a safer more welcoming environment for everyone.

We have identified four distinct areas where we can provide updates to the University community:

- Emergency Management Procedures
- Emergency Communications
- Safety and Physical Security
- Campus Communities, Culture and Climate

### Updates

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Work to identify updates that we can make to our emergency management procedures is coordinated by the Safety Office with close collaboration from stakeholders identified in the [Emergency Response Plan](#). This work is overseen jointly by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost and by the Office of the Vice-President, Administration and Finance.

### **We can improve our activation protocols for the Emergency Response Plan**

Our ability to respond and communicate rapidly and in a coordinated manner was limited by the practices and methods used to notify and gather key individuals responsible for immediate actions. The ability to quickly assemble essential staff and establish priority objectives must be coordinated and practiced.

**Action:** We will be improving notification methods and streamlining information exchange across campus, especially between adjacent buildings, to ensure that the Emergency Response Plan can be activated as quickly as possible. Further review and updating of the ERP is underway and we will continue to update the community on this work.

### **We must follow established protocols for information exchange through the Emergency Control Group**

In the urgency of the immediate response to the incident, and in an effort to share information quickly, not all critical sources of information were available and/or vetted by the Emergency Control Group. This led to a lack of timely, accurate instructions, especially for those closest to the incident, and inaccurate communication.

**Action:** We've identified key sources of critical safety information and will build protocols to ensure that information can be exchanged between the Emergency Control Group, first responders and personnel on site. This will allow us to ensure that information passed to the Emergency Communication Team is timely and accurate.

### **We should reconsider how faculties or academic units are represented within the emergency response structure**

Lessons learned during the pandemic and our experiences on June 28 have highlighted how important it is for decision-makers in the Emergency Control Group to have and use information from within academic units to assess risk related to teaching and research. We also recognize that buildings and academic units are not synonymous. There can be multiple academic and non-academic units and services in the same building.

A positive finding was that departmental staff trained in fire and first aid procedures involved in this incident quickly jumped into action to aid those in need.

**Actions:** Ensuring the emergency response structure addresses all faculties, academic units, and departments, including more awareness and training of emergency protocols.

Recognizing that every emergency is different, we are considering ways to effectively leverage the knowledge of colleagues in academic units. This may include additional training for leaders outside of the Emergency Response Group to ensure consistent understanding of the University's processes during an emergency situation.

We will ensure that the Emergency Control Group has up-to-date lists of all units and services in buildings to ensure that relevant leaders are engaged in the response as necessary.

Through additional training and resources, we aim to leverage fire wardens to expand their capacity to respond in a wider set of emergencies.

### **More training and awareness of our emergency response protocols is required for all audiences**

The response of those directly involved in the attack on June 28 demonstrated that students and employees knew what to do. However, we have heard that confidence in knowing how to react could be improved across the campus so that every student and employee is prepared to respond in various types of emergencies.

**Actions:** We have already made additional emergency preparedness information available for students and employees in LEARN and on the [Safety Office website](#). Orientation for new employees has also been updated with this content. With respect to occupational health and safety, we are undertaking a re-assessment of workplace violence risk, which will further inform our direction on employee education.

## EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Work to identify updates that we can make to our emergency communication protocols is coordinated by University Relations working closely with the Safety Office and other stakeholders.

### **We need to expand access to our Emergency Notification System to ensure it is used appropriately**

Our initial assessment of the emergency response on June 28 has confirmed that the problems we experienced with alerts that day were not with the app itself. We have worked closely with the app vendor and confirmed that it is an effective platform when we use it appropriately.

At the outset of the emergency, those with access to the emergency notification system (a platform that allows for “one button” ability to communicate pre-determined messaging to the WatSAFE app, display screens, desktop alerts and some social media channels), did not activate it. Later, when communicators attempted to use the Emergency Notification System, too few individuals had access to use the systems quickly and effectively.

**Actions:** One of the key steps we have implemented is expanded access to WatSAFE and detailed training for certain employee groups to ensure that notifications are sent quickly. We recently used WatSAFE to share information about a safety issue on campus, and we will continue to send safety information to the campuses through the app.

We are conducting a comprehensive review of the emergency notification system to determine a new set of requirements for the technology platform, including the application of multimodal communications (e.g., combining alerts with text messages, emails, etc.), and protocols for its use. We expect this work to continue throughout the Fall '23 and Winter '24 terms with a view to implementing a new emergency notification protocol.

### **We can improve the effectiveness of our emergency communications team**

The attack on June 28 revealed that more cross-training of staff is essential in the Emergency Communication Team in order to avoid knowledge gaps during an emergency. More can also be done to involve communicators from units not formally represented in the Emergency Communication Team.

Furthermore, members of the Emergency Communication Team would benefit from expanded training and development to ensure familiarity with emergency procedures and protocols to make full use of the tools and channels available.

There is also an opportunity to expand the channels available to the Emergency Communication Team during a crisis. Feedback made it clear that earlier use of email during the event is desirable, in addition to new tools including SMS.

**Actions:** A full review and update of the Emergency Communication Plan with the aid of third-party experts will be complete in Winter '24. This work will be followed up with a comprehensive training and exercise program for members of the Emergency Communication Team.

We have already established a new rota to ensure that members of the Emergency Communications Team are available to work, and have the opportunity to test and train on the use of the WatSAFE app and full Emergency Notification System monthly.

Recognizing that every emergency is different, we are considering ways to effectively leverage colleagues in other units.

## **SAFETY AND PHYSICAL SECURITY**

Prioritizing campus safety and physical security remains a key focus area for the Vice-President, Administration and Finance with support from the Safety Office, Special Constable Service, IST and Plant Operations.

### **We must continue to prioritize physical security**

As we have [previously shared](#), our reviews identified potential risk with information regarding instructor names and the physical location of classes being shared on public-facing websites. The team in the Registrar's Office has removed class locations and instructor names from the public schedule of classes and work continues to ensure other websites have this information removed.

Prior to the June 28 attack, the University had already started plans for an expanded building access control project. A full review of the access technology has taken place, with plans to rollout expanded access control to our main campus and our satellite campuses. The University currently relies on personal fobs and physical keys for restricting access. Plans are underway to incorporate a technology solution that utilizes options available with updates to the WatCard.

## **CAMPUS COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND CLIMATE**

The Office of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost, the AVP, Faculty Planning and Policy, Office of the AVP Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-racism, and the Office of the AVP, Indigenous Relations have received and gathered feedback from the campus community in response to the Hagey Hall attack on June 28, 2023. As a next step towards creating a community of belonging as articulated in the University of Waterloo's key strategic documents, such as the [University of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#), the [Waterloo at 100 Framework](#), and the [PART Report](#), we are updating the community on the following initiatives:

### **We must build trust in the institution within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community**

The University will engage in dialogues as an opportunity for senior administrators and 2SLGBTQIA+ campus members to review feedback received since the attack in a safe space and with the guidance of experienced facilitators. These dialogues are meant to centre student voices and will be expanded to employees in the coming months.

These dialogues will seek to:

- Confirm and understand the historical relationship between the University of Waterloo and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, consolidating feedback received from the community to date and validating feedback with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.
- Confirm a mutual understanding of the current concerns of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, while ensuring that space is created to centre trans and non-binary voices.
- Collaboratively find solutions and strategies to promote a safe, equitable and inclusive environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
- Collaboratively prioritize action items

The outcomes will inform a detailed action plan that will be shared with the community at a later stage.

### **We must tackle antagonism and intimidation in academia**

Institutions of higher learning are environments where new ideas, insights, and discoveries are cultivated. Here is where unexplored territory provides the space for curiosity to grow, for rigorous enquiry to nurture understanding, for innovation to reach new heights. It's where professors and students conduct extensive research in the constant pursuit of knowledge, truth, and justice. Unfortunately, it's also where targeted attacks occur by those who feel threatened by this important work and the impact it has on society.

Why is this happening and what can we do about it? The University of Waterloo aims to answer these questions in a [new speaker series entitled "Antagonism and Intimidation in Academia"](#) (Fall 2023 – Winter 2024) that will conclude with an international conference. These events are organized jointly by the Faculty of Arts and the Office of Research and funded by the Provost's Interdisciplinarity Fund.

The speaker series involves talks by members of the University of Waterloo academic community on the broad subject of antagonistic and intimidating responses to academic research and pedagogy. Scholars in many fields have experienced hostile responses to their work, such as those whose emphasis is on social justice scholarship that focuses on discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and religion; science and technology research; health and vaccine research; and environment, sustainability, and climate change research. Aggressors aim to silence the individual researcher and attack those advocating certain scholarly ideas through various hostile actions, including cyberbullying, disruption of public presentations, personal threats, and in the worst-case scenario, physical violence.

To commemorate the first anniversary of the hate-motivated attack on June 28, 2023, the University of Waterloo is committed to spotlighting the various kinds of scholarship that draw adversary responses and extend far beyond academic or non-academic disagreement. As part of this commitment, the University of Waterloo is sponsoring and hosting an international conference, *From Targeting in Academia to Promoting Trust and Understanding*, on June 27-29, 2024.

### **We will develop principles of freedom of expression and respectful engagement**

Academic freedom and free expression, the two fundamental principles of university research and teaching, are increasingly challenged in current political climates around the world — where we see events deemed controversial are cancelled or speakers uninvited, where instructors might hesitate to discuss certain subjects with their students, or students might feel reluctant to

express their opinions freely. Often these situations are amplified through increased visibility in social media channels.

To be successful in upholding our institutional mission amid today's changing social, civic, and political landscape, we need to articulate renewed principles of free expression and respectful engagement. To this end, we are forming a task force to explore and understand the reasons for the current fraught nature of freedom of expression and to create principles that help us maintain and ensure a campus culture of robust and respectful intellectual exchange, open inquiry, and free expression.

We will share more information on this task force, including how to express your interest in joining before the end of December, 2023.