Progress on Emergency Management and Safety

In October, we shared an update with you on our progress related to a number of opportunities to improve safety and security, and to improve the culture and climate on our campuses, in the wake of the Hagey Hall attack.

Today we provide more information related to our emergency response plans, safety on campus and our work on issues related to culture and climate.

Improving our Emergency Response Plan

As part of the normal process for evaluating actions following an emergency, we identified the need to review our Emergency Response Plan (ERP) to ensure that it meets the current needs of our community. To help us in this work, we engaged emergency management experts at Deloitte to review our ERP and to evaluate it against best practises.

We welcome the findings of Deloitte's review. The comprehensive report reveals that the Emergency Response Plan draws from Incident Management System principles and provides a foundational structure for the university's Emergency Management Program. The report identifies areas for enhancement of the plan. Some of the recommendations include:

- the establishment of emergency management coordinators at the faculty or academic support unit level to help manage emergency response locally, and provide insight to the Emergency Control Group;
- expanded training and awareness as well as high-level guidance on emergency preparedness; and
- improved guidance to help us activate or escalate our emergency response processes.

Many of their recommendations reflect takeaways we shared in October's post-incident update. These helpful findings and insights will allow us to advance the process to modify our Emergency Response Plan and the important work to create more awareness of the plan.

You can expect updates this year on changes to the Emergency Response Plan and our progress to refresh our Emergency Notification System. Teams are evaluating responses to our request for proposal for an updated system this month.

Making changes to our campus spaces

Work to evaluate the necessary changes to our campus environment has continued. New safety information has been posted in classrooms and meeting spaces across our campuses this term. Please take a moment to review these new posters from time to time and please also review the emergency preparedness training available on LEARN.

Additionally, we have set aside budget to make safety enhancements to buildings and exterior spaces. We have started this work with some necessary improvements to the corridors in Hagey Hall that will make the spaces brighter and give more control over lighting. This work also aligns with our efforts to improve sustainability by introducing LED lighting in more spaces. We will be addressing other dimly lit areas across campus as part of this work.

We continue to evaluate improvements we can make to exterior spaces, reviewing placement and technology of our helplines and other safety features. We have identified that all our classrooms meet the Ontario Building Code requirements for entry and exit. All rooms for more than 60 people have two entry/exit points and three quarters of our registrar-managed classrooms for 32 to 59 people also have two entry/exit points. With this good range of spaces available we have not identified a need to add entry/exit points to additional rooms.

One significant area we continue to work on is the way we can secure external access to our buildings. We currently have two access control pilots underway within East Campus 2 and the School of Architecture to test new ways people can open doors (with their WatCard, for example) and improving the security of our buildings. This continued work started in 2022 as part of a project team who are evaluating external access to all campus buildings. The intent of this work is to enable faster securing of buildings in the event of an emergency; we will not necessarily be locking building doors around the clock.

As we do our reviews of potential safety measures, we consider the evolution of available technologies as well as the potential for unintended consequences of introducing new measures. For example, some measures that our community proposed to us last year at our community fora, like the introduction of panic buttons in classrooms, may be redundant given the widespread availability of mobile devices, and introduce a false sense of security.

We'll share more information on physical safety changes this year as we are able.

Addressing campus climate and culture

Our important work to address climate and culture on campus continues and we are pleased at the keen response so far to our speaker series on Antagonism and Intimidation in Academia. The third panel discussion is happening on Tuesday, February 27 and you can find more information about it on the series website.

We are also making good progress toward our international conference in June this year: *From Targeting in Academia to Promoting Trust and Understanding*. We received many strong proposals that will make for an engaging conference. We have shared details of keynote speakers online and look forward to sharing more information soon.

In parallel to the conference, Universities Canada in collaboration with the University of Waterloo will host a Senior Leaders Forum on "Institutional Approaches to Principles of Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom", where university presidents, provosts, and chairs of boards of governors are invited to join thought leaders and influential changemakers to discuss the current complexities of freedom of expression and academic freedom. This forum will complement the work of our taskforce on freedom of expression.

Finally, we are also pleased to share that Brianna Wiens, Department of English Language and Literature and Shana MacDonald, Department of Communication Arts have been successful in obtaining funding from the Provost's Interdisciplinarity Fund that was awarded to the Dean of Arts in response to the Hagey Hall attack. Their project seeks to collaborate with the university community, including students and employees, to develop customizable toolkits that address cultures of misogyny, queer- and transphobia, and racism in our spaces of learning, to build stronger relationships and foster a sense of care on campus. The toolkits will be available for

circulation across faculties and satellite campuses for research and pedagogical use by the winter term of 2025.

We care about your safety on campus, and we're committed to continuing our learning from the events of June last year. If you have any questions about our progress on safety, including questions about Deloitte's report, please reach out to safety@uwaterloo.ca.