

Students query Tulane police superintendent on safety issues

October 21, 2015 11:15 AM Carol J. Schlueter
cjs@tulane.edu



“Part of our mission as an institution is engagement and community outreach, but we have to balance that with overall student safety,” police superintendent Jon Barnwell told students at a town hall meeting on Tuesday night (Oct. 20). The leader of the Tulane University Police Department answered questions from students about campus safety in the hourlong session. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Undergraduate Student Government president Madeline Hicks opened the town hall meeting on campus security Tuesday night (Oct. 20) with a firm statement: “There are pretty important questions that need to be answered.” For a solid hour, Tulane

University police superintendent Jon Barnwell answered students' concerns and welcomed their recommendations "to see how we can serve you better."

About 100 students nearly filled the lecture room in Jones Hall on the Tulane uptown campus. Senior administrators from the [Tulane University Police Department](#) and the [Division of Student Affairs](#) were on hand for the event, which was co-sponsored by the Student Safety Committee of the USG.

Barnwell spoke briefly, detailing programs that will improve security on the uptown campus. The town hall was held in reaction to an Oct. 10 armed robbery in the Lavin-Bernick Center. Five days later, police arrested a suspect. Tulane had posted a \$10,000 reward for his capture and conviction.

"No. 1, we pursued it aggressively; No. 2, we made an arrest; and No. 3, I'm on the news media telling people, "Don't come on campus to commit a crime, because we *will* catch you,"" Barnwell said.

The university has increased patrols by TUPD officers, supplemented by guards from Landmark Security; placed a 24-hour guard at the LBC; and initiated a police liaison program with an officer in all residence halls. In addition, Barnwell is planning increased lighting on the uptown campus and improved access control to buildings to "become a robust, fully functioning, security-management system in the long run."

Several students asked questions about the Oct. 10 incident, wanting to know why the campus was not put on "lockdown" when a gun was involved.

"I want to make sure everyone understands that the report of a gun versus the report of an active shooter are two completely distinct and different things," Barnwell said. "If a person commits an act like a robbery and immediately flees campus (as was the case on Oct. 10), then he's gone before we can have an opportunity to lock down campus. Whereas, if we have an active shooter situation, then that person is committing an ongoing act on the campus that we're responding to."

TUPD procedures for an active shooter situation include sending out email and text messages, sounding outdoor alerts, and sending messages across the campus

computer network to desktops and interactive boards in classrooms.

Other student concerns included wanting more visible security personnel, especially in the residential blocks surrounding campus, better street lighting, faster posting of crime alerts and more involvement by TUPD in neighborhood incidents.

One student asked if TUPD could let students know exactly when and where they patrol neighborhoods. Barnwell didn't give details because of security issues but said, "I can assure you that we are in those areas, patrolling." Officers [patrol pedestrian corridors](#) between South Claiborne, South Carrollton, Jefferson and St. Charles avenues.

Another student brought a question "from my mother," generating a bit of laughter from the audience. Her mom's concern was serious: Does TUPD still keep up patrols when students are away on holiday breaks?

Absolutely, Barnwell said. University holidays "are not the time to let your guard down. We take it just as seriously."

He encouraged students to take advantage of existing safety and security programs. Students can request a TUPD [safety escort](#) anytime by calling TUPD at 504-865-5381. In addition, a Gold Zone shuttle service is available to Tulane and Loyola community members from 6 p.m. until 3 a.m. every day between residences and campuses.

[Rave Guardian](#) is another important resource. Students, faculty and staff can register for the free personal safety service, which includes a panic button for immediate connection to TUPD.

Both Hicks and Barnwell asked students to funnel all security suggestions to the Student Security Committee. Hicks said the committee's meetings are open to all students, and invited students to email [USG](#) for more information.