



Photo: Courtesy of The Independent Florida Alligator - Charles Roop, Alligator Photographer

Dear students, faculty, staff, concerned parents and others in the university community: The deaths of 32 people at the hands of a gunman Monday at Virginia Tech have stunned the entire nation, especially those of us in academia. Our thoughts go out to the victims and to those who lost loved ones in this heinous and senseless act.



In the wake of this horrific event, I know your concerns, like mine, have turned to the question of how prepared we are at the University of Florida if such an event occurred here.

First, the University of Florida Police Department, a nationally and state accredited organization, trains regularly for a variety of possible emergency situations, including just such a scenario: a gunman on campus. UFPD, which enjoys highly successful collaboration with law enforcement agencies throughout the state, conducts exercises in conjunction with the Gainesville Police Department and the Alachua County Sheriff's Office and has a thorough and extensive response plan. For security reasons, I cannot go into the details of that plan, but rest assured that our law enforcement agencies consider every contingency and work hard together to provide a safe secure campus environment. With the lives and well-being of more than 50,000 young people at stake, we take this responsibility seriously.

We also have in place an extensive communication plan that combines mass simultaneous e-mail notification, UF home page postings, text messaging and media alerts to get out emergency information as quickly as possible. Our experiences during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons provided a good opportunity to hone those plans and improve upon them. UFPD and other campus officials and community leaders will be meeting in the days and weeks to come to review what happened at Virginia Tech and see if there are any lessons to be learned and applied here at UF.

Perhaps the most important security measure we can all take is to pay attention to what's going on around us. Take notice of unusual behavior in others. Call 911 immediately if you see someone on campus with a weapon. If you or someone you know needs counseling, please take advantage of our staff of highly trained professional counselors. Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



We at the University of Florida are especially sensitive to the type of situation that occurred at Virginia Tech. Seventeen years ago, we had our own nightmare - the murders of five students. Although those did not occur on campus, they affected the university profoundly. To this day, our approach to campus security is influenced by those events of 1990. For instance, campus housing is locked 24 hours a day, and a key is required to access not only each building but also each floor within each building.

Finally, the university has planned a candlelight vigil for later this week in memory of those whose lives were lost at Virginia Tech. I hope those of you who can will join us.

Keeping the campus community safe and secure is our No. 1 priority at the University of Florida, and we will continue to seek new ways to fulfill that mission. Life is far too precious to take for granted.

Sincerely,
Bernie Machen
President



Photo: Courtesy of The Independent Florida Alligator - Charles Roop, Alligator Photographer

Dear students, faculty, staff, concerned parents and others in the university community: The deaths of 32 people at the hands of a gunman Monday at Virginia Tech have stunned the entire nation, especially those of us in academia. Our thoughts go out to the victims and to those who lost loved ones in this heinous and senseless act.



In the wake of this horrific event, I know your concerns, like mine, have turned to the question of how prepared we are at the University of Florida if such an event occurred here.

First, the University of Florida Police Department, a nationally and state accredited organization, trains regularly for a variety of possible emergency situations, including just such a scenario: a gunman on campus. UFPD, which enjoys highly successful collaboration with law enforcement agencies throughout the state, conducts exercises in conjunction with the Gainesville Police Department and the Alachua County Sheriff's Office and has a thorough and extensive response plan. For security reasons, I cannot go into the details of that plan, but rest assured that our law enforcement agencies consider every contingency and work hard together to provide a safe secure campus environment. With the lives and well-being of more than 50,000 young people at stake, we take this responsibility seriously.

We also have in place an extensive communication plan that combines mass simultaneous e-mail notification, UF home page postings, text messaging and media alerts to get out emergency information as quickly as possible. Our experiences during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons provided a good opportunity to hone those plans and improve upon them. UFPD and other campus officials and community leaders will be meeting in the days and weeks to come to review what happened at Virginia Tech and see if there are any lessons to be learned and applied here at UF.

Perhaps the most important security measure we can all take is to pay attention to what's going on around us. Take notice of unusual behavior in others. Call 911 immediately if you see someone on campus with a weapon. If you or someone you know needs counseling, please take advantage of our staff of highly trained professional counselors. Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



We at the University of Florida are especially sensitive to the type of situation that occurred at Virginia Tech. Seventeen years ago, we had our own nightmare - the murders of five students. Although those did not occur on campus, they affected the university profoundly. To this day, our approach to campus security is influenced by those events of 1990. For instance, campus housing is locked 24 hours a day, and a key is required to access not only each building but also each floor within each building.

Finally, the university has planned a candlelight vigil for later this week in memory of those whose lives were lost at Virginia Tech. I hope those of you who can will join us.

Keeping the campus community safe and secure is our No. 1 priority at the University of Florida, and we will continue to seek new ways to fulfill that mission. Life is far too precious to take for granted.

Sincerely,
Bernie Machen
President