



**RESOLUTION ON COMMUNITY SAFETY: DATA TRANSPARENCY, SHARED GOVERNANCE, AND THE STRATEGY OF ARMING THE CAMPUS POLICE (24/5)**

**WHEREAS**, the “[Statement of Principles of Shared Governance](#)” endorsed by the GW Board of Trustees (BoT) and the Faculty Senate establishes the commitment of the Board, the Administration, and the Faculty to shared governance as the only means to achieve excellence in our academic mission and as a pre-condition for good governance;

**WHEREAS**, this Statement of Principles emphasizes the value of transparency in institutional decision-making and managing the university and encourages an environment that allows for a free exchange of ideas and candid discourse for everyone on campus and those serving on institutional governance bodies and committees to contribute to robust decision making;

**WHEREAS**, other universities in the urban area include [robust community wide, multi stakeholder discussion with fact gathering](#) before making decisions to arm campus police or to implement such decisions.<sup>1</sup>

**WHEREAS**, making decisions for the university based on rigorous analysis of available data is critical to achieving excellence in our academic mission;

**WHEREAS**, in the wake of campus shootings at Virginia Tech in 2009, President Knapp called for and received a Witt Associates report on arming the police and chose not to arm police after receiving that report;

**WHEREAS**, since the BoT’s [announcement](#) in April 2023 planning to arm the police, over 230 faculty members have openly shared their position against arming GWPD- as signatories of this [statement](#);

**WHEREAS**, this announcement stated that the decision to arm the GWPD by the BoT was based on more than a year of careful consideration and deliberation, review of safety data and best practices, and input from experts;

**WHEREAS**, such data and reports from experts were not made available to GW stakeholders and, in contrast, [interdisciplinary research](#) supports the opposite viewpoint by (for example) referring to weapons' adverse effects on campus and increased likelihood of harm caused by armed security;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2.

**WHEREAS**, 410 undergraduate and graduate members of the Milken School of Public Health community have also shared their concerns in a May [letter](#) to the trustees and former President Wrighton, which underlined research showing the harmful effects of arming campus police;

**WHEREAS**, a GW Community Safety Coalition formed of graduate and undergraduate students, faculty/staff, and alumni. They organized a teach-in on August 31, 2023, where an additional 69 graduate and undergraduate students signed a petition supporting the students' May letter;

**WHEREAS**, GW alumni have initiated a petition for alumni to pledge no more donations until the plans to arm police are stopped, a community forum is opened, and the feedback process is shifted to whether to arm police rather than how; and

**WHEREAS**, in the wake of the spring 2023 announcement of the decision to arm the police, GW established a webpage to collect community feedback;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE  
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

1. That, in the name of transparency, the University is requested to provide the comments and feedback by the community on the GWPD [webpage](#) to arm the police and share the disaggregated data (such as how many comments, how many remarked on the decision itself, how many for what position or suggestion, etc.), rather than a [summary](#), with the Faculty Senate;
2. That the University is requested to provide copies of the consulting reports or other research data that they used to make the recent decision to arm the police to be shared with the Faculty Senate;
3. That the University is requested to provide a copy of financial reports which indicate any changes to costs of GW liability insurance and of the operational costs including salaries and training for the new policy of arming GWPD;
4. That the University is requested to support and participate in a student and alumni organized public community forum with the Faculty Senate on the issue of arming the police;
5. That the University is requested to collaborate on forming a multi-stakeholder task force (robustly including students and faculty) to investigate and produce a report regarding the relevant research data on arming school/campus police in relation to community safety as well as alternative approaches. This report may include recommendations to be further discussed by the Faculty Senate and broader GW community;
6. That the University is requested to support and regularize robust de-escalation and bystander intervention training initially for a core set of leaders and stakeholders in the GW community as a central aspect of holistic Community Safety at GW; and
7. That any previous or upcoming implementation of plans to arm the GWU police are put on hold until the above resolutions are carried out.

**Submitted by Faculty Senate Members, October 12, 2023:**

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Jennifer Brinkerhoff, Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs

Murli M. Gupta, Professor of Mathematics

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Adopted by the Faculty Senate

October 20, 2023

## Appendix 1

Fall 2023: American University (AU) leadership announced a process which included: "thorough community engagement to educate about our approach and review possible updates to the safety infrastructure and practices." The leadership also noted "Through the engagement process this fall, we will collect extensive community input, consider potential updates and impacts, and ultimately report the findings to the AU Board of Trustees and the full community in the first part of the spring 2024 semester."

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231012130111/https://t.e2ma.net/message/zbczdj/fklozjc>

## Appendix 2

### *Collection of Research Data regarding Arming GWU Police*

1. **Weapons Effect:** This meta-analysis of studies on the “weapons effect” concluded that armed persons are more likely to believe the other person is armed, and moreover revealed that “**the mere presence of weapons increased aggressive thoughts, hostile appraisals, and aggression.**”<sup>3</sup>
2. [Presence of Armed School Officials and Fatal and Nonfatal Gunshot Injuries During Mass School Shootings, United States, 1980-2019 \(2021\)](#)  
Found “**no association between having an armed officer and deterrence of violence,**” and the rate of deaths was **2.83x’s higher with an armed officer present.** Found that having an armed officer on the scene was the number one factor associated with increased casualties after the perpetrators’ use of assault rifles or submachine guns. Whenever firearms are present, there is room for error, and even highly trained officers get split-second decisions wrong. A [2021 study by the University at Albany and RAND](#) found similar results. Also, the well-documented “weapons effect” was found to be a relevant factor (the presence of a weapon increases aggression).
3. [The Thin Blue Line in Schools: New Evidence on School-Based Policing Across the U.S. \(2021\)](#)  
Finds **no evidence that having police in schools prevents school shootings or reduces more serious firearm-related offenses.** Controlling for the factors of location and school characteristics, the rate of deaths was 2.83 times greater in schools with an armed guard. The presence of officers intensifies the use of police referrals and arrests of students. These effects are consistently over two times larger for Black students than white students.
4. [The Violence Project: Mass Shooting Key Findings \(2022\)](#)  
Finds that many school shooters are actively suicidal, intending to die in the act, so an **armed officer on campus may be an incentive for a potential mass shooter rather than a deterrent.** Mass shootings are public spectacles of violence intended as final acts. Whether it’s self-inflicted, or comes at the hands of police officers, or after life in prison, a mass shooting is a form of suicide.
5. [Decentering Police to Improve Public Safety: A Report of the DC Police Reform Commission \(2021\)](#)  
The local government of the District of Columbia has taken an evidence-based approach to determine whether public schools in DC should have **armed officers. They have concluded that the perceived safety benefits do not outweigh the adverse effects on students;** the panel of local youth that helped inform this conclusion says that instead of fostering safety in school, officers **often escalate altercations, create a hostile atmosphere, and cause anxiety among young people.**

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<sup>3</sup> Bushman, BJ. The weapons effect. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013;167(12):1094-1095. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.3824; Witt, J. K., Parnes, J. E., & Tenhundfeld, N. L. (2020). Wielding a Gun Increases Judgments of Others As Holding Guns: a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 5(1), 58. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41235-020-00260-3>.

6. [Aggressive Policing and the Mental Health of Young Urban Men \(2014\)](#)  
Found that **18-26 year old Black men** who reported more police contact also reported **more trauma and anxiety symptoms**, associated with the intrusiveness of their police encounters and their perceptions of police fairness. The substantive associations between respondents' experiences with the police and their mental health (particularly anxiety and PTSD) were strong and largely robust across samples and models, suggesting that policing is an issue of public health, particularly for young, Black men who disproportionately experience police violence.
7. [Giffords Law Center: Guns in Schools \(2022\)](#)  
Allowing guns on campus poses a grave threat to both students and people employed by schools, making the workplace more dangerous for university staff and faculty. The gun lobby's claim that "gun-free zones" invite mass shootings has been thoroughly debunked by research showing that the overwhelming majority—**nearly 90%—of all high-fatality gun massacres since 1966, including at schools, have occurred wholly or partly in locations where civilian guns were allowed or there was armed security or law enforcement present.**
8. [Firearms on College Campuses: An Empirical Review of Support and Opposition | Violence and Gender \(2022\)](#)  
This is a review of concealed carry policies on campuses in the US. This article reviews the perceptions of key college stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators, staff, campus police, parents, mental health counselors, and state legislators) regarding their perceptions of campus safety and their level of support or opposition for concealed carry on college campuses. Also assesses the characteristics of those who supported campus carry laws and those who were opposed to such laws in addition to exploring the effectiveness of campus carry laws.
9. [Stress of mass shootings causing cascade of collective traumas \(2022\)](#)  
Data suggests that the stress of mass shootings threats may weigh particularly heavily on children and teens, whose mental health is already in turmoil. The ongoing backdrop of gun violence is steadily eroding the sense of well-being, safety, and efficacy known to be essential for healthy development. This constant vigilance can be particularly problematic for students, as research on threat perception suggests that prolonged heightened anxiety may interfere with learning.
10. [American Public Health Association: Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue \(2018\)](#)  
Physical and psychological violence that is structurally mediated by the system of law enforcement results in deaths, injuries, trauma, and stress that disproportionately affect marginalized populations. Among other factors, misuse of policies intended to protect law enforcement agencies has enabled limited accountability for these harms. While interventions for improving policing quality to reduce violence have been implemented (e.g., community-oriented policing and body/dashboard-mounted cameras), empirical evidence suggests notable limitations. Importantly, these approaches also lack an upstream, primary prevention public health frame.

11. [New York Times: Who Stops a ‘Bad Guy With a Gun’? \(2022\)](#)  
In mass shootings that took place from 2000-2021, most attacks were already over before law enforcement arrived. People at the scene did intervene, sometimes shooting the attackers, but typically physically subduing them. In about half of all cases, the attackers committed suicide or simply stopped shooting and fled. *Police officers shot or physically subdued the shooter in less than a third of attacks.* Even when law enforcement responds quickly or if officers are already on the scene when the attack begins, active shooters can still wound and kill many people.
12. [Educational Fund to Prevent Gun Violence: On Police Violence \(2022\)](#)  
Each year an estimated 51,000 Americans are admitted into emergency departments for injuries inflicted by law enforcement, and more than 1,000 of these people die. **Black people are disproportionately impacted** by this physical violence; **Black people ages 15-34 are nearly five times more likely than white people of the same age range to be admitted into the ED for a police-inflicted injury.** Unarmed black people are over three times more likely to be shot and killed by police compared to white people. Multiracial or Black youth are also more likely to have witnessed threats and experienced use of force or racial slurs by officers. As a result, they were more likely to report feeling scared, unsafe, and/or angry around armed officers.
13. [Guns on College Campuses: A Clash of Perspectives \(2019\)](#)  
This paper explores the second amendment context of concealed carry on campus, reviews the pros and cons of permitting guns on campus, and discusses several violence prevention strategies that higher education institutions can utilize.
14. Madison Czopek, “[Armed Campus Police Do Not Prevent School Shootings](#), Research Shows,” *Poynter* (blog), June 1, 2022.
15. [On Campus Police Forces | AAUP \(2021\)](#)  
Campus police forces are not immune to broader injustices in US law enforcement, and these injustices intersect with core AAUP concerns over shared governance and academic freedom. In July 2020, the AAUP appointed a Campus Police Working Group and charged its members with drafting a report on the role of police on campus, the appropriateness of higher education institutions’ having their own police forces, the impact of systemic racism on campus policing, and changes needed to ensure that campuses are safe and welcoming for diverse peoples, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. The intended purpose of the report on campus police forces is threefold:
  1. To provide an historical overview of the development of campus police forces that contextualizes their relatively recent existence in the US academy and their alarming rates of expansion and militarization, with particular attention to their role in perpetuating systemic racism and inequities.
  2. To demonstrate the clear tensions between the AAUP’s core values and the existence and function of campus police forces.
  3. To urge AAUP chapters to address campus policing issues and provide guidance to help AAUP chapter leaders mount campaigns to transform campus public safety.

## Examples of harm caused by armed security:

We have seen how armed police have continuously harmed and killed unarmed civilians, especially Black and other persons of color. Recent examples on campus include a University of Cincinnati officer who shot Samuel DuBose, an African-American student at the university, in an off-campus traffic stop. A Portland State University police officer shot and killed a Black father of three named Jason Washington, who was trying to break up a bar fight off campus. The university also had liability issues and had to pay \$1 million to the victim's spouse.<sup>4</sup> The University of Cincinnati Case. It is very well known, where the campus security officer was charged with murder. The university encountered serious liability issues, and had to pay \$5 million to the family, agree to free tuition for the victim's dependents, and also reform its police.<sup>5</sup> Georgia Tech police kill President of LGBTQ student organization experiencing a mental health breakdown.<sup>6</sup> Texas honor student shot by campus police at a traffic stop.<sup>7</sup> Wayne State campus police shot an emotional support dog while doing a wellness check.<sup>8</sup> Gender-based violence by campus security.<sup>9</sup>

## Examples of unarmed persons protecting others, ensuring safety, and de-escalating those with weapons:<sup>10</sup>

- In 2017, a shooter opened fire at a church in Antioch, Tennessee before being apprehended by unarmed bystander, Robert Engle. Engle charged at the assailant, initiating physical contact, causing the shooter's weapon to fire into his own chest. ([CNN](#))
- In 2019 Abdul Aziz Wahabzadah was praying at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand when he heard gunshots coming from outside. Wahabzadah immediately ran outside, grabbing a nearby credit card reader to use as a weapon. He threw the credit card reader at the shooter, which delayed the gunman from entering the mosque. The gunman began shooting at Wahabzadah but because he was ducking behind cars and a fence, the gunman wasn't able to, "get a good angle on Wahabzadah." ([CNN](#))
- In January 2023 a group of bystanders wrestled the gun away from a shooter who had fled the scene after shooting 20 people at Monterey Park in California ([ABC News](#)).
- In 2019, a gunman opened fire at a Waffle House in Tennessee. James Shaw Jr. along with others ran into a bathroom to escape the gunfire, but when Shaw heard the shooter pause to reload the weapon, he ran out of the bathroom and thought to himself, "You're going to have to grab the barrel, James. You're going to have to push it down? ... As he goes for my

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2020/0702/If-police-on-campus-have-guns-is-college-more-safe>; Also see, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/4/4/lev-swatting-attack/>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.koin.com/news/protests/disarm-psu-now-jason-washington-vigil-06292020/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing\\_of\\_Samuel\\_DuBose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_Samuel_DuBose)

<sup>7</sup> [Georgia Tech Student-Activist Shot Dead by Campus Police \(nbcnews.com\); Georgia Tech officer overreacted in shooting LGBTQ activist, lawyer says | Georgia | The Guardian; Georgia Tech Student Leader Is Shot Dead by Campus Police - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/Georgia-Tech-officer-overreacted-in-shooting-LGBTQ-activist-lawyer-says-Georgia-The-Guardian-Georgia-Tech-Student-Leader-Is-Shot-Dead-by-Campus-Police-The-New-York-Times-nytimes.com)

<sup>8</sup> [Texas Student Fatally Shot by Campus Police After Traffic Stop - ABC News \(go.com\)](https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/wayne-state-university-officer-cleared-of-wrong-doing-after-shooting-family-dog)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/wayne-state-university-officer-cleared-of-wrong-doing-after-shooting-family-dog>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-crimes-of-campus-police>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/transformation-gunpoint>,

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/23/us/brandon-tsay-alhambra-monterey-park-shooting/index.html>,

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/22/us/richard-fierro-colorado-springs-club-q-shooting/index.html>,

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/22/us/waffle-house-shooting-hero-tennessee/index.html>.



left hand, I take my left hand off him and pulling and pulling and I get the gun and I throw it. It seemed like the gun was in the air for days and when it finally got over the bar I manhandled him out of my way.” ([News Channel 5](#))

- In 2015, three unarmed bystanders on a Paris-bound train acted as a group to take down an active shooter. One bystander threw himself on top of the gunman while the other wrestled his gun away. With the help of a third bystander, they managed to overpower and restrain the gunman. ([The Guardian](#))

#### Research on bystander intervention in armed shooter situations ([RAND](#)):

- **Bystanders physically intervening against a shooter:** interventions were successful in stopping the attack **entirely** in about **two-thirds** of the incidents. In the remaining cases, the interventions were at least partially successful, with bystanders **managing to get the shooter to flee** in **over 85 percent** of those situations.
- **Approaching the shooter head-on:** Approaching the shooter from the front has resulted in the loss of several bystander lives, as it makes the bystander an easy target from the shooter's perspective. Instead, find ways to create distance and increase personal safety. One strategy is to throw any objects that are within reach towards the shooter to create a distraction and buy time for escape or for others to take action.
- **Collaborate as a group:** Only **once out of 19 times** were groups **unsuccessful** in stopping the shooter. The most effective approach involved simultaneous engagement from multiple directions, swiftly bringing the shooter down to the ground. This method proved successful in all 12 attempts examined by RAND.
- **Stopping a shooter as a lone bystander:** successful in **13 of 25** attempts and **failed in only 20 percent** of attempts.

-the rate of injury and death is higher with an armed SRO (school resource officer) present ([here](#)). Database documenting incidents of mishandled guns in schools ([here](#)).

-evidence is mixed or lacking that an armed SRO deters, reduces or prevents crime ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and here from [The Trace](#) -not peer-reviewed). From my reading there seems to be consensus that crime control/fortification measures are widely adopted by schools but there is limited evidence to support them. Key quote→

"The employment of school security measures comes out of fear-based moral panics regarding student's safety on campus, rather than an examination of evidence-based practices of security measures. The response to a national outcry of "something must be done to protect children" is widespread and fuel uninformed decisions to implement security strategies ([Jonson, 2017](#), p. 960)." ([here](#))

Anecdotally, mass shootings were not deterred by armed SROs/police officers in Columbine HS, Virginia Tech, Parkland HS, Buffalo grocery store, Uvalde...

#### **The potential adverse effects. Armed GWPB might criminalize student (mis)behavior ([here](#)) and disproportionately target BIPOC students.**

- Gender and racial disparity in the application of school security measures ([here](#), [here](#)).
- Racial variation in perceptions of armed school officers ([here](#)).