



SUMMARY OF THE FEB. 16 INDEPENDENT REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

UCCS Response December 2024

BACKGROUND

In March, Chancellor Sobanet requested that the Office of University Counsel engage independent legal counsel to help the campus gain a more complete understanding of the facts leading up to and including the incident that occurred on Feb. 16 and to review relevant campus policies and procedures.

In response to this request, the Office of the University Counsel retained the law firm of Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck to conduct the review. The Brownstein team was led by Jason Dunn, a former U.S. Attorney and Colorado Deputy Attorney General, and John Suthers, a former U.S. Attorney, Colorado Attorney General and 4th Judicial District Attorney.

The campus requested that the independent review include the following:

1. A review of campus response leading up to the incident.
2. Recommendations for any policy or process changes needed in regard to that response.
3. A review of campus response following the incident.
4. Recommendations for any policy or process changes needed in regard to that response.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

As the review notes, the UCCS Administration was fully cooperative in facilitating this review, providing the hundreds of pages of documents that had been subpoenaed for the criminal trial to the Brownstein Team. We answered all questions posed by the team and ensured they had the necessary coordination to speak with the requested UCCS employees.

Ultimately, this review found that there are ways in which our campus can improve processes and policies — as well as enhance existing trainings — to do what we can, where we can, to prevent another incident of this kind at our institution. This summary provides the campus response to each individual recommendation below.

Many of the recommendations have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented, and the university will continue to integrate these recommendations into its future plans.

It's important to note two additional points:

- While the review finds improvements we can and will make, it does not find that any individual at the university was responsible for a violation of policy or that anyone knowingly contributed to this tragic outcome.
- UCCS strives to apply the highest standards of training and response to campus safety. Even with that effort, this report highlights how difficult it can be to identify a dangerous situation as it is slowly unfolding. Roommate conflicts are not unusual on a college campus and are regularly resolved through education and mediation.

UCCS will commit itself to the training and process changes outlined in this report, strengthening our ability to create the environment our campus community deserves.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION RESPONSE

Following is a list of each recommendation made by the report as well as a detailed description on university activities in regard to that recommendation. UCCS already has, or is in the process of, addressing each recommendation made as a result of the independent review.

1. UCCS should immediately improve its tracking of multiple reports of behaviors of concern from a single student.

The campus was already in the process of migrating to a better system for tracking multiple student issues prior to the tragedy. The more robust Maxient software, which allows more comprehensive and easy-to-use tracking, has been in place as of August 1, 2024, for the Office of the Dean of Students CARE Team, basic needs, conduct, and residence life reporting purposes. The CARE Team has reported that the new system allows for easier tracking of individual student issues and greater information sharing with a larger number of campus units. The CARE Team has also seen an increase of faculty reports since implementation due to a better user interface. Staff are receiving ongoing training to ensure they are using it to its fullest capacity.

SUMMARY OF THE FEB. 16 INDEPENDENT REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. UCCS should conduct a full review of its threat assessment protocol to ensure it is comprehensive and includes follow up with students appropriately.

In fall 2023, the Office of the Dean of Students initiated a full policy review and began revising the procedures (including CARE Team membership, roles and documentation), with the original plan including full campus review in the spring 2024. However, because of the February 16 incident, the Dean of Students paused that review in order to incorporate any lookback recommendations. Now that the lookback has been completed, these suggestions will be incorporated into the ongoing work. The Office of the Dean of Students will send the final review to the campus community in the spring 2025 semester.

3. A representative from UCCS's Counsel's Office should be added to the CARE Team.

As discussed in response to recommendation number 2, an analysis is already underway to expand the membership of the CARE Team. As part of that, a member of University Counsel will be added as a core member. This will be communicated to the campus community along with the other recommendations, including more expanded membership, in the spring 2025.

4. The CARE Team should document its discussions more thoroughly, particularly in cases where multiple behaviors of a single student are noted.

The new Maxient reporting system was designed with the NaBita threat assessment tool in mind, so the fields in the system correlate with that tool. These fields allow CARE Team members to capture more details of student discussions, allowing for easier tracking and documentation.

5. Given increasing demands for the critical function of the CARE Team, UCCS should ensure ongoing, appropriate support, including additional staffing.

Since the incident, the Dean of Students Office has added two additional staff members. The individuals are assigned to both prepare documentation for ongoing CARE Team cases and review each file prior to closure to ensure it is complete.

6. UCCS should redouble its training efforts around reporting behaviors of concern to the CARE Team and should expand the groups engaged and trained to a broader array of campus units outside the traditional groups.

The Dean of Students Office is currently recording a video to be posted online that will explain the types of behavior to report and how to report. Additionally, some expanded in-person trainings on Maxient will be held in spring 2025. The CARE Team will collaboratively build the training plan for recommended use at all levels, including New Employee Orientation and college-level meetings. The University also currently offers a Skillsoft training for all employees to help members of the campus community identify behaviors of concern in both our student and employee populations.

SUMMARY OF THE FEB. 16 INDEPENDENT REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. UCCS should immediately review its residence life and housing policies to reduce bureaucracy and ensure that serious incompatibility issues between roommates are more quickly identified and have a clearer and quicker path to resolution.

As a part of the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management reorganization that took place over spring and summer 2024, the University hired an external consultant to make recommendations to address low occupancy and low retention rates in housing. The consultant has reviewed the contract, handbook, and internal standard operating procedures and made several recommendations throughout the fall 2024 semester. Some of these recommendations addressed responding to conflicts between roommates and the University's process for handling those complaints. The consultant's work will be finalized this month. The University has already adopted several of the recommendations as they have been made throughout the fall 2024 semester. The University will continue to evaluate the need for additional changes for fall 2025.

8. UCCS should increase its training for Resident Assistants (RAs).

The University provided increased conflict management training for RAs in fall 2024, providing more foundational knowledge as well as more practice through role playing. As the University continues its reorganization of Residence Life and Housing and implementation of the consultant's recommendations referenced in response to recommendation number 7, the University anticipates engaging in a complete overhaul of RA training for fall 2025.

9. UCCS should review and enhance training for housing staff to ensure that all staff have the tools to accurately track and report student behaviors of concern as well as to resolve conflict and conduct other needed monitoring and oversight.

In addition to the trainings listed in response to recommendation number 6, all Residence Life staff have been trained in Maxient. Housing staff are currently being trained in Maxient as a result of the departmental reorganization announced in November 2024. All housing staff will be proficient in Maxient in the spring 2025 semester. Annual conduct training will also contain more targeted instructions for investigations.

10. UCCS should review its Emergency Operations Plan.

We have recently hired Kris Parsons as the new Emergency Operations Manager. He has already begun a review of the Emergency Operations Plan. Every department that has a role in the plan from 2016 is reviewing their listed expectations and capabilities and providing changes by December 16, 2024. Those changes will be made and an updated plan submitted for approval by the Chancellor in spring 2025, with ongoing revisions made as needed.

11. UCCS should assure continued open channels of communication with local law enforcement.

The University values its strong and positive relationship with local law enforcement. As part of our new Police Chief Diana Cooley's onboarding which began on Oct. 1, we are reviewing our MOUs with those agencies to ensure they are operational.

12. UCCS should conduct more frequent tabletop exercises to test emergency operations and responses.

The University has increased the frequency of tabletop exercises since the incident. With the release of the updated emergency operations plan, the training subcommittee will establish a plan for regular trainings, with a goal of holding an exercise once per quarter. According to the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, a training exercise schedule should only be created after the approval of the EOP, as that is the foundation document off of which the trainings are based.

13. UCCS should implement campus trainings on terminology used in emergency situations.

Currently, the alerts.uccs.edu page has multiple pages (“Emergency Actions and What They Mean,” “How We Notify You and What It Means”) that go over the meaning of each type of message. The Emergency Operations Manager is currently reviewing options to put links in texts to expand messages past character limit, allowing for greater detail. The Emergency Operations Manager also currently speaks at orientation and other campus preparedness events/classes where he will cover this content.

Students Affairs is in the process of updating its SmartMove presentation for GPS first-year students, revising it in coordination with Police. That training will include the Run/Hide/Fight video and additional education on the terminology. The Skillsoft training described in response to recommendation number 6 also contains information on terminology.