

Office of the Dean of Students

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Date: August 1, 2017

To: Chuck Staben, University of Idaho President

Fr: Blaine Eckles, Dean of Students

Cc: John Wiencek, Provost and Executive Vice President
Dan Ewart, Vice President of Infrastructure
Matt Dorschel, Executive Director, Public Safety & Security

Re: Student Affairs Addendum to Internal Report of Rocket Fuel Explosion of April 13, 2017

Summary:

Student safety is a priority at the University of Idaho. As a result of a rocket fuel explosion on April 13, 2017 from a student organization activity, a university-wide review of campus policies, procedures, and responses occurred. This was summarized in the report of May 19, 2017. A portion of that report entailed recommendations made from several areas of campus.

This addendum addresses the recommendations from the Student Affairs sub-group, which includes an analysis of information gathered and final changes and/or recommendations for actions moving forward. Members of the sub-group include:

- Blaine Eckles, Dean of Students (Chair)
- Kent Nelson, General Counsel
- Jim Craig, Deputy General Counsel
- Greg Tatham, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs
- Joe Law, Assistant Dean of the College of Engineering
- Shawn O'Neal, Director of Student Involvement
- Katie Dahlinger, Assistant Director of Student Involvement
- Nancy Spink, Risk Manager

Final outcomes as a result of this review include the following:

1. Starting Fall 2017, registered student organizations will receive a new Registered Student Organization Handbook with new and updated sections relevant to risk management
2. Student organizations will now be classified as engaging in low-risk or high-risk behavior, with appropriate follow-up being required per the classification level
 - a. All organizations that fall within the high-risk classification will be required to take additional risk management training
3. All student organizations should register for recognition with the Department of Student Involvement
 - a. Student organizations will be classified as either being "Recognized" or "Affiliated"

4. The Department of Student Involvement will maintain copies of signed student waivers for a period of no less than two years
5. Additional training and education, especially for high-risk organizations, is necessary for creating an environment where risk is mitigated
 - a. High-risk organizations will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety prior to final recognition and to develop a risk management plan.
 - b. Organizations will be required to follow the risk management plan in order to be affiliated organizations. OPSS, or other campus offices, may be a part of the plan to be completed
 - c. Organizations that choose not to meet with the Office of Risk Management or follow-through on their risk management plan will not be recognized by the University
6. High-risk organization advisors will be required to:
 - a. Complete additional training and education
 - b. Meet with the Office of Risk Management
 - c. Sign-off on organization risk management plans
7. High-risk organizations should have at least ONE full-time benefit eligible University of Idaho employee as an advisor
8. Advisors should be provided a copy/access to the Registered Student Organization Handbook.

The Student Affairs sub-group addressed the 9 recommendations from the report provided on May 19, 2017. Below is a summation of information learned which helped to inform the eight outcomes which have been identified.

Recommendation #1—Revise/improve ASUI handbook to incorporate enhanced risk assessment process

At the end of Spring 2017, there were 168 student organization registered with the Department of Student Involvement. Of those, 22 self-identified as engaging in behavior which could lead to harm. An additional survey was conducted during Summer 2017 attempting to identify other organizations at the University that were not on file with the Department of Student Involvement. An additional 90 student organizations were identified.

The sub-group reviewed current practices and written communication as outlined in the Registered Student Organization Handbook. This handbook is provided to all student organizations on campus once they are registered with the Department of Student Involvement (DSI). It was determined that several sections could be amended and enhanced which further delineated improved risk management practices. In addition, it was learned that if a student organization was not registered with the Department of Student Involvement, that organization does not receive the benefit of having useful document which can guide organizations to successful experiences.

Starting early Spring 2017, organizations were asked, “Does your organization participate in events that can cause physical harm?” Organizations that self-identified as “Yes” had follow-up conversations with Department of Student Involvement staff. It was learned that not all organizations fit a level of concern that would result in requirements for additional follow-up. For example, the Swing Dance club indicated yes. But their core actions, dancing, would not necessarily be considered a high-risk activity. The sub-

group determined that having a level of classification of low and high risk organizations will further assist in identifying appropriate follow-up.

It is understood that all actions entail some level of personal risk (i.e.—driving in a vehicle to a competition, walking across the street to attend a group meeting, etc.). Daily actions that are not the primary core of the group function but which still entail a level of risk of injury are not addressed by these changes and it is understood that individuals engaging in common activities assume responsibility in their own decision making as it relates to those actions.

Conclusion:

- Significant changes to the Student Organization Handbook include:
 - Recognition definitions
 - Benefits/resources
 - Complaint processes
 - Student Rights and Free Speech
 - Risk Assessment procedures and references to risk planning guidelines
 - Insurance
 - Travel/Auto Insurance
 - Hold Harmless Agreement (Waivers)
 - Youth Serving and Protection of Minors

- Student clubs and organizations will now be categorized in a Low Risk / High Risk activity category as it relates to actions or activities that may include personal/bodily harm as a part of the activity. Depending upon the classification, additional follow-up risk management steps will be required of organizations deemed to be high-risk organizations prior to recognition.

Recommendation #2—Mandatory risk management training for advisors and clubs that conduct potentially dangerous activities

In interviews with various student club leaders and advisors and after review of current practices, it was apparent that additional risk management education would be beneficial. The Department of Student Involvement and the Office of Risk Management have developed an educational program that will be a requirement for completion by high-risk student organization leaders and advisors prior to finalization/completion of recognition. All student clubs and advisors (whether in the low or high risk categories) will be offered the opportunity to complete the education, but the sub-group determined additional required education was not necessary for all organizations, only those that are identified as being in a High Risk category will be required to take additional training and education.

Conclusion:

- All organizations that fall within the high-risk classification will be required to take additional risk management training.

Recommendation #3—Department of Student Involvement should maintain copies of all student club required waivers

All students, when signing up for an account on VandalSync, have basic waivers included in the r process. Students affiliating with low-risk organizations will not need to complete an additional waiver aside from the one all students will agree to. Organizations that fall in the high-risk category will have required specialized waivers for their members created by Risk Management. These waivers will be retained on file in the Department of Student Involvement for a period of no less than 2 years.

The process for high-risk groups will entail a requirement meeting with the Office of Risk Management where a specific waiver will be generated for individual club members to fill out and turn in to DSI. Organizations will receive regular reminders that any new members joining the organization (mid-semester, for example) will be required to have waivers on file with DSI prior to any organization travel and/or prior to the start of the following semester (whichever comes first). Students will not be considered organization members without a waiver on file with DSI and assume all inherent risks as a result.

Conclusion:

- The Department of Student Involvement will maintain copies of student waivers for a period of no less than two years.
- High-risk organizations will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management prior to final recognition.
- ASUI Affiliated Student Organization rosters and function will be reviewed when those organizations seek ASUI reimbursement.

Recommendation #4—Mandate Office of Public Safety & Security (OPSS) be consulted for clubs that conduct potentially dangerous activities

It was determined by the sub-group that all student organizations that fall into the high risk category will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety to develop a risk management plan. A portion of the plan *may* result in the organization meeting with OPSS and if so, the organization will need to do so to prior to final recognition. However, it was determined that all organizations may not necessarily need to meet with OPSS. In an effort to increase efficiency, the risk management plan will identify those campus offices which student organizations are required to visit prior to final recognition. The development of a risk management plan will enable specific, tailored outcomes for each organization that falls into the high risk category as opposed a blanket requirement that may or may not be germane to each organization.

Conclusion:

- High-risk organizations will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety to develop a risk management plan.
- Organizations will be required to follow the plan in order to be ASUI Affiliated organizations. OPSS, or other campus offices, may be a part of the plan to be completed.

- Organizations that choose not to meet with the Office of Risk Management or follow-through on their risk management plan will not be recognized by the University.

Recommendation #5—Formal revisions of club advisor role to include Risk Management and Safety Functions

Interviews with several student club advisors discovered that risk management practices were not discussed, or discussed minimally. As a result, club advisors to high risk organizations will be required to complete additional training on risk management best practice (as outlined previously) in addition to meeting with the Office of Risk Management. Further, club advisors will be required to sign-off on the risk management plan that is developed for full awareness of club responsibilities and their role as an advisor as part of the risk management plan.

Student organizations identify club advisors from a variety of different areas (including community members, faculty, staff, full and part-time employees). It is the recommendation of the sub-group that all student organizations that are determined to be high-risk have, at a minimum, one full-time benefit eligible University employee as a club advisor. The University will consider that the employees who advise clubs are doing so in the course of the “other duties as assigned” responsibilities. University Counsel has indicated a change in official language could add clarity to this area.

Conclusion:

- High-risk organization advisors will be required to complete additional training and education
- High-risk organization advisors will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management
- High-risk organization advisors will be required to sign-off on organization risk management plans
- High-risk organizations should have at least ONE full-time benefit eligible University of Idaho employee as an advisor

Recommendation #6—Conduct incident review and gather data from students (and faculty) of NORE club.

A series of interviews were conducted with student organization leaders and identified advisors that had self-identified as having the potential to engage in behavior that could lead to physical harm. The specific question posed to clubs/organizations when they initially register is, “Does your organization participate in events that can cause physical harm (for example sports, physical activity, or use of equipment)?”

The nature of the interviews centered around what occurs once a club/organization self-identifies in engaging in such behavior. The club leadership were inquired about what they do, where they were directed, what type of risk management education/training they received, etc. In addition, club advisors were also interviewed to learn what they understand as to their responsibilities, risk management education/training, and the nature of their work with the organizations.

Below is a summary of what the interviewees shared, which will help inform practices moving forward:

NORE club leadership and an advisor were interviewed to gather information on their experience in formulating the club, how advisors were identified, training, and education. In addition, discussions were held about risk management and practices the organization engaged in. But it was also deemed appropriate to gather data from additional organizations to help inform practices moving forward. Thus, the Department of Student Involvement identified additional organizations that self-identified as engaging in potentially high-risk activity. In total, 4 student clubs and organizations were interviewed to provide an understanding for what occurs with student clubs and advisors. Below is a brief summation from each category (student leaders and advisors). Of the student organizations on record with DSI, 21 organizations fall into the category that have self-identified as being “high risk”. These organizations range from sporting event organizations, to Church groups that may bring in controversial speakers, to organizations that work with volatile material.

Student leader summation:

Several student organization leaders were interviewed for this report. Information learned helped to shed light on the student experience and information as it pertains to risk management, working with advisors, and education received as a part of their leadership experience. The students explained that the genesis for the organizations typically came about from interest in their fields of study. One student explained that the organization helped students find careers upon graduation and the information he learned by being involved helped him make critical contacts and gain great experience for future employment. Others saw it as a passion and enjoyed the opportunity to pursue things of interest.

Risk Management— Students explained that in general, they did not receive a great deal of information on risk management. All shared that they were referred to the Office of Risk Management for conversations. Students reported that UI Risk contacts centered primarily around waivers and did not focus as much on risk reduction. UI Risk reports that student groups that scheduled a consultation with UI Risk received information about risk planning, use of Waivers, and a referral to Environmental Health and Safety. UI Risk reports that if students use the Online Waiver system, their only contact with UI Risk would be the waiver approval process.

Working with advisors—Students shared that advisors for their organizations were either 1) already in place when they became student leaders (which helped them a great deal in transitioning to their own leadership position) or 2) that they had to find an advisor for their new organization. In these cases, they typically looked within their academic fields of study to identify advisors. In one organization's case, the student identified their new advisor but in conversation with him, he did not see himself as their advisor and did not wish to assume that responsibility. All of the student leaders expressed appreciation for the support of their advisors and indicated the advisors were able to participate as much, or as little, as they wanted. But the students looked to their roles as primary gatekeepers to administrative processes (ie—travel assistance, reimbursement, etc.). The students did indicate that had an advisor told them not to do something, they would listen (although in one case, the organization said the group would take what the advisor said into consideration...but likely would still heed their advice).

Education—Students enjoy the opportunity to engage in activities that they find interesting and beneficial to their own growth. Several students expressed an appreciation for the support of the institution in furthering their own professional growth and opportunities to do so within the campus

learning environment. In addition, some of the organizations stated that the reason for their involvement in their organization was to help educate others and provide a service that benefits the larger community.

All leaders indicated they met with staff in the Department of Student Involvement and did receive the Registered Student Organization Handbook. A few referenced trainings put on by DSI, but stated they did not find them useful and only attended once. Students were not informed, in general, how best to work and use an advisor...it was left primarily up to the relationship the students developed with each advisor.

All groups indicated they received the Registered Student Organization Handbook, which is the primary method by which information about organization responsibilities is communicated, but some students indicated they don't readily recall reviewing it. It is left up to the students to read/review the information.

Most of the leaders interviewed indicated that as a result of falling in to a high-risk category, they received minimal guidance/follow-up on what to do/who to talk to in regards to risk management and mitigation. Referrals were made to the Office of Risk Management. Additional education that was provided by DSI was suggested, but not required, for the leaders.

In relation to advisors, some of the organizations already had an advisor in place when leadership was assumed, while others were new organizations and they had to identify an advisor to assist them. The students indicated they identified advisors for their organizations primarily based on their content expertise of the area of focus for the club. Most students indicated they would listen to their advisor if the input was to "not" do something, although one club did indicate they would take it under advisement and make that determination as an organization.

Regarding risk management, students received primary direction to connect with the Office of Risk Management for waivers, but don't recall much conversation and/or education as it pertained to mitigating risk. UI Risk reports that student groups that scheduled a consultation with UI Risk received information about risk planning, use of Waivers, and a referral to Environmental Health and Safety. UI Risk reports that if students use the Online Waiver system, their only contact with UI Risk would be the waiver approval process.

Conclusion:

- Additional training and education, especially for high risk organizations, is necessary for creating an environment where risk is mitigated.
 - Additional information in the Registered Student Organization Handbook, in addition to required risk management education and meetings with the Office of Risk Management, where a Risk Management plan is created, will help to educate students about their responsibilities and methods by which they can have safer organizational events and activities. Providing guidance on how best to "work" with an advisor, how to seek them out and work with them, will also benefit the student experience.

Student Advisor summation:

Employees engage in advising organizations as a result of their interest in helping students grow and learn. In some cases, it counts toward volunteer service that applies for tenure credit. But in the majority of cases, employees volunteer to be advisors because they enjoy the additional engagement with students in topical areas of interest to them.

Four different student organizations advisors from self-identified high-risk areas were interviewed for this report. Similar thoughts were shared to help inform changes being made to practice moving forward. A couple of the key themes that emerged from the interviews include:

Risk Management—All of the interviews were conducted with faculty who were advisors. They all indicated they received minimal information on risk management practice and believed that if their organization was engaging in high risk behavior, that connection with Risk Management would be beneficial. One advisor even suggested the advisor and student leadership meet with Risk Management together. UI Risk would encourage this approach. Another advisor explained the extensive Risk Management training and education she provides to the students due to the potential danger the students engage in (burning things as a part of fire ecology) and the national practice requirements needed to do so.

Training as an advisor—The advisors shared they received minimal information on how to be an advisor. Some indicated they do not recall receiving any material at all while others referenced receiving emails that may have contained information. A couple also referenced being invited to advisor trainings, but not attending regularly.

Working with students—The advisors all felt strongly that if they were aware of something occurring that was potentially dangerous, they would speak up and step in to address the behavior. As one advisor indicated, it was their responsibility to be the “adult in the room”, knowing students may not be aware of all the potentialities while another advisor indicated he believed it was his responsibility to help the students understand their rights and responsibilities as it pertained to University policy, as well as State and Federal law. The advisors also felt this was a learning opportunity for students and that the actions of the organization members, and not the actions of the advisor, was important for the success of the organization.

Conclusion:

- Advisors should be provided a copy/access to the Registered Student Organization Handbook.
- Advisors would benefit from additional risk management training and education as well as their role as an advisor.
 - Advisors shared similar information that reiterated challenges advisors have, primarily in the area of consistency of information on how to be an advisor to student organizations. In addition, each advisor spoken to indicates they have received minimal information regarding Risk Management practice and believe this would be beneficial, in addition to increased access to resources to assist them working with students.

Recommendation #7—Identify all student organizations at the University of Idaho

One of the challenges the university has is identifying all the ways in which a student may get involved in out-of-classroom experiences. Students organizations are primarily registered via the Department of Student Involvement. However, there are student organizations that students can participate in, but are

NOT registered with the Department of Student Involvement, such as through academic departments or sports club or Greek related organizations. This creates a challenge of consistency when it comes to gathering student data and ensuring risk mitigation from participation. It also creates confusion for students on where they should go to learn about their opportunities to get involved on campus in areas that may be of interest to them.

At the end of Spring 2017, 168 student organizations were registered with the Department of Student Involvement. Of those, 22 self-identified as engaging in behavior that could lead to physical harm (ranging in activity from sports related organizations to fire ecology and the rocket club).

Conclusion:

- All student organizations should register to be recognized by the university with the Department of Student Involvement.
 - Recognition is basic information about the club and organization contact info so that if students are interested in following up, they are eligible to do so for their own interests. Recognition does not hold any benefits beyond listing the organization in University communications (online and print resources) as an option for students to pursue, a VandalSync portal and free room reservations.
- Student organizations will be classified as either being “Recognized” or “ASUI Affiliated”.
 - All organizations can be Recognized. Not all organizations can be Affiliated. Once a student organization is recognized, they are eligible and can apply to be affiliated with ASUI. Affiliation allows for added benefits to the organization, including the ability to access/use University facilities at no cost, additional training/education, and become eligible for reimbursement of expenses via ASUI funding policies. Organizations will NOT receive benefits unless they are affiliated. Affiliated organizations will then be broken in to two categories....low risk and high-risk. High-risk organizations will also be required to complete additional education prior to being formally recognized.

It is understood that students gather and formulate groups on a regular basis. The focus for this initiative is to identify all student-led groups on campus that is initiated and run by students. Student organizations as it relates to this categorization do not pertain to employment based groups or academic related groups. It is also understood that some organizations may not be eligible to be affiliated due to national protocols. However, those organizations will still be reviewed for high/low risk behavior and referred appropriately so for follow-up.

Recommendation #8—Include safety/risk management process, roles, and responsibilities into the Registered Student Organization Handbook

A substantial update to risk management practices has occurred as a result of this review. Additional sections on risk management have been added to the Registered Student Organization Handbook. In addition, student organizations that fall in to the high-risk category will be required to meet with the Office of Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety and advisors to organizations will also be required to sign off on risk management plans that are developed for the benefit of the student organizations.

These changes will greatly enhance the experience of students and advisors that assist them in pursuing efforts of interest and passion for students.

Recommendation #9—Have a new student handbook with updated policies/procedures/guidelines

A review of student organization policies and procedures, in addition to information obtained from interviews and best practice efforts in higher education have all informed the changes being made to the Registered Student Organization Handbook. The handbook is provided to 1) new organizations as they are being created and 2) yearly to currently recognized organizations every fall semester. In addition, a copy of the handbook (or link to its location) will be provided to all identified advisors for their review. A review of recommendation #1 in this report outlines the additional sections in the handbook that have been updated that will benefit students and advisors.

Final concluding comments:

Some may wonder why a university would allow students to engage in high-risk activities and/or support such actions. A primary objective of a university is to help students grow and pursue their interests to stimulate learning. A university is also about the creation and dissemination of knowledge. In order to generate new knowledge, individuals may sometimes engage in actions others would consider high-risk but that ultimately helps students grow and learn and at times, benefits others in the process. For example, the Student Association for Fire Ecology (SAFE) plays a vital role in educating students and community members about best-practice for fire suppression. Many of the students involved in this organization volunteer countless hours battling fires in the northwest and go on to professions in this field and their involvement in the organization furthers the learning they do in the classroom setting and benefits the larger society. To inhibit this kind of growth and learning would be a determinant to the larger community and the field of study.

A university has an obligation to assist students in understanding the steps needed, and proper actions to take, in order to engage in activities that further the mission of the university and interests of the students while at the same time creating a safe, enjoyable learning experience for the participants. It is not feasible that all risk will be eliminated from actions students choose to engage in. However, risk can be reduced and the changes being made as a result of this review to campus policies, procedures, and education are designed to help mitigate risk toward students and increase safer learning environments.

Student safety is a priority at the University of Idaho. The incident that occurred during Spring 2017 is a reminder of how scientific exploration and innocent actions can lead to hazardous outcomes. The recommendations and changes being made as a result to student organization policies and procedures will strengthen the relationships between students and their advisors, as well as connect students with the appropriate campus supports to create a safer experience for members. In addition, the increased education and information for students and advisors will help further the understanding of responsibility all members of the University community have in creating a fun and exciting, yet safe, experience for students and other individuals.