



Press Release

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Citrus College Learns Lessons from Santa Monica College

Law Enforcement Officials Discuss Proactive Approaches to Active-Shooter Situations

GLENDORA, Calif. – As tragedies unfold on school campuses across the nation, Citrus College is continually taking proactive measures to ensure that campus safety and emergency preparedness are a top priority.

Citrus College recently held a staff development day for all staff and faculty, which included two workshops and a panel discussion on how to respond to real-life shootings on campus. This event was in addition to the emergency trainings and seminars that Citrus College regularly conducts, including lockdown, fire and evacuation drills. The college also has a crisis team that is prepared to be activated should the need arise.

“It is our hope that we will never have to use these skills, but we need to be as proactive as possible to ensure that we are well prepared,” said Superintendent/President Geraldine M. Perri, Ph.D. “In our ongoing responsibilities to maintain a safe learning environment for our students and staff, we will continue to take any steps necessary to guarantee that the Citrus College community has the right tools to effectively respond to a crisis situation.”

During the Feb. 18 panel discussion led by Dr. Albert Vasquez, dean of campus security, student health and safety at Santa Monica College (SMC), Citrus College faculty and staff heard the details and lessons learned after SMC endured its own tragic four-minute shooting in its school library last year. Vasquez, who also serves as SMC’s campus police chief, discussed utilizing on-campus resources, identifying worrisome behaviors and the need for mandatory training, which can lead to more lives being saved.

Citrus College Interim Executive Dean Martha McDonald, Ed.D., then presented the college’s own emergency preparedness plan, including the partnerships with police agencies in Azusa and Glendora, which conduct safety reviews and hold active shooter and barricaded suspect trainings on campus.

“It has been a priority for this college to take public safety seriously, and I credit our administration for providing the leadership in making emergency preparedness part of our campus culture,” McDonald said. “While we can’t prevent a catastrophic event from occurring, it is important for us to be vigilant and prepared.”

To further strengthen its emergency preparedness plan, in 2007 Citrus College partnered with West Coast Consulting Group, which specializes in actively providing customized emergency operation plans and training to academic institutions.

As part of the day's workshops, Craig Carter of West Coast Consulting facilitated two active shooter trainings for staff and faculty. The lecture and video-based presentation offered tips and lessons on how to anticipate different scenarios and how to plan for the most effective response.

"Campus shootings can occur anytime, anywhere and to anyone, so we have to be prepared to react to any situation," said Carter, who has 25 years of law enforcement experience and is currently the chief of police at the Escondido Police Department. "What if? Where would I go? What would I do? These are all questions that one should think about to be prepared and have a survival mindset."

Dr. Patricia Rasmussen, president of the Citrus Community College District Board of Trustees, said the event provided an invaluable learning opportunity for the campus community.

"It's incumbent on all of us to be prepared when it comes to dealing with these types of situations," Rasmussen said. "I take pride in Citrus College's dedication to maintaining a safe environment."

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