



# KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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## **BOARD WORKS TO ENHANCE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY**

### *New Policies to Address Weapons and Criminal Background Checks*

(TOPEKA) – Today, one day after the one-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech tragedy, and following a year-long review of campus security issues on the state's six university campuses, the Kansas Board of Regents unanimously approved two new policy statements intended to address the safety of university students, faculty, and staff.

The first motion, offered by Regent Jerry Boettcher of Beloit, states, "It shall be the policy of the Board of Regents that the six state university campuses be weapon-free and that Board staff be directed to develop language to that policy statement."

The second motion, offered by Regent Gary Sherrer of Overland Park, states, "It shall be the policy of the Board of Regents that the six state universities conduct criminal background checks on all newly hired employees; staff is directed to develop language to effectuate this policy."

"Ensuring the safety of our state university students, faculty, and staff is a critical responsibility of the Board," said Regent Christine Downey-Schmidt, Board Chair. "Securing our campuses is an on-going challenge and our work will never be done in this arena, however, we must never forget that continued diligence on this issue is a vital priority."

Over the past year, the Board has taken a number of critical steps to enhance campus safety and security. At its April 18, 2007, meeting, two days after the Virginia Tech incident, the Board directed the state universities to review their existing campus security, and encouraged Washburn University, the state's 19 community colleges, and the state's ten technical institutions to do the same.

The state universities immediately began considering what additional steps could be taken or what could be done differently to best address issues highlighted at Virginia Tech. Several campuses acted to install and implement new communications equipment and/or software allowing them to mass-mail safety warnings to students via text messages, e-mails, voice-mails, public announcements, or other means. When the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report was published in August 2007, the Board and the state universities began reviewing the recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the National Association of Attorneys

General September 2007 report, to ensure that existing campus security plans appropriately addressed each of the critical areas discussed in those reports.

In addition, the state universities have continuously reviewed their weapons policies in order to implement the new concealed carry posting requirements provided under the Kansas Personal and Family Protection Act. In October 2007, the Adjutant General's Office made a presentation to the state universities on current National Incident Management System requirements and procedures, and, in November 2007, the state universities agreed to review their policies for requiring employee background checks and to consider appropriate ways to enhance those policies. Campus security was a topic of discussion during the state university Council of Presidents' December 2007 meeting, and, on January 17, 2008, the Board formally approved the hiring of a private consultant to provide crisis management safety and security plan review. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for a private security consultant was issued on March 21 and the RFP will close on April 30.

“While a number of states have created special committees to review the security of their university campuses, Kansas may be the first state to hire a private security consultant to evaluate and objectively review the unique security plans of each of its universities,” added Downey-Schmidt. “We look forward to receiving and responding to the recommendations of an external security expert who will assist us in enhancing the safety of our state university campuses.”

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***About the Kansas Board of Regents:***

The nine-member Kansas Board of Regents is the governing board of the state's six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the state's 36 public higher education institutions (six state universities, a municipal university, nineteen community colleges, and ten technical institutions). In addition, the Board administers the state's student financial aid, adult education, GED, and career and technical education programs. The Board also authorizes private proprietary schools and out-of-state institutions to operate in Kansas, and administers the Kan-ed network, a statewide network that provides broadband Internet access and distance learning capabilities for schools, hospitals, and libraries.

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