

## **Letter to the University of Georgia community in response to the tragedy at Virginia Tech**

April 19, 2007

As a community, we mourn for those who died in the senseless violence that took place on the campus of Virginia Tech, a sister land-grant university. In particular, we mourn the loss of Jamie Bishop, the holder of two UGA degrees, who was teaching German there and was killed. His family and the families of all the victims are in our thoughts and prayers.

The serenity of that campus was shattered by the sound of gunfire Monday morning. It is the worst possible sort of emergency – a deranged gunman stalking campus with the intent to kill as many people as possible. We have seen such rampages occur in post offices, in fast food restaurants, in office buildings, in shopping malls, at K-12 schools and, yes, college campuses. We live in an open society; in academia, we particularly value the openness of campus life. It is impossible to install enough barricades and security checkpoints to keep a deranged person from committing such acts of horror if he or she is determined to carry them out.

But we can prepare for such situations, plan for the response and train people to respond quickly and effectively. I have the greatest confidence in the planning that has already taken place at UGA for this and other emergency scenarios. Among the security measures in place are controlled access to residence halls and many of the newer facilities on campus. I would encourage students to understand that residence hall security is only as good as the people who use it properly; please do not prop doors open or hold the door open for people you do not know.

Crime prevention is a shared responsibility. I urge faculty, students and staff to be aware of and take responsibility for your own safety and that of others by being observant and reporting any suspicious or unusual activity.

The UGA Police, working with the Athens-Clarke County Police and state agencies, have protocols in place for responding to campus emergencies. I firmly believe that these protocols are well conceived and that the officers are well trained and prepared to carry them out in a moment of crisis. Additionally, the Office of Security and Emergency Preparedness, in conjunction with other campus and community response agencies, routinely plans for the types of large-scale emergencies that could impact the UGA campus.

The university has a number of emergency notification systems already in place including outdoor warning sirens, building telephone trees, emergency pagers by building and the ArchNews campus-wide e-mail system. We are currently evaluating an emergency notification system with the capability to send messages to cell phones and land-line numbers submitted by students, faculty and staff.

Counseling and Psychiatric Services in the University Health Center (706.542.2273) is always ready to assist students in need of such professional services.

At the appropriate time, we will look to our colleagues at Virginia Tech for what they have learned from this tragic event, and we will evaluate our own plans and processes based on those lessons.

In closing, I have been touched by the outpouring of support from the UGA campus to the Virginia Tech campus, especially the many ways that students have reached out to try to help those known and unknown to them. The spirit of the UGA family is a powerful force for good, and I am honored to be a part of that family.

Michael F. Adams, President  
University of Georgia