

**Violence Reduction Task Force Report:  
Findings and Recommendations for Temple University**

Submitted by  
Temple University's Violence Reduction Task Force

October 2022

## **Background**

Philadelphia has remained near the top of the list for decades as one of the U.S. cities with the highest rates of homicides. In 2020, on average 6.1 people were shot each day in Philadelphia, and for every homicide, there were roughly 3.5 non-fatal shootings. In 2021, there were 35 homicides per 100,000 persons, which represented an increase of 13% from 2020.

While Temple's Main Campus has one of the lowest rates of gun violence in Philadelphia, several zip codes surrounding Main Campus continue to see high rates of gun violence. On November 27, 2021, Temple University senior Samuel Collington, 21, suffered fatal gunshot wounds outside of his off-campus apartment just blocks from Temple's Main Campus. Following Samuel's death, Temple President Jason Wingard announced the creation of a Violence Reduction Task Force ("Task Force") to bring together representatives from our campuses and our community to review existing efforts, consider best practices and innovative initiatives, and make recommendations on how to proceed. (See Appendix for a list of Task Force members).

The university initiated a parallel process of evaluating and implementing immediate safety strategies alongside the Task Force, whose focus included longer-term non-law enforcement strategic initiatives. Measures implemented since November 2021 include, hiring the university's first-ever vice president for public safety, increased patrols, more lighting, establishing a parents' roundtable that provides a forum for parent representatives to share concerns and ideas for improving safety in and around campus, the relaunch of Flight shuttle as a fixed-route service, and expanded walking escort services. Led by former Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and his public safety organization 21CP Solutions, the university also has engaged in a safety audit and will make further recommendations to strengthen public safety and policing on campus. The audit includes a comprehensive review and evaluation of the university's public safety department policies, practices, training, technology and equipment, management and communications, and Temple's relationship and coordination with neighboring police departments. It also includes individual interviews, focused sessions, and open forums with university stakeholders. Specifically, students, faculty, staff, and community members were invited to provide their experiences with the police and security efforts, share their ideas for how to improve safety measures, and describe their vision for a cohesive safety response system across the university.

The work of the Task Force was guided by research on policies and programs known to reduce community violence, with reliance on the John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s *Reducing Violence without Police: A Review of Research Evidence*. This report, issued in November 2020, emphasized the importance of strengthening anti-violence social norms and peer relationships, engaging, and supporting youth, reducing substance abuse, mitigating financial stress, reducing the harmful effects of the justice process, improving the physical environment, and confronting the gun problem. The Task Force also was guided by key process considerations, including considering potential solutions on a comprehensive spectrum, working from a sound evidence base, including how best to allocate efforts and resources based on potential impact and outcome, being community-driven with a focus on equity and collective action, making adequate resources available to promote healthy youth development, and seeking accountability by using appropriate performance measurements and evaluating programs. Building from the “acres of diamonds” motto, the Task Force focused on how to best engage Temple staff, faculty, students, neighbors, and parents in new or expanded efforts and build on existing strengths within the Temple University community, including individuals with expertise in the fields of violence prevention and gun violence. Guided by the principles emerging from this body of scholarship, the task force began its work which is described in this report. Specifically, the report includes a review of 1) the Task Force process, 2) existing efforts at Temple, 3) efforts at peer institutions, and 4) recommendations.

## **Process**

The charge of the Task Force was to:

- Review the variety of existing efforts (educational programs, research, and other initiatives) at Temple related to violence reduction
- Identify areas where any existing violence reduction efforts at Temple might benefit from greater collaboration, coordination, or integration
- Examine and evaluate the violence reduction programs and initiatives at other large urban institutions of higher education and other organizations across the City of Philadelphia
- Recommend improvement in our dissemination of information and communication around violence reduction work at Temple (including within the Temple community, among our community neighbors, political leaders, and others)

- Identify and recommend additional potential violence reduction initiatives that Temple should consider, as well as potential funding sources for moving recommendations forward

Following the formation of the Task Force in early 2022, the group began to meet in March and April as a large group. The group engaged in high-level conversations and then broke into smaller working groups that could be more focused on specific areas including 1) assessment of existing efforts at Temple to address violence, 2) assessment of violence reduction efforts at other large urban institutions, 3) opportunities for greater collaboration and coordination, and 4) communication strategies to better disseminate information regarding violence reduction efforts at Temple. The full group reconvened in late July and August to share the group findings and to develop a set of recommendations based on their work.

### **Review of Existing Efforts at Temple University**

Temple University maintains an inventory of community-engaged (CE) initiatives that contains more than 250 programs undertaken by faculty, individual students, student groups, and administration to develop a strong approach to violence in our community. A representative sample of programs at Temple known to reduce community violence include:

- Temple’s numerous early childhood education, after-school, out-of-school, and summer academic enrichment and camping programs engage and support youth
- Cure Violence Philadelphia and Philadelphia CeaseFire, two (grant-funded) portfolios consisting of an array of programs focused on strengthening anti-violence social norms and providing trauma-informed support for individuals exposed to violence
- Inside-Out Prison Exchange education program creates opportunities for people inside and outside of prison to have transformative learning experiences together
- Temple Hospital’s Cradle to Grave, a violence prevention program offering young people a behind-the-scenes look into the physical, emotional, and social realities of firearm injury
- Temple University Victim Advocates program provides medical and emotional support to victims of violent crimes in the emergency department and links them to community-based services
- Temple University Lenfest North Philadelphia Workforce Initiative’s efforts to mitigate financial stress through job training and placement and the city’s largest job fair

- Technical assistance and capacity-building programs for community organizations
- North Central Special Services District, which addresses the physical environment (e.g., trash removal)
- Temple Campus Safety Urban Bike Club teaches, engages, and provides free bicycles to youth in the neighborhoods around Temple

In addition, Temple faculty are actively engaged in violence reduction research and advise policymakers and law enforcement agencies across the country and around the world. They publish works that inform violence reduction efforts and can be deployed to apply their expertise to inform law enforcement, including Temple's Campus Safety, and on impactful interventions to address crime near campus. Further, Temple students, faculty, and administration collectively volunteer countless hours with social services organizations throughout the region on community development programs, that often help to also mitigate crime.

There is a connection between crime and social and economic inequality and other effects of racism. Temple University's Center for Anti-Racism is working to remedy the unique harm racism plays in the lives of marginalized groups within the U.S., particularly those residing within the North Philadelphia neighborhood that Temple University shares with its long-term neighbors. The Center seeks to accomplish this work through (1) supporting cutting-edge scholarship that will shape the discourse around racism, (2) fortifying the public's understanding of racism, and (3) implementing informed, solution-based initiatives designed to mitigate the impact of racism within the Temple community, on individuals in Temple's North Philadelphia neighborhood, across the region and the country.

Despite the breadth and depth of Temple's CE initiatives, the inventory does not have a clear home and lacks a regular cadence for data collection and updating. Many working group discussions were focused on what could be done to expand upon these existing efforts and develop a real-time, useful database that catalogs and showcases these efforts. As will be discussed in the recommendations section, such a living database could be utilized by a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to build upon Temple's existing efforts.

## **Review Efforts at Peer Institutions**

One of the working groups took on the charge to explore the violence reduction efforts currently being used by large urban institutions across the United States. Between May and July, the working group spoke with the vice presidents for campus safety or police chiefs at six large urban institutions of higher education, including Marquette University, the University of Chicago, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, and Johns Hopkins University.

The work group explored issues of leadership, collaboration with local law enforcement agencies, the deployment of technology for crime deterrence and prevention, internal and external communications and funding for violence prevention. Each institution cited the importance of collaboration with local law enforcement, strong leadership from campus safety and university administration, clear and timely communication regarding crime and the need to leverage technology to be a force multiplier. The use of technology (e.g., cameras and license plate readers), consistent and sustained monitoring of that technology, and strong messaging can not only help solve the crime but also prevent crime as things like cameras can be an effective deterrent. Indeed, the effective use of cameras not only on campus but in the patrol area off-campus has proven to be force multipliers at many universities confronting rising crime in the communities surrounding their campuses, where many students live. Several institutions also emphasized the importance of transparency in communications regarding violent events and the police response to the events, and several institutions had a dedicated communications person within the police department. While Temple University has many of these strategies in place, there are still opportunities to do more.

There were two examples of programs highlighted by these particularly interesting peer institutions that present an opportunity for Temple to expand their existing efforts. First, Marquette participates in a program called “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design,” which addresses such things as broken windows, trash-filled streets and vacant lots, and graffiti, all of which contribute to a sense of a community’s decline and serves to promote crime. They also learned that crime mitigation cannot be addressed solely through policing, but rather, campus safety efforts must also work in collaboration with meaningful community engagement efforts. Temple could build upon the work of the North Central Special Services District and consider other “environmental” elements that may contribute to trauma and anxiety on campus

and in our local neighborhoods. The second opportunity involves funding violence prevention efforts. While private institutions such as the University of Chicago allocate tens of millions of dollars to support campus safety efforts, the public University of California system uses a portion of the workers' compensation fees to cover the cost of violence prevention efforts across all their campuses. In addition to exploring the feasibility of such a program in Pennsylvania, Temple also could explore innovative ways to secure and dedicate funding for violence prevention efforts.

## **Recommendations**

Findings discussed directly above from the working groups on “Efforts at Temple” and “Efforts at Peer Institutions” were presented to the other working groups to facilitate discussion centered on drafting final recommendations. Although the Task Force recognizes that violence is an issue across the city, they focused their efforts on the opportunities specific to Temple University and our surrounding neighborhoods. Violence is a complex issue and finding solutions to address and mitigate crime is multifaceted and requires coordination and collaboration across the university with partners from the private, public, and non-governmental sectors across the city. One issue that came up multiple times was the impact of violence on the Temple community in terms of anxiety and mental health concerns. Given that there is a Mental Health Task Force, representatives from the Violence Reduction Task Force met with representatives from the Mental Health Task Force to share findings and coordinate recommendations as they relate to policing and trauma-focused responses to crime.

The following recommendations are intended to lay the groundwork for a multi-pronged sustained effort to address violence in our community. The need for additional resources is noted and suggestions for securing funding for these resources are included. Given the importance of the situation, the university has already begun to implement several recommendations.

### **I. Develop an advisory board to continue to provide support for the university’s violence reduction efforts**

The current Task Force has completed the foundational exploration and finds that there is a need for sustained conversations in the form of an advisory board. The Task Force recommends the development of a board of interested parties across the university, including students, faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and local community members.



## **II. Enhance communications to improve awareness of existing efforts**

Much of the fear and anxiety that is generated after each instance of a violent crime occurring near Temple campuses is largely due to a lack of clear and timely communication. The following steps can help to build a culture of transparency and acknowledge the need to alleviate the anxiety and trauma caused by these violent events.

- Enhance existing communication efforts regarding campus safety and violence reduction efforts underway. For example, there is a need for follow-up communication after a TUAAlert to share the disposition of an incident to avoid ongoing fear due to a lack of communication. Relatedly, the campus crime log should be more widely publicized. (Note: The TUAAlerts are currently under review with a committee to add context and clarity to the messages. One change already is the use of "Police have cleared the area. You may resume normal activity.")
- Create a Campus Safety tab on TUPortal that is like the current COVID-19 tab to share information more effectively with the Temple University community. The tab would be used to push out resources, connect to apps, and encourage safe practices on and around campus, including living off-campus. The tab could include an overview and basic tips on what it means to go to school on an urban campus and how students, staff, and faculty can take an active role in their safety. (Note: The TUPortal currently has a space on the main page with this information in a carousel format, but this could become more permanent with its own tab in TUPortal.)
- Develop an enhanced campus safety website that is externally facing to better communicate the range of programs and how they interact to promote safety and protect the Temple community and local neighbors. There is a perception among parents and community members that Temple is not being transparent or doing enough to address crime, but in conversations within the Task Force, it became apparent that this was a lack of awareness by individuals outside of Temple's systems and not a lack of action from the institution.

### **III. Enhance existing campus safety efforts**

The members of the Task Force recognized the hard work that is currently being done by Campus Safety Services and Temple University police and security officers. However, there was also agreement that more needs to be done and the university can help to support these efforts with the following initiatives:

- Develop more opportunities to highlight the strong collaborations that the Temple Police Department has with the Philadelphia Police Department to reassure our campus community and parents of a comprehensive safety approach on and off campus.
- Evaluate Campus Safety Services staffing concerns for new sworn officers and retention of existing officers and the potential impact on the campus. In times of staffing shortages, there should be clear communication about how there are systems in place to engage officers from the Philadelphia Police Department to address the shortages.
- Expand on existing community engagement in campus safety and increase student awareness of opportunities for officers to interact with students in a social fashion, including things such as coffee-with-a-cop, engagement at Convocation, and ride-along. The increased connections between officers and students may increase students' willingness to report things that they see and take better advantage of the resources and strategies available to them to keep themselves safe.
- Provide more hours for walking escorts for students, staff, and faculty. Given the police officer shortage, the use of ambassadors who could provide escorts on campus could free up sworn officers to be redeployed more off-campus.
- Increase the use of security cameras and license plate readers on domestic campuses and Temple properties to better track criminal activity, as well as try to prevent crime. Collaborate with local government, police, and community leaders on expanding the use of technology on campus and in patrol areas and sharing the data collected to address crime on campus and throughout the area. (Note: Temple University has completed an audit of existing cameras and is already working to install more Code Blue phones off-campus with cameras that can provide surveillance in off-campus areas.)

- Develop a preferred landlord’s program to promote off-campus housing that meets certain safety protocols. The list of preferred landlords could include those who participated in the Spring 2022 grant program to provide funding for additional lighting and security cameras. (Note: The preferred landlord program is in progress and should be ready in Fall 2023.)
- Develop a behavioral health training program for officers on ways that policing can be more impactful and less triggering when officers respond to calls involving individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis. There could also be opportunities for qualified mental health professionals (staff or student interns) to work with officers being called to a mental health crisis. (Note: This is a joint recommendation between the Violence Reduction and Mental Health task forces. In addition, Dr. Griffin has already initiated the process to develop a “co-responder” model that would pair social work graduate students with police officers responding to a student in crisis.)

**IV. Develop a citywide collaboration to better understand violence reduction efforts and build collaborations with other businesses and institutions of higher education across the city**

The issue of violence is not unique to Temple or North Philadelphia and is being felt in large cities across the country. In the summer and early Fall of 2022, Philadelphia saw violent crimes and gun-related offenses at several local institutions of higher education, including Drexel University and St. Joseph’s University. The following recommendations build from the basic notion that Temple University can demonstrate its continued leadership by engaging the expertise across the city, in both public and private institutions and businesses, to find solutions to the problem of violence.

- Convene a Violence Reduction Summit in Spring 2023 on the Temple Main Campus to engage leading crime experts, the leadership of local universities, city officials (e.g., Office of the Mayor, Philadelphia Police Department), and community leaders to address violence. While there is a multitude of individual efforts and programs already underway across the city, there is currently no forum to bring together leading

minds and best practices to address the crisis of violent crime impacting our students and the community.

- Using the summit as a launching point, establish a city-wide consortium focused on campus safety and crime reduction. In the greater Washington, D.C. area, there is such a forum that is composed of institutions of higher education, government leaders, and business leaders (<https://consortium.org/gunviolenceprevention/>) focused specifically on gun violence. Temple University could be a leader in developing and coordinating a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to violence reduction across the city.

**V. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for community engagement efforts focused on violence reduction**

- Designate a dedicated staff person to lead and coordinate violence reduction discussions and efforts for the university. The named individual would be responsible for coordinating with Campus Safety Services, facilitating the implementation of new initiatives, and evaluating ongoing efforts. The designated leader would not only focus on the implementation and evaluation of on-the-ground strategies, policies, and programs but would also consider and strategize about Temple's larger role as a potential national leader in research (and pedagogy) around violence reduction.
- Elevate the campus inventory of CE initiatives to become the platform to expand, communicate and coordinate community engagement efforts that can help to reduce violence. Designate a home and dedicated staff responsible for systematizing the process for regular updates and keeping the inventory active (i.e., live) and engaging.
  - Designate representatives from each school, college, and administrative unit (if applicable) responsible for regular contributions to the inventory.
  - Create and disseminate information to raise awareness of the current activities to help build momentum for this effort and encourage faculty and staff to add their information and engage in collaborations within and across schools and colleges.
- Improve the physical environment in and around campus which can help mitigate crime. The quality of life and characteristics of neighborhoods are associated with physical and

mental health (e.g., affordable housing, green space, traffic, noise, vacant land, and artificial light). As such, the Task Force recommends expanding the work of the North Central Special Services District to address beautification efforts beyond trash removal.

- Continue support for existing programs and create opportunities for new community impact programs that provide youth with skills and resources to forge a positive and productive path forward, including bolstering existing pathways to Temple. The newly redesigned, live (and sustainable) campus inventory of CE initiatives can be used as a platform to center these efforts.
- Seek opportunities to increase the level of technical support for community organizations. Recognizing that violence reduction work must emanate from and be owned by the community members, a university is nonetheless uniquely positioned to assist those on the front lines without the infrastructure to apply for and receive grants.

## **VI. Build research and evaluation capacity to support Temple’s multi-pronged strategy to reduce violence and become a leader in this area**

While there is a range of opportunities to engage in activities to address violence in our community, it is equally important that there is a systematic approach to evaluating our work and modifying activities. The following are key steps that should be instituted to ensure a systematic evaluation underlies our violence reduction efforts.

- Require assessment or evaluation component for all new strategies, programs, and practices related to violence reduction efforts at Temple University
- Work with the Campus Safety Services to create an online, sustainable data dashboard that shows trends in crime and violence in the zip codes around Temple, maps the location of Temple’s projects and highlights outcomes related to Temple strategies and projects.
- Consider developing and providing support for a multidisciplinary community-engaged research center or group to support evidence-based violence reduction strategies as well as community-based programs that can impact violence mitigation. Collaborations could include the Departments of Criminal Justice, Behavioral Health, Psychology, Public Health, Social Work, Lewis Katz School of Medicine, and others.

- Seek funding to support this center, including administrative support to help coordinate activities and research proposals and community-engaged researchers
- Showcase (and facilitate) opportunities for students and faculty to become involved through coursework, such as fieldwork, capstone projects, and clinical experiences
- Make a commitment to conduct research and evaluations that inform actions that community residents want and that community organizations would be able to partner on and help lead
- Engage community members in efforts to advance policies and programs that address violence reduction and prevention

## **VII. Develop a plan for sustained funding for violence reduction efforts**

The recommendations will require a range of resources, both human and financial. The Task Force explored options for funding for short-term and more long-term programmatic efforts, including internal university funding, grant funding, and support from local, state, and federal government dollars. If an advisory board is created, the board should continue to explore additional funding opportunities. The following is a list of examples of funding opportunities that could be pursued.

- Internal Temple University Funds – Temple University already invests considerable resources in Campus Safety initiatives, including recent programs such as increased patrols, updated shuttle services, and walking escorts. The university has also invested in technologies, such as additional security cameras on campus and new Code Blue phones off campus. The Task Force recommends that the university continue to grow such investments and assess their impact, adjust those dollars, and adjust these investments, as needed.
  - Pilot Funding for Research – Temple University should also consider offering pilot funding for data collection and feasibility studies to increase the likelihood of securing external funding. For example, partnerships between Campus Safety and Criminal Justice could look at Temple’s “hot spots” and

analyze what factors may be leading to the given hotspots and then work to address those concerns.

- External Government Funding – University leadership should work closely with the university’s Government Affairs group to pursue state and federal funding to support violence reduction strategies. For example, in the current Pennsylvania state budget, Governor Wolf included millions of dollars for violence reduction efforts, including a \$50 million increase for gun violence prevention programs to promote grassroots efforts for safety communities, \$105 million more for violence prevention, public safety and community safety initiatives, and \$135 million for local law enforcement support (<https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-wolf-cements-legacy-with-historic-3-7-billion-in-education-funding/>).
- External Grant Funding – Faculty across the campus should work together to apply for external grant funding for violence prevention efforts, including the development of new programs, as well as research and evaluation. There is a range of funding opportunities from government agencies such as the Department of Justice and the National Institutes of Health, state funds from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, and grant funding from various foundations, such as the IMPACT funding from the Philadelphia Foundation <https://www.philafound.org/nonprofits/available-grants/impact-grants/>. While there are individual faculty who currently are awarded funding from these agencies, efforts to bring together multidisciplinary teams may increase the success of funding.
- Innovative New Approaches – There also are opportunities for innovative approaches to funding. For example, the University of California uses 2 cents/employee/month from the workers’ compensation fund to support violence prevention efforts. Across the University of California system, this approach generates \$1 million annually per campus. Given the potential ramifications of experiencing violence, the use of workers’ compensation dollars for violence reduction should be explored. Temple should explore this and other innovative mechanisms for funding and ensure sufficient evaluation to demonstrate value in the use of the funds.

## **Conclusion**

The Violence Reduction Task Force appreciates all the important steps that Temple has already implemented to address violence and believes that now is the time for Temple to continue to increase its efforts. The background research has been completed and the recommendations provide a pathway forward. Just as urban-based colleges and universities across the nation struggle with similar problems, we too must pursue the right solution for Temple and North Philadelphia, while always drawing upon the existing evidence and best practices. We have an evidence base to guide the work, outstanding human resources, and the drive to do better for our students, our faculty, and our community. The next step is to prioritize the recommendations and begin to move forward, alongside a clear evaluation plan to ensure that we will continue to reflect on what we have done and amend our process, as needed. Many opportunities lie ahead, and the only wrong course of action is to do nothing. The Task Force appreciated the opportunity to lead the process and jump-start Temple's next steps to providing a safer campus community for all.



## **Appendix I: Violence Reduction Task Force Membership**

### **Executive Sponsors**

- Valerie Harrison, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Gregory Mandel, Provost

### **Chair**

- Jennifer Ibrahim, College of Public Health

### **Faculty**

- Quaiser Abdullah, Communication and Social Influence, Klein College of Media and Communication
- Maia Cucchiara, Teaching and Learning, College of Education and Human Development
- Caterina Roman, Criminal Justice, College of Liberal Arts
- Krista Schroeder, Nursing, College of Public Health
- Kimmika Williams-Witherspoon, School of Theater, Film and Media Arts and president, Faculty Senate
- Celeste Winston, Geography and Urban Studies, College of Liberal Arts

### **Staff**

- Shawn Abbott, Admissions, Financial Aid and Enrollment Management
- Marla Davis Bellamy, Philadelphia Ceasefire, Lewis Katz School of Medicine
- Scott Charles, Temple University Health System
- Olan Garrett, Student Affairs
- Charles Leone, Campus Safety Services
- Shirley Moy, North Philadelphia Workforce Initiative

### **Students**

- Nash Baria, Political Science, College of Liberal Arts
- Joju Somoye, Health Professions, College of Public Health
- Bradley Smutek, History, College of Liberal Arts and president, Temple Student Government
- Gabrielle Spence, Criminal Justice, College of Liberal Arts

### **Parents**

- Karla Brown, parent of 2022 student
- Ken Giunta, parent of 2024 student

### **Community Members**

- John Athanasiadis
- Greg Bonaparte
- Jewell Williams