Over the course of the last year, various segments of our campus community have been engaged in a conversation regarding safety at PSU. In particular, an issue has developed concerning whether or not PSU’s Campus Public Safety Office should become a fully sworn police department, to better deter and respond to campus crime. All of these conversations have been genuine and sincere; however, they have not always been well informed by facts and data. Moreover, while the transformation of CPSO represents one strategy for more effectively addressing campus crime, it certainly is not the only strategy. Finally, without the relevant facts and data as context, campus leadership cannot determine appropriate next steps that would address life/safety concerns at PSU.

Accordingly, I am convening a Task Force on Campus Safety, and charging the TFCS to provide me with a set of recommendations on how best to address safety concerns, and to improve the University’s response to criminal activity on campus. I ask that your work involve the following actions steps.

First, before July 1, 2013, I would like the TFCS to host a series of conversations with all interested constituencies to obtain information regarding how safe various stakeholder groups feel going to school at PSU, or working, or visiting the campus. The purpose of these initial conversations is to elicit from our community how safe people feel on campus, and why, as opposed to how to address real or perceived safety risks. The list of groups the TFCS should talk with include, but is not limited to: students (including the ASPSU), faculty (including the Faculty Senate), staff (including representatives from SEIU), members of the community that frequently do business or otherwise interact with the campus, representatives from both the PSU Foundation and Alumni Association, a representative group of parents of students, community safety experts (e.g. the Portland Police Bureau, federal law enforcement with local offices), and individuals on campus who have specific responsibility for keeping the University and its constituencies safe (e.g. the Chief of CPSO, members of the Emergency Response Team, the Dean of Student Life, the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, the Director of Environmental Health & Safety, and the University Risk Manager).

Second, over the course of the summer, I would like the TFCS to review the information gathered during the above-described conversations, against the body of facts and data PSU has available to it regarding the actual nature and extent of crime on campus, how the University currently addresses life/safety issues, and how PSU compares to other institutions. Based upon this analysis, I would like the TFCS to develop a set of findings, driven by the hosted conversations and data reviewed, and preliminary recommendations on how the University should respond to those finding.

Third, in the Fall, I would ask the TFCS to share its preliminary finding and recommendations with the same stakeholder groups it interviewed at the start of this process, for feedback and reaction. I then would suggest that the TFCS amend their preliminary findings and recommendations to reflect feedback it receives, so that by November 1, 2013, the TFCS could deliver to me a final set of findings and responsive recommendations regarding safety at PSU.