

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

University highlights safety procedures with dramatic video

--Alumni, students take part in creation of training too for students, faculty, staff --

PITTSBURGH, PA. – A man calmly walks into a building on a college campus and enters the elevator. When the doors close, he unzips his bag to reveal a handgun and automatic weapon. What happens next?

It's a situation that has played out across the country, but one that, for many, remains unimaginable. Jeff Besong, assistant vice president of Public Safety and police chief at Point Park University, sought to create a video that would educate students, faculty and staff on what to do in such a situation, while also highlighting the protections in place on campus.

"When they see our own University, it will bring the scenario closer to home," Besong said. "They'll say, 'I sit in that classroom.' ... I think everyone will get a sense of ownership. Our hope is that they will better understand what actions can be taken in case of an armed intruder."

The video was conceived using the tenants of the ALICE Training Institute, a school safety company. ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate, the institute uses the acronym to highlight ways to respond to an active shooter situation on campus.

Besong is aware of only a handful of training videos available to universities, and none of them deal with a situation on a Point Park-like urban campus. The final video will be presented in the City-University Life Class, and all current and future students will see the video.

To produce the video, Besong hoped to use homegrown talent, and asked the Cinema and Digital Arts Department for a recommendation. Chair and Associate Professor Jeremy Braverman recommended Garrett Kennell, Kevin Stiller and Timm Romine, all recent Point Park graduates.

"I think it's a great opportunity. It's the type of stuff they'll be getting paid to do as filmmakers," Braverman said. "It's a springboard. They're so talented, they can make anything look good."

Besong provided a script and a video done by Auburn University as an example to follow, customize and improve upon. While Kennell had never made an instructional PSA video before, he found elements of familiarity in the project.

"What was cool about this project is that it had somewhat of a narrative attached to it," said Kennell, who directed the project. Stiller does cinematography, while Romine acts as editor. "We were able to

construct a very loose narrative to this PSA. It actually gets people interested and attached more when you can follow a clear and concise story.”

Kennell said all actors in the video were students and faculty members. Braverman said the project provided some nice experience for students, but the use of alumni to produce it was just as important.

“It allows (alumni) to feel even more connected to the University,” he said. “It strengthens that relationship – it’s very similar to ‘The Chair.’ It’s the same concept, as both students and alumni worked on that. This provides them an entry into the industry and connects alumni to students.”

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Founded in 1960, Point Park University is a dynamic, urban university with a strong liberal arts tradition. Located in Downtown Pittsburgh, Point Park enrolls nearly 4,000 full- and part-time students in more than 100 undergraduate and graduate programs offered through the School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Communication and Conservatory of Performing Arts.