A content review of campus police vehicle pursuit policies at large institutions of higher education

Max L. Bromley
Associate Professor, Criminology Department, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, USA

Keywords Police, Higher education, Crime, Campuses

Abstract Campus crime and related issues have received considerable attention from the various legislative bodies, the media and social science researchers over the last two decades. Much of the attention has been focused on campus police with regard to their ability to protect the campus community. Civil liability lawsuits against campus police departments and their host institutions are not uncommon today. As campus policing has evolved from a watchman/security orientation to more of a full-service model, it is incumbent that policies used to guide officers in high liability areas be comprehensive. Having comprehensive policies in the high liability areas may also aid in the defense of civil liability lawsuits. One such high liability area is vehicle pursuits. While the general policing literature has focused considerable attention on this topic, campus police guidelines have not been collected or systematically reviewed. The present study examines the content of the vehicle pursuit policies from 67 of the largest 100 campus police departments, serving communities with high student enrollments and often a substantial number of roadways throughout their boundaries. It is certainly foreseeable that from time to time campus police will become engaged in vehicle pursuits. While pursuits by campus police may be relatively infrequent events, policies governing officer decision making are none the less critical. A profile of these policies is developed for review by practitioners and researchers alike. It is believed to be the first such examination of this important policy area within the context of campus policing.

Introduction
During the 1980s and 1990s campus crime and related issues have received considerable attention at institutions of higher education. College campuses are no longer seen as sanctuaries of absolute safety and it is not uncommon for serious crimes to be reported. As noted by McEvoy (1992, p. 137) “crimes against students on campus are not uncommon, despite the tranquil, idyllic images of campus life printed by glossy catalogs.”

The contrast between the former image of college campuses and the current reality is often highlighted by the media. For example, when a serious assault or rape occurs in a downtown apartment complex, the story may appear briefly in local media publications. Should a similar incident occur in a college campus residence hall, local and possibly national media will typically focus considerably more attention on the offense. Mass media coverage of serious crimes on college campuses reinforces the notion that campuses experience high levels of crime (Brantingham et al., 1995).
Given the high profile attention by the media when a serious campus crime occurs, the consequences of lawsuits for failing to provide an adequate level of security (Smith, 1988, 1989; Bromley, 1993, 1996; Fisher and Sloan, 1995), and legislative campus crime reporting mandates of the last 15 years (Bromley, 1996; Seng, 1995; Griffaton, 1995; Fisher et al., 1998), colleges and universities today must take necessary steps to provide an adequate level of security. Often this means having a professional full-service police department on campus. In the following section contemporary research on campus policing is briefly discussed in order to provide the appropriate context for research presented later.

Prior campus police research
There is a small but growing body of literature that describes contemporary campus policing. Perhaps the earliest contribution to this research was made by Gelber (1972) who found that many police departments had their authority granted through statutes or by local law enforcement authorities. By the 1990s, 44 states passed legislation granting full police authority to officers at public institutions (Bromley, 1996). In their case study of a campus police department in a metropolitan area, Bordiner and Petersen (1983) found many organizational similarities between the campus police department and its city counterpart. Additionally, many campus police departments have become increasingly autonomous within their institutional hierarchy. For example, many campus departments today have responsibility for their own budgets, for the development of rules of conduct for their officers and for the establishment of their own policies (Peak, 1988; Sloan, 1992). Peak (1988, 1995), Sloan (1992), and Jacobs and O’Meara (1980) found campus police to be similar to local police agencies with regard to various organizational characteristics such as use of military ranks, organizational structure, utilization of various advanced law enforcement technologies and personnel training requirements. More recently, some authorities have noted that as campus policing continues to evolve as a profession, there is less reliance on traditional reactive policing techniques and more of a focus on a service-oriented philosophy. Similar to many local police agencies, many campus police are adopting a community-oriented policing philosophy (Lanier, 1995; Peak, 1995). Given the diversity of many campus populations, Lanier (1995) argues that campus police may be in an excellent position to adopt community-oriented policing which emphasizes flexibility in response and community partnerships as an operational philosophy.

The most current, comprehensive description of campus police agencies is offered by Reaves and Goldberg (1996). From their survey of over 680 campus police departments, conducted for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, a clear picture of the major characteristics and features of contemporary campus police agencies emerges. Several of their findings are summarized below (Reaves and Goldberg, 1996, pp. iii-iv):

- Overall, 93 per cent of the agencies serving public institutions used sworn officers, including all those serving a campus of 25,000 or more students.
Most sworn campus police officers were armed, and 64 per cent of all agencies used armed officers.

Combined field and classroom training requirements for new officers ranged from the average of more than 900 hours on campuses of 20,000 or more students to less than 400 on the smallest campuses.

Nearly all agencies used automobile patrol, about three-fourths used officers on foot patrol, and about one-third used bicycle patrol.

About three in five agencies had primary responsibility for homicide investigations, and three in four handled the investigation of other serious violent crime such as rape, robbery, and assault. About four in five investigated major property crimes such as burglary and motor vehicle theft.

Research efforts continue with regard to the ongoing advancing professionalism of the campus police field. Two recent studies underscore this point. In 1998, Bromley and Reaves (1998a) compared various operational practices of campus and city police departments. Many direct parallels were found between campus and city agencies in operational practices such as the following: central dispatch functions, 911 systems, investigative responsibilities, and the issuance of protective equipment such as body armor, batons, and pepper spray. In a second study, Bromley and Reaves (1998b) compared human resource practices and policies of campus and city police departments. Dimensions such as the number of training hours, educational requirements for officers, and employment practices with regard to women and minorities were compared. Once again, these researchers found evidence of parallel practices and also reported that in some instances, campus police agencies seem to be somewhat more progressive than their city colleagues. Reaves and Goldberg (1996) also reported that many campus police agencies were concerned about high liability operational areas. This is reflected in that 81 per cent were found to have written policies on “use of force” and 69 per cent had similar policies on vehicle pursuits (Reaves and Goldberg, 1996). Just as in municipal policing, there is apparent concern on the part of campus police executives about providing guidelines for their officers in high liability areas. As campus police vehicle pursuit policies are the subject of the current inquiry, the next section provides highlights of select prior research. Absent from the prior research is any review of campus police policies.

Select vehicle pursuit research
One area of police operations that has come under public, professional, and legal scrutiny is vehicular pursuit. This is not surprising given the potential for serious injury and death to perpetrators, police officers, and innocent third parties resulting from such pursuits. Some authorities (Alpert and Anderson, 1986; Alpert, 1987) have suggested that when police vehicles are used in a pursuit, they should be considered as similar to other police weapons and thus
extreme caution and care should be exercised by the pursuing officer. Police involvement in vehicular pursuits in congested urban or other heavily trafficked areas certainly carries considerable risk to all parties and many have called for fairly restrictive policies on the practice (Alpert and Fridell, 1992; Stone and DeLuca, 1985; Urbonya, 1987).

Much of the focus of prior empirical research has been on the frequency and outcome of police vehicular pursuits. These studies include the Physicians’ Automotive Study (PAS, 1968) as well as Fennessy et al. (1970); Alpert and Anderson (1986); Beckman (1987); California Highway Patrol (1983); Alpert (1987); Alpert and Dunham (1988, 1989, 1990); Auten (1994); and Falcone et al. (1992).

A limited number of prior studies have also examined the content and comprehensiveness of police department policies governing vehicular pursuits. For example, Territo (1982) reviewed a sample of 45 municipal agency policies, and Schubert (1981) analyzed the policies of 31 state police agencies. In 1989 Shuman and Kennedy examined the vehicle pursuit policies of 36 police departments and Misner (1990) evaluated a combination of state and city police department policies ($n = 15$). More recently Falcone and Wells (1998) analyzed a non-random, national sample of vehicle pursuit policies obtained from municipal and county law enforcement agencies.

While each of these studies were somewhat limited in size and scope, they do provide some insight as to the status of this important policy area. In 1992, Kennedy et al. (1992) published findings from a more nationally representative sample of large city ($n = 25$) and state level police agencies ($n = 47$). Their analyses focused on various factors that might be used to justify the police pursuit. They developed officer judgement categories ranging from wide discretion on the part of the officer to very restrictive discretion in officer decision making. Generally they found that both city and state agencies, “permit a great deal of judgement, although cities tended to be more likely than states to place restrictions on pursuits” (Kennedy et al., 1992, p. 227).

**Purpose of the current study**
As previously noted there is a paucity of empirical research regarding campus policing in our country, despite the fact many of these agencies fulfill most if not all the same functions as their municipal counterparts. No research has been found specifically describing the content of various campus police operational policies.

Many college campuses have a high number of vehicles present on a daily basis. Not only do many campuses have a substantial number of miles of internal roadways (Reaves and Goldberg, 1996), some campuses also have municipal arterties that run throughout and adjacent to campus property. Given the potential for traffic infractions, as well as more serious crimes to occur, vehicle pursuits initiated by campus police are reasonably foreseeable. While these pursuits may not be initiated as frequently in the campus setting as in surrounding communities, they are a source of concern with regard to
potential civil liability lawsuits against colleges and universities. Smith (1989) notes that it is important that campus police administrators need to develop clear departmental policies on high liability topics such as “hot pursuit” and to properly train officers in the implementation. Just as with municipalities, colleges and universities can ill afford the financial and public relations costs associated with losing a civil liability lawsuit based on the negligent act of a campus police officer involved in a vehicular pursuit.

However, at present little is known about the specific content of vehicle pursuit policies developed by campus police agencies. The following objectives were established to guide the present inquiry:

1. To review and analyze baseline information with regard to campus police vehicle pursuit policies, within the context of national models provided by CALEA and IACP.

2. To provide campus police administrators with a profile of the content areas most often included in vehicle pursuit policies adopted by their colleagues at large institutions.

3. To contribute to a small but growing body of knowledge for others interested in conducting campus policing research.

Procedures

The 100 largest campus police departments identified in the Reaves and Goldberg (1996) study were asked to provide their vehicle pursuit policies for the present study. These campus police agencies serve campuses having the largest populations (over 20,000 persons), have the greatest number of students living on campus, and average 20 miles of on-campus roadways (Reaves and Goldberg, 1996). Therefore, these campuses are in many ways “cities within cities.” As Kennedy et al. (1992) noted, large police departments are often the most influential in policy making and therefore by analogy these large campus police agencies should also play a similar role. Initially 60 campus police departments responded to the request for copies of their vehicle pursuit policies. Follow-up contacts yielded an additional seven policies thus comprising a final sample of 67. All geographic regions of the country and 32 states were represented. Given the size of its higher education system, it is not surprising California had the largest number of campus police agencies in the sample (n = 7).

Two professional police organizations have developed “model” vehicle pursuit policy guidelines for municipal police agencies to consider. These groups are the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The model vehicle pursuit policies provided by these two organizations were reviewed and their policy elements served as a reference point for the current examination of campus police policies. The results described below provide a profile of current campus police vehicle pursuit policies within the general context of the model policy elements suggested by IACP and CALEA.
Results
As a general finding it should be noted that there was considerable variation in
the length of campus police policies reviewed and in the number of policy
elements covered. For example, three policies were a single page long while
some others were 10 to 15 pages in length. It should also be mentioned that for
the purposes of the data described below, the three campus police agencies with
single-page policies prohibited any type of vehicular pursuits, instead referring
those situations to the local police. Therefore, the final number of policies
reviewed and discussed below is 64.

Given the variation in the individual policies and the number of model
elements present, it was useful to establish categories for placement of the
various elements. For purposes of the present study, model elements from
the recommended IACP and CALEA policy guidelines were placed in the
following categories: environmental conditions; officer decision making; tactical
considerations; and a more generalized miscellaneous topics area. Each of those
categories is reported below.

Environmental conditions as policy elements
Approximately four in five of the agencies included “traffic conditions” (83 per
cent) and “weather conditions” (80 per cent) as elements in their polices. Two-
thirds of the agencies included “road conditions” (67 per cent) and almost as
many listed “pedestrian traffic” (61 per cent) as elements to consider. Almost
half of the policies reviewed identified “time of day” (47 per cent) and over four
in ten included “location of pursuit” (45 per cent) as elements. “Visibility and
illumination” was an environmental condition included in slightly over one-
fourth of the policies reviewed (see Table I).

Officer decision making as a policy element
“Type of offense” was an element included in over four-fifths of the agency
policies. “Type of police vehicle” being driven by the campus police officer was
included in approximately seven out of ten of the policies reviewed. Giving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy elements</th>
<th>Number of times present</th>
<th>Per cent of times present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic conditions</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather conditions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road conditions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian traffic</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of pursuit</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility and illumination</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Number of agencies = 64
consideration to the “possibility of later apprehension” was an element in nearly six out of ten of the policies. Finally, one out of three of the policies included an officer’s “familiarity with the area” as an element to consider (see Table II).

_Tactical considerations as policy elements_
Next, attention turned to policy elements relating to various vehicle pursuit operational tactics. Almost eight in ten of the policies reviewed included “the number of police vehicles involved in the pursuit” as elements. Over two-thirds of the policies also included the tactic of “use of roadblocks” within their departmental policy. The “use of ramming” of suspect vehicles was included in six of the ten policies reviewed. Finally, approximately one in four of the policies reviewed included the element of “shooting at or from vehicles” as an element of consideration (see Table III).

_Miscellaneous topics as police elements_
A final miscellaneous topics category was established to report some of the more common elements identified in the campus police policies that did not fit the other three. While these policy elements do not necessarily relate to one another, they did appear frequently in the policies reviewed and many of them also related directly to IACP and CALEA recommended guidelines. For example, over eight out of ten of the campus police policies included guidelines with regard to the involvement of other police agencies in vehicular pursuits (“multi-jurisdictions involved”). Over four-fifths of the policies also included the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy elements</th>
<th>Number of times present</th>
<th>Per cent of times present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of offense</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police vehicle type</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible later apprehension</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with area</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Table II._
Officer decision making as policy elements

*Note:* Number of agencies = 64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy elements</th>
<th>Number of times present</th>
<th>Per cent of times present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of vehicles involved</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of roadblocks</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ramming</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting at or from vehicles</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Table III._
Tactical considerations as policy elements

*Note:* Number of agencies = 64
element of “departmental philosophy” which included requiring balancing the need to apprehend a suspect with the overall safety of everyone involved in the pursuits. The “role of the supervisor” was an element included in over three-fourths of the campus police policies. Over seven out of ten of the campus policies included “the role of the communications center” in their guidelines. The writing of “an after-action report” following a vehicular pursuit, was required by slightly over one-half of the campus police agencies. Over four out of ten of the policies included a reference to “state traffic law.” Finally, slightly over one in four of the policies reviewed, included the element of “personnel training and experience” within their policy guidelines (see Table IV).

While it is arguable that most, if not all, of the model elements should be present in a campus police agency’s vehicle pursuit policy, it is interesting to note which elements overall were most frequently incorporated. Table V shows the frequency of elements in descending order and provides some insight regarding which elements were thought to be most important by the large campus police agencies.

### Discussion

Over the last 30 years a growing body of evidence suggests that the role of the campus police has evolved from a position predominately focusing on property protection and student regulation to one of a more full-service professional policing model. The presence (or absence) of policies that help to guide police decision making in critical, high liability areas such as vehicle pursuits, is important to review. Given the size of many of today’s campuses and the likelihood of traffic infractions or other more serious criminal events, it is important for campus police departments to have comprehensive vehicle pursuit policies in place. The present study reviewed the content of the vehicle pursuit policies obtained from the largest campus police agencies throughout the country. Objectives for this inquiry involved the development of baseline information and a profile of content areas most often included in campus police vehicle pursuit policies. It was also a goal to describe the data as analyzed in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy elements</th>
<th>Number of times present</th>
<th>Per cent of times present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-jurisdictions involved</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of supervisor</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Communications Center</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-action report</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City state traffic law</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel training and experience</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Number of agencies = 64

**Table IV.**

Miscellaneous topics as policy elements
order to contribute to a small but growing body of knowledge regarding the evolution of campus policing within the context of a high liability operational policy area. Specific topic areas were reviewed within the context of model vehicle pursuit policy elements as recommended by the IACP and CALEA. The present study is descriptive, and therefore the intent is to provide information with regard to current campus police vehicle pursuit policies at America’s largest institutions of higher education. Generalizing the current findings should be done with caution.

The current findings generally support the notion that larger campus police agencies are similar to their municipal counterparts within the context of a very high liability area of police operations, namely vehicle pursuit policies. Certainly, large campus police departments recognize the need to have written policies in this area and 90 per cent of the agencies serving campus student enrollments of 20,000 or more have such policies (Reaves and Goldberg, 1996). While the present findings apply only to large campus police agencies, it should be remembered that these departments serve a substantial proportion of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy elements</th>
<th>Number of times present</th>
<th>Per cent of times present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-jurisdiction involvement</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic conditions</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental philosophy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of vehicles involved</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather conditions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of offense</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of supervisor</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Communications Center</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of roadblocks</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road conditions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian traffic</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible later apprehension</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-action report</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of pursuit</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/state traffic law</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with area</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel training and experience</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting at or from vehicles</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility and illumination</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table V.** Frequency of policy elements in descending order

**Note:** Number of agencies = 64
the overall number of students enrolled in higher educational institutions today, and in many ways serve small cities.

One general finding relates to the frequency of common model elements found in the vehicle pursuit policies reviewed. The most important elements, i.e., the most frequent occurring, were: multi-jurisdiction involvement, traffic conditions, departmental philosophy, number of vehicles involved, weather conditions, type of offense and the role of the supervisor. These elements were present in 80 per cent or more of the policies.

A review of some of the specific language in the policies provides some insight with regard to policing in the campus community. For example, college campuses are clearly part of larger communities and many campus geographic boundaries are immediately adjacent to or even overlapping cities or counties. Therefore, it is not surprising that campus police are sensitive to the consequences that follow upon pursuing vehicles into other police jurisdiction or having other police agencies continue pursuits they have initiated off campus on to campus streets. Statements regarding the department’s philosophy on vehicle pursuits are also important, as this element was found in 82 per cent of the policies. These statements characteristically included language that emphasized the danger inherent in vehicle pursuits and the requirement to balance the necessity of continuing the pursuit with the safety of all parties involved.

The inclusion of elements such as traffic conditions, weather conditions and type of offense by at least 80 per cent of the agencies is also significant. These are important variables for officers to consider when weighing the risk versus benefits of pursuit in a fairly compact geographic area such as a college campus. It is also noteworthy that 80 per cent of the agencies included a section on the role of the supervisor. Alpert and Fridell (1992, p. 120) suggest that “perhaps the most important person to ensure that policies are being followed and that risk is balanced appropriately is the supervisor.” The supervisor is less personally involved in the “heat of the moment” that precipitates the pursuit and is someone who can possibly evaluate the known facts more objectively. Likewise, the supervisor should be in a position to evaluate the need to continue the pursuit based upon the written policy guidelines which reflect to a greater or lesser extent the model policy elements described in the present study.

Campus police agencies in the present study underscored the important role played by communications center personnel in vehicular pursuits. Three-fourths of the policies identified this element and presented guidelines for radio dispatch and police officers with regard to their specific roles. However, given the fact that Reaves and Goldberg (1996) report that over 90 per cent of the largest campus police agencies have their own central dispatch capabilities, it is somewhat surprising that an even higher percentage of campus vehicular pursuits policies did not include the role of the communications center.

Another finding relates to the inclusion of controversial tactical techniques such as the use of roadblocks, ramming vehicles and shooting at or from
vehicles. While 64 per cent of the policies included use of roadblocks, and 67 per cent mentioned ramming, there were differences in the actual content of the guidelines. For example, of the 41 policies that included use of roadblocks, 19 prohibited the technique while 22 allowed it as a last resort measure. With regard to the 40 policies having guidelines on ramming, 24 prohibited the technique while 16 allowed it, again as a last resort. While only 23 per cent of the policies included the element of shooting at or from a vehicle, the specific guidelines varied. Six of the 15 policies strictly prohibited this tactic while nine allowed it with limitations or included these actions within the agency’s deadly force policy guidelines.

Approximately 61 per cent of the agencies also included the consideration of pedestrian traffic and possible later apprehension of the offender as elements. Given the heavy volume of pedestrian traffic on many campuses, inclusion of this element seems prudent. The possibility of the later apprehension of violators on a campus may be enhanced if the offender is recognized or otherwise identified as a student or campus staff member. Thus this element also seems appropriate within the campus community context.

It was somewhat surprising to find that only slightly over one-half (56 per cent) of the policies required an after-action report to be written following a pursuit. Mandating such a report ensures officer accountability and may also serve to identify possible training needs, policy revisions, and other factors related to pursuit driving (Alpert and Fridell, 1992). After-action reports may also be useful to administrators and campus legal staff in the preparation of defense strategies in the event of a civil liability lawsuit stemming from a vehicular pursuit incident.

One-third of the policies included the element “familiarity with the area” and slightly less than one-half included “geographic location.” A possible explanation for these relatively low percentages is the fairly compact nature of many campuses. For many campus agencies it may be assumed that officers will be very knowledgeable of these factors as a result of their post-academy field training programs and the relatively confined boundaries of most campuses. Personal training and experience, and visibility and illumination are important model elements, yet were present in only approximately one-fourth of the policies reviewed. These topic areas are important and if included would contribute to the overall comprehensiveness of a campus police department’s policy.

As noted by Peak (1995), today’s campus police are part of the fabric of higher education in America. Over the last three decades, much effort has gone into the continued professionalization of campus police agencies. Higher education executives must establish specific expectations and identify operational limitations for their campus police that are consistent with both the needs of their campus and with the professional models that are available. The present study examined one aspect of campus police operational policy within the context of nationally recognized model policies. Baseline information is now available for campus police administrators and others to review in the high
liability area of vehicle pursuits. The adoption of such policies not only helps to
guide officer decision making, but also provides a means of defense in the event of a
civil liability lawsuit. Failing to have such a policy based on the assumption that vehicle pursuits are a relatively infrequent event, is not an acceptable option. The present review is believed to be the first such examination, but should not be the last. Additional research is required in this and other policy areas in order to better understand campus policing operations. For example, it may be useful in future research to examine the perceived usefulness of such policies on the part of campus police administrators as well as some officers. The degree to which such policies have been useful in defending civil lawsuits against universities may also be a topic worth reviewing. Given the size of enrollment of many institutions of higher education, the level of professional service now expected from campus police, and the threat of civil liability lawsuits, it is important to systematically examine operational policy issues that may affect the lives of many people as well as the reputation of the college/university.

References and further reading
Alpert, G. and Dunham, R. (1990), Police Pursuit Driving: Controlling Responses to Emergency Situations, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT.


Gelber, S. (1972), The Role of Campus Security in the College Setting, United States Department of Justice, Washington, DC.


Physicians for Automotive Safety (1968), Rapid Pursuit by Police: Causes, Hazards, Consequences: A National Pattern is Evident, Physicians for Automotive Safety, NY.


