



AAUP Chapters and Campus Police Forces: First Steps

Below are questions for chapter leaders and members to consider as a first step toward understanding, and ultimately changing, the nature of public safety on campus. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to organizing around this issue, and where a chapter should start will depend on the political situation on campus, the dynamics of the campus police force, the will of chapter members, and what other organizations on campus and in the community are doing.

These questions will be most useful for chapters that are just beginning their efforts to understand the origins and dynamics of their campus police forces. In these times of heightened awareness of institutional racism and police violence, faculty members may want to engage with these issues, but they often know little about the contexts on their own campuses. These questions can help identify gaps in knowledge and enable chapters to determine how they can best leverage their power to transform campus public safety.

The questions are divided into four major categories: 1) understanding the context of your campus police force; 2) identifying the range of opinions and level of knowledge among your members; 3) mapping out potential allies and partners on campus and in the broader community; and 4) questions to stimulate thinking about possible alternatives for ensuring campus safety. We recommend that chapter leaders take the time to work together to answer these questions prior to building a larger organizing campaign.

Fact Finding and Context of Your Campus Police Force

History of Campus Security and Police

- What is the history of policing on your campus, going back decades? What is the broader context of the decisions to establish a campus police form and to arm officers?
- What was your institution's approach to campus public safety prior to the creation of a formal campus police force? What were the reasons given at the time for the need to change? Is your campus safer since the change took place? How is safety measured?

Transparency, Oversight, and Accountability

- To whom do campus police typically report? To whom are they accountable? Are faculty members involved in oversight? In what ways and to what degree?
- How much money does your campus spend on police? Where do the funds for campus police come from? How is the money spent? What is the overall trend in spending on campus police in the last decade?

- Are campus police required to publish handbooks and policy documents that explain their procedures and tactics? Are their operations transparent to all members of the campus community? Is there community input on police policies and procedures?
- What safeguards exist to ensure the legitimacy of criminal investigations by campus police, especially in high-profile cases in which unelected and unaccountable administrators have a conflict of interest?
- What is the mechanism for filing and tracking complaints regarding police behavior on or off campus? Who investigates these complaints? Are investigations reviewed by anyone external to the police department? Are there regular audits of complaints and investigations? What have been the results of complaints filed in the past decade?
- Do your campus police track their use of force? Are use-of-force records easily accessible to the public? How frequently have your campus police used force—including deadly force—in the past decade? Are the trends for use of force increasing or decreasing?
- Have there been complaints against campus police for discriminatory treatment of BIPOC students, staff, or faculty members or other systematically marginalized community members? Where can you find comprehensive reports of these complaints and how have they been investigated?

Safety Issues on Campus and Campus Police Activity

- What are the main safety and security issues on campus?
- What types of incidents do campus police most frequently respond to on or off campus?
- How have they responded?

Police Hiring and Training

- What type of training do campus police receive, both before and at the beginning of their employment, and on an ongoing basis?
- Does your institution have requirements around the diversity of their police leadership and staff? If so, who developed these policies and what body oversees their implementation?
- Do campus police have to address racism, misogyny, and other forms of bias? What does this look like?

Police Weapons and Authority

- Do campus police regularly carry firearms or other, less lethal weapons? Which kinds? Do they have access to other weapons for exceptional circumstances? What policies regulate their use of weapons? Can campus police use tear gas? What is the history of their use of (lethal and less lethal) weapons?
- What is the campus, local, and state policy in terms of open-carry and concealed-carry firearms in public or on campus? How recent is that policy?
- Do your campus police possess surplus military equipment such as armored vehicles, assault rifles, or grenade launchers? Have they received counterterrorism training? If so, who made the decisions to acquire this equipment or training?
- Do campus police policies include restrictions on the use of force such as banning chokeholds, strangleholds, and shooting at moving vehicles or fleeing suspects? Do they require de-escalation, warning before shooting, and comprehensive incident reporting?

- Are campus police allowed to question, detain, or arrest people for violating college policies? How are campus police deployed during campus protests? Are there specific university policies regarding their use during demonstrations, strikes, and protests? Have campus police intimidated faculty members and staff who were trying to organize a union or engaging in a strike on campus?

Unions and Contracts

- Do your campus police have a union? If so, are campus police in a bargaining unit with other types of workers (for example, administrative staff or service workers)? What authority negotiates contracts with them? Is their contract available for review? What is in it? How often are contracts negotiated?

Relationships with Other Police Forces

- Does your university or college have contracts, mutual support agreements, or formal relationships with other law enforcement agencies (whether city, county, state, or federal)? What do those contracts and relationships include? Do they require campus police to respond to law enforcement needs off campus?
- In what ways, and in what instances, have campus and other police forces interacted over the past decade?

Identifying the Range of Perspectives among Chapter Leaders and Members along a Continuum of Reform to Abolition

- What are the perspectives of faculty, staff, and students that are unfairly targeted by police, such as BIPOC and other systematically marginalized persons? What can you, as a chapter, do to center these perspectives in discussions around campus police?
- What is the level of understanding among chapter members regarding the history of policing and systemic racism?
- What are the perspectives of chapter members on these issues, along a continuum ranging from maintaining the status quo to pursuing reform or abolition?
- Do any of your chapter's members possess expertise in the history of policing? If so, how might you tap into this expertise to inform your chapter's discussion?

Possible Partners and Allies on Campus and in the Broader Community

- Are there student organizations, labor unions, or other community groups who have taken an interest in changing campus public safety? If so, who are the leaders of these groups and how can you get into contact with them?
- What is the position of student government regarding campus police? What role, if any, do they play in oversight and accountability?
- Are there BIPOC-led or antiracist organizations on campus pushing for changes to campus policing? If so, are any of your chapter's members involved in these efforts?

Identifying Alternatives for Campus Safety

- How can we think of campus safety and security more broadly than the model of an armed police force? Are there alternative proposals already circulating from community or student organizations?

- Would your campus be better served by having safety and security officers, perhaps in the form of crisis responders who are unarmed and do not have the power to arrest people or conduct criminal investigations?
- Would your college or university be better off spending money on other public-safety programs, such as crisis-support services or counseling? If so, what are some programs with demonstrated ability to improve public safety? How might your chapter work to implement similar programs?
- How can your campus comply with the reporting requirements of the Clery Act without an armed police force?