

University of Colorado Boulder Public Safety Task Force
Report (Fall 2020)

Introduction:

After a series of student-led protests across Boulder County, the CU Boulder Police Department (CUPD) was interested in engaging with students to understand their concerns about current policing practices. Police Chief Doreen Jokerst coordinated a meeting with prominent student leaders on campus, including members of the Black Student Alliance, the three branches of CU Student Government (CUSG), the Cultural Events Board, and a member of the Boulder Police Oversight Task Force.

The first meeting commenced on Friday June 26, 2020. The meeting allowed for all the various concerns of the students to be heard but also demonstrated the need for a more concrete mechanism within CUPD that would allow for these reforms to be implemented with community involvement. Students were determined to schedule another meeting with Chief Jokerst after feeling like the conversation was unsuccessful in charting a path towards reform. In between the first and second meetings, students met daily to create demands for the police, converse with the Board of Regents and CU leadership, and brainstorm the establishment of a “Community Oversight Board for CUPD.”

Prior to the second meeting on July 29, 2020, student leaders were also provided with a list of action items proposed by Chief Jokerst that sought to increase transparency within CUPD and the student body. Student leaders thoroughly discussed and agreed upon some of the action items which called for consistent meetings between CU Boulder law enforcement and BIPOC students as well as the centering of CUSG as the intermediary between CUPD and the broader CU community. However, students denied several action items including the “Chief’s Advisory Board” as they were not representative of the students’ interests. Instead, in order to balance the power between the CU Boulder community and CUPD, the students at the meeting advocated for a “Community Oversight Board” that would be centered around deep analysis of police policies aimed at fostering reform. Staffed by students, faculty and staff, the students imagined that the “Community Oversight Board” would have the ability to review completed internal investigations and conduct thorough reviews of police practices. The board would also empower BIPOC students who have been burdened by racial profiling in policing and systemic inequities by promoting anti-racist policies. By involving the community in ensuring justice within policing, the “Community Oversight Board” creates an external accountability mechanism.

Oversight boards have been implemented in police departments across the nation for the simple reason that they have proven their effectiveness in increasing accountability, transparency, and equality. Furthermore, oversight boards directly benefit police departments due to the fact that they allow community members a voice in the way they are policed, which bolsters relationships between the police department and the community.

To this end, on August 18, 2020, Chancellor Phil DiStefano and Chief Doreen Jokerst granted the students’ request to create a task force to examine these issues. During Fall Semester 2020, the task force, composed of representatives from student, faculty, and staff governance as well as members of the CUPD, met on six different occasions. Individual members of the task

force solicited feedback from the constituencies they represented, and a dedicated email was created and publicized to gather additional community feedback.

Recognizing the work that students had already accomplished in cooperation with the CUPD, the taskforce wanted to create a formalized structure to ensure this work continued and to provide an avenue for continued community review, feedback, and regular communication with the police department. The task force reviewed several models of community oversight and decided that a community review board model most closely aligned with the objectives of the students and the needs of the CU Boulder Campus community. Using the framework of issues and recommendations developed by the students over the summer as a starting point, the task force developed a series of recommendations for the role and responsibilities of this recommended board.

Recommendations:

The University of Colorado Boulder Public Safety Task Force recommends the formation of a University of Colorado Boulder Police Department (CUPD) Community Oversight Review Board with the following capacities and responsibilities:

- The responsibility to review and provide recommendations to the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee on any current CUPD policies and protocols including internal affairs processes to ensure they are reflective of current community processes.
- The responsibility to review and provide recommendations to the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee on disciplinary actions taken against officers. The taskforce recommends this should occur at the conclusion of internal affairs processes but prior to actual disciplinary action being taken.
- Access to CUPD data that is of interest to the board and the responsibility to advise on that data that is made available to the public.
- The responsibility to collect and analyze data from the community on CUPD interactions with the public and general community sentiments toward CUPD to inform the general aims of the board.
- The responsibility to actively participate in the hiring and promotional processes for CUPD officers to include participation in oral board interviews.
- The responsibility to review and provide recommendations on CUPD's hiring and promotional processes to include recommendations on the composition of the department's oral boards and assessment processes.
- The responsibility to review and provide recommendations on all CUPD training including but not limited to anti-racism and implicit bias training.
- The responsibility to review and provide recommendations on CUPD's community engagement activities.

- The ability to provide innovative recommendations independent of existing departmental structures, policies, or practices.

Next Steps:

To facilitate the creation of the recommended board, the task force recommends the following next steps:

- The formation of a task force with the members and resources needed to consider and provide recommendations on the legal, structural, and logistical aspects of creating a permanent board on the CU Boulder Campus with the responsibilities and capacities recommended above.