

## Stony Brook evaluates response to gunman scare

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[Stony Brook University](#) officials said yesterday they would work to post information to the school's Web site more quickly in emergency situations after assessing their response to Monday's report that a gunman was loose on the campus.

Stony Brook also is working on preparing messages in advance that can be updated more quickly with new information as situations develop, Assistant University Police Chief Douglas Little said.

The self-evaluation came as many students complained they were confused about what to do during the two hours the campus was on alert.

Outside security experts said the school's notifications were timely and the messages themselves were prudent, although one criticized the confusion that resulted when some students reported being advised by faculty to stay inside buildings while others received no such instructions.

"That confusion, that needs to be eliminated," said Jim Satterfield, president and chief operating officer of Firestorm Solutions LLC in Atlanta.

After meeting yesterday, university officials said on the campus' Web site that they would continue to evaluate their response to "address any deficiencies we find. We appreciate suggestions for improvement."

Freshman Matthew Bacchus, 18, of [Far Rockaway](#), Queens, said a friend told him of the initial alert but there was no information on Stony Brook's Web site when he first looked.

"I wasn't sure exactly what was going on," he said, so Bacchus decided not to go to class.

University officials said the text message alert went out at 1:58 p.m. It said: "There is a report of an armed perpetrator on the academic mall. Remain alert and follow directions of emergency personnel. Go to the Stony Brook Web site for updates."

But the first Web site update providing a bit more detail was not posted until 2:51 p.m.

Robert Seiden, president and chief executive of Great Neck-based Fortress Global Investigations, called the messages a "prudent, cautionary approach" in the face of a "vague threat."

"You need to preplan messages in advance," said Satterfield, whose security consulting firm was retained by [Virginia Tech](#) after last year's massacre. "You take that message and modify it based on facts. It's easier to edit than to create it" in the heat of the moment.

Little said the text message, issued 21 minutes after university police reported to the scene, could not have come much sooner since officers had to interview the cafeteria worker who reported the incident.

"They handled this very well," said Catherine [Bath](#), vice president of Security on Campus Inc., an advocacy group based in King of Prussia, Pa. "A 20-minute delay is very acceptable. ... We are asking for a 30-minute-or-less time frame for the warning to go out."

Seiden said, "Twenty minutes may sound like a lot of time ... [But] they cannot take everything as it happens without doing an initial, preliminary investigation."

Some students said they wanted more information from the alerts. Sean Park, 24, an international student from South Korea living in [Port Jefferson](#), said, "I seriously didn't know whether I had to go to school."

As for complaints that Stony Brook should have "locked down" the 1,100-acre campus, Little said, "It's almost impossible to lock down a city of 40,000 people." Little said police were not stationed at roads leading into campus because they were deployed to areas where they were needed to search for a suspect on foot.

The university community includes more than 23,000 students.

"We don't want to put people in places where [the suspect wasn't]," he said.

Little said the university dispatched 12 officers to secure the scene - assisted by, he estimated, at least 20 Suffolk County police and 10 State Police officers.

[Suffolk County Police](#) and State Police did not respond to an inquiry about the numbers of their officers involved.

Sixth Precinct Insp. Frank Stallone said Suffolk and Stony Brook police have done "tabletop" emergency drills to prepare for a real campus attack.

Staff writer Christine Armario contributed to this story.