



After closed session, UCS passes resolution supporting possible arming of U. police

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After hearing opinions from students and community members Wednesday night, the Undergraduate Council of Students called a closed executive session and passed a resolution in support of a possible decision by the University to arm Brown police.

After reviewing a confidential report prepared by members of the University administration regarding campus safety, the council voted to approve a statement that "encourages the administration to take the steps it deems necessary to change (the disengagement) policy; including, but not limited to, the armament of the Brown University Police."

"The majority of UCS prefers to have BUPS armed," said UCS President Rodrick Echols '03.

The council's statement stressed the importance of ensuring that "no members of the student body, particularly students of color, feel targeted or harassed by the presence of an armed police force."

The proposal also recommended providing additional training for Brown police officers to "specifically address the issues of carrying firearms in a diverse campus community."

It also suggested that Brown security officers patrol and protect dormitories, Brown police increase its visible presence on and around the Brown campus and that the administration "expand and bolster the escort and shuttle services to meet the rising student demand and to ensure the safety of students traveling on or near the campus."

The statement, written by Allen Feliz '03, Tarek Khanachet '03 and Luke Meier '04, was passed by a vote of 18 to zero, with three abstentions.

"I am very pleased that the resolution passed," Khanachet told The Herald. "I believe it is in the best interest of the student body. I hope the administration takes this as a cue to make the necessary decisions to make Brown safer," he said.

Though issues dealing with students of color were not discussed in the open portion of the meeting, Feliz and other UCS members emphasized the importance of sensitivity to students of color when deciding whether to arm the police, both in the proposal and in discussions after the vote.

"We on council will not settle for a police force that won't be sensitive to students of color," Feliz told The Herald.

"We understand the consequences of arming the police, and we want to work proactively to provide a safer campus," he said.

UCS' closed discussion and vote came after an open discussion with members of the Brown community. Shaun Joseph '02 presented a petition with 509 signatures against the armament of Brown Police. Carl Takei '02, a Herald columnist, urged UCS to consider the use of non-lethal weapons such as taser guns.

Takei, Joseph and others expressed discontentment with the fact that the decision would be coming solely from UCS and not from the whole Brown community through a referendum or another method.

"Depending solely on forums and e-mails as a barometer of student opinion is not reliable. The people who come to the forums are the ones who have strong opinions, but they represent a small subset of the population," Takei said.

Tali Wenger '02, vice president of UCS, was against holding a campus-wide referendum on the arming issue. "Most students' level of knowledge is not clear," she said.

Khanachet agreed, adding that graduate students and community members "do not have direct access to a referendum" but are still impacted by the decision.

Echols said the issue of a referendum was to be discussed in the closed executive session. There was no mention of a referendum in the statement that was eventually approved.

During the open discussion, Visiting Fellow of Engineering Josef Mittlemann '72 argued against the arming of the Brown police.

"Guns are not the answer, because (the police) are not catching the criminals in action," he said. He suggested increasing patrols as a more effective method of preventing crime, a suggestion that was echoed by UCS in their statement.

Echols closed the open portion of the meeting by announcing that the council was “privy to sensitive information that we need to debate as a council.” He said he got access to a report co-authored by Vice President for Campus Life and Student Services Janina Montero, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration Donald Reaves and others discussing the armament of Brown Police.

The confidential nature of this report required that UCS move to executive session, Echols said. In the executive session, all but voting members of UCS were asked to leave.

UCS members said they were prohibited from releasing Montero and Reaves’ report to the rest of the student body by the administration.

“It wasn’t our decision” not to make the report public, said Luke Meier ’04. “It’s top secret. They don’t want anyone to see it.”

“I know this is a very contentious issue,” Echols told the community members before they were asked to leave. “I think we have the good faith of the student body.”

He also encouraged students and other concerned parties to e-mail President Simmons and tell her their views on the issue.

Before moving to executive session, UCS discussed regular business, including committee reports and upcoming events. Two Category II groups, the women’s club field hockey team and the Enchor singers, were promoted to Category III status.

Sarah Buchwalter ’05 and Diana Jeffery ’04 were also announced as new associate members of UCS.

The meeting also included an outreach program in which members of student groups were invited to discuss their concerns with UCS. Attendees included members of the College Democrats, the International Socialist Organization and the Young Communist League. Major issues discussed included the Undergraduate Finance Board’s methods for funding student groups.

“Loosening of restrictions would lead to more effective money use,” said Joseph, a member of the ISO. All groups agreed that they would like more funding for speakers, publications and copying, among other needs. Echols assured the students that their concerns were being considered.

“UFB has never been this active in reforming itself,” he said.

Dmitri Seals ’02, a representative of the YCL, said that he noticed “a feeling of political apathy on campus.” He asked that UCS think of “proactive, not reactive, ways to raise issues.” Methods such as open debates, meetings between groups with opposing viewpoints and campus-wide forums were discussed as possible solutions.