

**Revision Recommendations  
Dordt College's Annual Security Report**

Prepared for  
**Dordt College Safe Campus Committee**

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Safe Campus Committee  
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Dear Safe Campus Committee:

As part of our enrollment in English 305, Business and Technical writing, we have been asked to review , analyze, and evaluate a professional document. During our course of study we have analyzed the Annual Security Report published by the Safe Campus Committee of Dordt College. Enclosed is a summary of our analysis and our recommendations.

Overall, the Annual Security Report contains a wealth of information. The document clearly strives to provide as much information as possible while meeting the requirements of the Cleary Act. It also aims to keep unnecessary information out, by sticking only to the facts. All of these are commendable acts.

However, there are a some items about this document we wish to address. The document, for example, is in need of better structure and organization. It also needs reworking to help if flow better and become easier to read. This document also needs to be redesigned in order to more effectively engage the reader.

Please find attached our completed report and analysis of the Annual Security Report. If you wish to discuss any of this with us, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely

Kirk Struik  
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CC: Josh Blom, Jeff Muzelaar, Joseph Van Haften, Prof. Leah Zuidema

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## Informative Abstract

The purpose of this report is to analyze the design, structure, and content of the Dordt College Annual Security Report. After doing so, we will then propose revisions to improve the overall quality of this document.

The Cleary Act requires that all colleges publish a report detailing crimes in and around the college campus. This report is comprised of four components: an annual security report, crime logs, timely warnings, and crime statistics.

The first part of our research was to understand who is being addressed in the Report. We did this by answering the questions:

- What is the background of the annual security report?
- What is the purpose of the report?
- Is the document fulfilling the intended purpose?
- What type of suggestions can we make to help the document fulfill its purpose more effectively?

We then conducted research and a survey to find out what other users felt about this document. We have discovered some of the following issues with the Annual Security Report that should be addressed:

- Very few members of the Dordt Community read the entirety of this document.
- Few even know where to find it.
- Many readers did not even know what the Cleary Act was, so they did not understand the purpose of the document.
- Most find it too long and overwhelming.
- The report needs an outline to help users find information.

To address these issues, we recommend the following revisions:

- Addition of an outline.
- Better use of headings.
- Reorganization of the document to place more pertinent information near the top.
- Better incorporation of the statistics.
- Provide an incentive to read the document as a whole.

## Introduction and Explanation

To fulfill the requirements for the Recommendations for Revisions paper for the English 305 class at Dordt College, our group looked over the many documents in Dordt College's website and have chosen to research, analyze, and make recommendations to the Annual Security Report. This document is published by the Dordt College Safe Campus Committee and can be accessed on the Dordt College website, or through Dordt College Student Services.

As a group, we have conducted thorough research, analyzed the data, and then made recommendations to the authoring body as to issues that we feel could make this document easier to use and more accessible to students, faculty, and the general public.

The Dordt College Annual Security Report is written in accordance with the Clery Act. Officially titled The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, this act states that "any college or university that participates in federal financial aid programs [must] keep and disclose information about crime on and near their respective campuses" ([www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org)). This is done primarily for the safety of the students and faculty of the institution. If the examining body, the United States Department of Education, finds an institution failing to comply with the regulations set by the Clery Act, civil penalties can be imposed on the institution. These penalties can come to \$27,500 for each offense, and the suspending of any current federal financial aid assistance that the institution participates in.

In examining the Dordt College Annual Security Report for usability, there are four elements required by the Clery Act that the institution must address: an annual security report, crime logs, timely warnings, and crime statistics. This document may be posted by way of providing notice of the report, a URL if available, and how to obtain a paper copy if desired. We must make sure that we do not suggest the removal of any of these components, as in doing so we would be breaking the Clery Act and possibly imposing penalties on the college. According to [www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org), this report is required to provide crime statistics for the prior three years, policy statements regarding various safety and security measures, campus crime prevention program descriptions, and procedures to be followed in the investigation and prosecution of alleged sex offenses ([www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org), 2006).

Concerning the crime logs,

"the institution's security departments are required to maintain a public log of all crimes reported to them, or those which they are made aware of. The log is required to have the most recent 60 days worth of information. Each entry in the log must contain the nature, date, time and general location of each crime and disposition of the complaint, if known. Information in the log older than 60 day must be made available within two business days. Crime logs must be kept for seven years, three years following the publication of the last annual security report"(wikipedia.org).

This information is needed to be held for records, so that if the college would be approached by the Department of Education and asked to provide the crime statistics, and all other reports of violence, they would be able to in due time so that punishment would be avoided.

## Research Methods

As our group prepared to begin writing a recommendation report on the annual security report, we first asked ourselves what our objectives were going to be for this project. Through this collaborative process we formulated a group of four questions that would help to guide us through the research and recommendation process. These questions were: (1) What is the background of the annual security report? (2) What is the purpose of the report? (3) Is the document fulfilling the intended purpose? (4) What type of suggestions can we make to help the document fulfill its purpose more effectively?

To begin answering the first question, we started by examining the document in its entirety. The beginning of the document actually contained an introduction that explained the background and purpose of the report, so in reality, it helped answer our second question as well. It also contained an internal link that described the Clery Act more in depth. To further our initial findings, we also conducted online primary and secondary research into the Clery Act, and into the information that is to be included in the report.

In order to help answer both the third and fourth question, we built an online survey of ten questions. This survey was randomly sent out to two hundred students, faculty, and staff at Dordt College in order to give us an idea of how the document is being utilized on campus. (The survey is discussed in detail in the Findings and Analysis section of this report. The list of questions can also be found in Appendix A.) Using the results from our survey, along with our own personal input, we were able to effectively answer the both the third and fourth question. Through this initial process of generating an overview of four main questions, we were able to establish a foundation on which the rest of our report would be built upon.

The next step of our research process was to conduct a forum analysis on various aspects of our research. A forum analysis is used to help identify background information and discourse conventions that the document contains. A forum analysis focuses more on *how* a document states something rather than *what* it is stating. This type of analysis has a close relationship with an audience analysis, in that it should focus on what the audience has to say. This will help the writer determine background information, who speaks, to whom they speak, why they say it, and how they say it. In short, the writer does not simply learn about the audience, they also learn from them. We used Porter's Heuristic on forum analysis as our primary source for conducting this analysis. The Porter Heuristic, in its entirety along with more detailed description of a forum analysis, can be found online at <http://critical.tamucc.edu/~writing/resources/invent/forum.htm>.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **BACKGROUND**

In order to make pertinent suggestions for revisions to the Annual Security Report, we first need to understand the audience this document is addressed to. Each year Student Services sends out an email to the entire student body and staff informing them of the presence of an updated security report. So the primary audience of this document is the student body and staff of Dordt College. However, this document is posted on a public access section of Dordt's website, so when developing this document, the fact that anyone with internet access could read this document must be kept in mind.

### **CONDUCTING THE SURVEY**

To help us better understand what the members of Dordt College do and do not know about the Annual Security report, we decided to conduct a brief survey of a random sampling of the Dordt college community. We chose to focus on the campus community and their reaction to this document. To determine our random sampling, we compiled a list of all members of Dordt college with college email addresses. We then used Excel to produce a randomized list of recipients. We used the online survey processing engine, [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), to administer our survey. (Survey questions can be found in Appendix A)

### **FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY**

We polled approximately two hundred individuals, with slightly disappointing results. We had twenty-four respondents at the time of this writing, and about half of those did not respond to the whole survey. However, in light of other trends in statistical surveys mentioned at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistical\\_survey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistical_survey), our response ratio of approximately 11% is normal for online surveys.

We first asked respondents if they were aware that Dordt published an Annual Security Report, and if they were aware of it, could they find the document. Overall, slightly more than half of the respondents said they were aware that Dordt published this report. The others were not aware of the report (as they should have been), or they had forgotten that Dordt had tried to make them aware of the report. Slightly less than half said they could actually find the document quickly. Perhaps most interestingly, when asked if they read the entire document, only three respondents said they had read through the whole report. Most reported they had skimmed it, never even read it, or stopped "at the knowledge of knowing it exists."

When asked for their initial reactions, several respondents said they did not really believe the accuracy of the statistics. The report does not make clear if the statistics are from self-reported crimes only, or if those compiling the statistics sought other ways to determine crime rates. If they only went by reported crime, then the numbers may be much lower than what actually occurs. Others reported that they initially felt scared or overwhelmed by all the statistics, verbiage, and definitions, and therefore have since not thought much about the report.

When asked what the main purpose of this document was, several responded they did not know, or that the purpose was to inform us of the safety of the college campus. Several said they felt the purpose was simply to meet some federal requirements and nothing more. While these are both true, that is not the entire purpose of the Annual Campus Security Report.

Interestingly, when asked if they would like more information on the Cleary act, most respondents did not even know what the Cleary Act was, even though it is the basis for this report and is mentioned in the report introduction. When asked for the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the report overall, most of the respondents also felt an outline would be beneficial, although some pointed out that with an outline even fewer people might read the document all the way through. For those who had read some of the report, the current paragraph headings were found to be helpful and meaningful. Overall, few respondents left comments on the overall quality of the document. One respondent stated the article was quite long, and another felt that the influence of sin should be more thoroughly noted and discussed in this document.

## **ANALYSIS**

Overall, our survey shows that many, if not most of the students, faculty and staff polled do not read this document or even skim it. As a Christian organization, hopefully all of our work, including this document, is produced to be used by someone and not just to fulfill some requirements set by the government. If this much effort will be poured into a document, then the document should be revised so that those who are affected by it can use it easily. In fact, the document should be revised to make users want to read and comprehend it.

## **Recommendations**

In order to make this document more user-friendly, we are recommending that an outline should be added, the headings should stand out more, the information should be reorganized, the statistics should be included in the main document, and there should be more incentive to read this document.

### **OUTLINE**

The Annual Security Report would benefit greatly from the addition of an outline. According to the survey, that 13 out of 15 respondents thought an outline would be useful because the document was very long and as a result, they were not likely to read the entire document. Also, many of the respondents of the survey suggested that an outline would be helpful to make the document easier to navigate through.

The outline would make it easier for the users of the document to find sections of the document that are most pertinent to them. It would come in handy if the users need to find a section that is in the document without trying to scan the entire document. The outline also would provide an overview of all the information that is within the document. Since this is a web based report, one option is that the beginning of the document should consist of either an outline or table of contents that contains internal hyperlinks to various sections of the report.

### **HEADINGS**

We also feel that the document does a poor job of clearly making the headings stand out. If the readers of the document are quickly scanning for one specific area, they can easily pass over the heading because the headings are very similar to the regular text of the document. From our survey results we found that our respondents felt that the headings were useful, but with a change in the format of the headings, they could become much more useful. We suggest that the headings should be a larger font size to make them stand out more for the people reading the document.

### **REORGANIZATION**

The document appears to present the information in a manner that does not flow well. The sections are not arranged well for the users to read this document. We think that the information in the document should be rearranged with the information most applicable to Dordt students first. One way to do this is to move all of the sections that contain information that has not occurred on Dordt's campus to the latter part of the document. Also the Alcohol portion should be moved up as it has been the most reported crime on Dordt's campus from 2002-2004.

The definitions that are in the document seem to take up a lot of space, and we think that it would be better if the definitions in this document be moved into an appendix. A hyperlink would be useful after the section that applies to each definition. This way the users of this document will not have to scroll through the long list of definitions that are in the document.

### **STATISTICS**

The statistics spreadsheet on crimes occurring on campus contains a large amount of zeros, which in reality is good for the college. However, the information reflected in the statistics may not accurately reflect the amount of crime committed on Dordt's campus because it only shows

the crimes that have been reported. However, many students have commented that this statistic page alone makes the annual security report look as if it is a joke. The reason being the layout of the chart. Most of the results are zero, which is good, but seeing almost entirely zero's with only a few non-zero numbers does make the chart hard to read. It also makes the chart appear as if Dordt is trying to emphasize its lack of crime over all while downplaying what does happen. While it is good that the crime on campus is low, this chart would be better if it simply showed crime statistics for crimes that actually have occurred. One way to handle this could be for the authors to commend all of members of the Dordt College institution for their strong work in minimizing crime as a prelude to the statistics. Then they could go on to briefly discuss some areas of concern based on the statistics presented.

Our survey showed that we need to include an executive summary of the statistics in this document. Most of the categories in the campus crime statistics were zero. We think that an executive summary would be beneficial because it could highlight the main crimes that occur on Dordt's campus.

Currently, the campus crime statistics are attached to the document by a link. We think that the statistics should be moved to the appendix section of the document. This way, the information is built into the document, and the people won't have to worry about jumping from page to page or finding a dead link.

### **INCENTIVE TO READ**

Since the survey results showed that few of our respondents had read the entire Security report, and since few students even responded to our survey, it is possible to infer that the majority of students never take the time to even browse over the security report. In order to get more students to become aware of the security and threats on campus, it is crucial that somehow the document presents an incentive to be read.

One suggestion would be to assign the reading of the security report to Gen 100 students. We believe that the information contained within the document would be appropriate for the broad subject matter that Gen 100 covers. Another incentive to read that could be offered is to simply raise awareness. Very few students are aware of the security dangers and guidelines that exist on campus. By raising awareness, more students will become aware of these issues and will be self empowered to look over the annual security report.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

After conducting, analyzing, and reviewing the results from our survey we have made the above recommendations to the authoring body. If these elements are improved, we feel this document would be easier to read and understand for the Dordt College community. We have found that this document contains the elements required by the Clery Act, but with a few changes this document, it could be much more appealing to read and therefore would be more useful to the Dordt College community.

## WORKS CITED

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*Security on Campus, Inc.* 30 Apr. 2006 <[www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org)>.

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## **Appendix A**

1. Were you aware that Dordt published an Annual Security Report?
2. Would you know where to quickly find the Security Report?
3. Have you read through the entire report? If not, where did you stop?
4. What was your initial reaction to the report? Did you notice/read the statistics?
5. After reading the safe campus document, what do you think is the main purpose of this document?
6. Do you think the report should give more information about the Clery Act? Why or why not?
7. Do you feel adding an outline would make this document easier to use? Why or why not?
8. Do the headings give a good indication of what information is in the following paragraphs?
9. What, in your opinion, is (are) the strong point(s) of this document? What, could use improvement?
10. Any additional comments are welcomed and encouraged.